

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Background (Migration Literature)**

Migration/Diaspora literature can be broadly classified as a body of writing dealing with issues of migration. It focuses on the life experiences of the migrants before and most importantly after they try to settle down in the new country. Migration literature abounds in sentiments, nostalgic remembrances of the parent nation, difficulties and challenges in assimilating with the migrated nation, problems with adapting to the new culture etc. Narratives of migration vary according to the background of the migrant and the country from which she/he migrated as it addresses some of the conflict or challenges faced in the new place. While migrating from developing countries to more developed countries, a migrant has to undergo tremendous challenges of language and culture in assimilating with the new country. Such migrant narratives may carry elements of the writer's life but have become an established part of fictional writing. The experiences discussed in migration fiction are not always autobiographical but generally representative of the migrant condition.

Differences in culture, tradition, lifestyle, language, in addition to the geographical variations add to the corpus of migration narratives. When it comes to migration from developing countries the added stigma of racial discrimination polarizes everything: colour and racial conflict in the host nation pose problems for the migrant. As migrants have to live through problems at the workplace, in residential areas and other public places, it leads them to seek shelter in the community formed by other migrants including dwelling places like migrant enclaves. This provides temporary relief but comes with its own set of challenges as individuals are expected to conform to community decisions and policies. The tensions within and without add contours to the stories of settlement and assimilation.

Migration literature on its own or under compulsion from the publishers, concentrates on issues of hardship in the erstwhile homeland and their migration in the new country. Varied experiences of migrants from different parts of the world inform the stories of mobility and difference. Apart from this common thread, writers of migration fiction are seen exploring other issues pertaining to the individual's as well as community's dilemmas in the host country, the U.S.A. for example. It is seen that writers of migration fiction from different communities highlight issues pertinent to their own people even as they aim for a wider readership. Asian American literature will have

variations within it as well as between it and other American migrant literature dealing with the African, Caribbean, Latin American and European experiences in the United States. It follows that Caribbean American Literature which is the focus of this dissertation, carries its own characteristics which to some extent distinguishes it from others. In comparison to other such literatures dealing with issues of migration and diaspora, Caribbean American fiction, especially the work produced by women writers is still a work in progress as more and more novels are being published, thereby stretching the parameters of women's fiction and Caribbean American fiction as a whole.

Migration literature also addresses issues pertaining to the individual's admiration and at times hatred for the host nation. Sometimes stories are about successful settlement in the new land and at others, they are about troubled memories and fresh problems in the new place. Inability to cope with the pressures of the new country might lead the migrant to a condition of loss of self and identity, to mental sickness, and even the need to return home. "Migration creates the desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or the longing for home become motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning once one experiences a level of displacement from it. Still home is a contradictory, contested space, a locus for misrecognition and alienation" (Carole Boyce Davis 84). It is this desire for a proper and genuine 'home' that a migrant struggles with throughout her/his life which finds expression in migration literature.

### **Migration Literature in the Twentieth century**

The immigrant narratives in the twentieth century have enabled migrants moving to different places across the world to retain elements of their earlier lives and cultures in their works. They have recorded some of the dark histories and troublesome presents of some nations. As such they offer the reader insights into the lives of people under dictatorships and unstable regimes in different parts of the world. Though, some migrant literatures are written in the form of fiction, not all depict the real life situations. Depending on the demands of the publisher, there might be contestations between countries regarding the projection of their nations by the immigrant or writer of migration fiction.

Again, a trend witnessed in migration which later became a part of literature, was mass migrations within a single time frame or at different times, by individuals or

families migrating due to various reasons. Another factor associated with it is whether the migration is forced or voluntary. Several factors, economic, political, and geographic, contributed to the migration of people to other countries during the twentieth century. Migration and diaspora studies form an important part of Postcolonial literature. Yet another issue added to it, is the permanency and non-permanency of the migrant. It is seen that, at times, some people migrate for a temporary period and after the completion of the work or service they return home. In some cases, migrations are permanent with little chance of return. Here, there is an ambiguity because some people who come for a temporary period sometimes stay permanently, and some who come to stay permanently, leave after some years. Depending on their ability to assimilate in the new land, the nature and variation of the period of stay varies.

Migrant narratives deal with accounts of voluntary and involuntary migration. Voluntary migration might have several factors associated with personal need or growth, joining family members already there, or in case of return migration, a desire to connect with the erstwhile homeland of the parents. In the case of involuntary migration, the factors might vary from natural disaster, to wars, partitions, resettlement of communities by government agencies, illegal trafficking of workers, to name a few. These again vary from place to place depending on the government's policies regarding immigrants. Migrants from poorer countries face problems of acceptance and assimilation in the developed countries as their culture, skills and general ability to earn/pose challenges for them and for others. This problem of unwilling acceptance by the developed nations is a major debate amongst politicians and people there and writers are seen addressing some of the issues in their writing, both fiction and non-fiction.

### **Caribbean American Migration**

Migration is a part of Caribbean lives as people were once brought from African and Asian countries to work and begin new lives on the islands. Moreover, the islanders are in the habit of hopping from one island to another in, course of their work lives. Any major move beyond the Caribbean is seen as double migration or the second part of the migration curve. Henke suggests that "Prejudice, classism, racism, and various forms of dependence" have contributed to the movement of people across and from the Caribbean in search of job opportunities. He points to their "multi-occupational strategy" which has contributed to: [T]heir migration to metropolitan countries in order to attain professional

skills and/or employment. Thus, travel, (temporary) migration, (temporary) return, and (temporary) migration again have been regular features of life in the English speaking Caribbean from the very beginning. (*The West Indian Americans*, 21)

Henke points to the continuous movement of Caribbeans in search of better opportunities across the islands and other countries like the U.S.A., Canada and Europe. George Lamming contends that elements of Caribbean culture continue to govern the lives of Caribbean migrants to the extent that Caribbeanness is retained elsewhere and in the work of writers of Caribbean origin. (see “George Lamming: Concepts of the Caribbean”, Frank Birbalsingh Ed. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*)

Narratives on Caribbean American migration rely on the migrant’s experience in America while struggling with assimilation in the host nation. Fictionalized narratives by writers foreground the various facets of problems and prospects faced and encountered by the migrants. The trend of Caribbean Migration literature started from the 1930s and it was from the 1980s Caribbean women migrant writers took up the literature of diaspora reflecting on many untouched and challenged borders of migration literature. While talking about Caribbean American women writers a few female writers came up with narratives through the medium of novels, memoirs, short stories, autobiographies challenging the ongoing narratives on migration literature and focusing on issues concerning women migrants or at times from the point of view of the women writers. The layers of problems faced by the Caribbean American migrants in the Caribbean and after migration in America form a major part of their discussion. Exploring their backgrounds, cultural and traditional pasts alongside the challenges of assimilation of the migrants in a racialized country takes forward their discourse on migration. The Caribbean to them remains not only an archipelago, that is an extensive group of islands but a memory from which they cannot fully withdraw themselves. To name a few, writers like Paule Marshall, Michelle Cliff, Jamaica Kincaid started to explore the life of the migrants and their struggle with assimilation as a result of the change of space. This dissertation includes these following writers: Marshall, Cliff. Kincaid as mentioned above, along with Edwidge Danticat, Angie Cruz, Julia Alvarez, Loida Maritza Perez, Esmeralda Santiago, Elizabeth Nunez, Iris Gomez, Cristina Garcia and Cristina Henriquez and Naomi Jackson.

## **Women and Migration**

When migration is seen in terms of women specifically, it draws attention to their relocation, status and work, apart from family and children (in the background). When one talks about women's migration, the overall attention shifts to issues like family, marriage, rape, children along with other general issues. "Their opportunities and constraints differ from male migrants. Through the process of migration and settlement, patriarchal relations undergo continual negotiation as women and men rebuild their lives in the new country. An important task in the study of immigration has been to examine this reconfiguration of gender relations. Central to the reconfiguration of gender hierarchies is the change in immigrant women's and men's relative positions of power and status in the country of settlement" (Sotelo 81). Caribbean American women face discrimination at the workplace and are paid less compared to African Americans and Americans. Key issues like self-development, providing a decent life for their children, poverty, politics, past problems, were some of the reasons behind their migration. Also, Caribbean women were quite aware of the opportunities in industries and agricultural sectors in America. Migration also helped them to come out from the strict patriarchal social structures of the Caribbean. They enjoyed an amount of freedom in America which they could not in their homeland. Women's place in the Caribbean was always doubly colonized, one from the Whites' dominion and the other from the black men. Stories of their struggle for survival, common needs, equal rights were some of the common issues faced by every Caribbean woman. Their flight to America was one way to either better themselves, their children or their family including those left behind in the Caribbean.

It is also observed that not all Caribbean women migrate to America for fulfilment of material needs. Rather, in most cases it is seen that there is always a dark past from which they wanted to run away. Here, America provides them with a life which indirectly helps them to heal themselves. Uncountable incidents of rape, violence, strict family customs, force them to migrate to a place which has a wider scope for work and anonymity. In most cases their migration was voluntary and independent.

In the case of Caribbean American women writers much less research has been done compared to the male writers. Their works, especially the fiction speak loud for themselves of the atrocities they faced in the Caribbean. Also, narrative abounds in treatment meted out to them in America. Hostility knew no bounds for them in both the

countries. With the rise of strong female writers from the Caribbean, their literature is gradually taking shape. Where writers like Michelle Cliff in one of her interviews said that she refuses to call herself belonging to a particular community of Caribbean American writer. Nevertheless, a similarity is found amongst other Caribbean American female writers in their urge to assert themselves as being of Caribbean origin. This dissertation brings them together as Caribbean American women writers in its examination of issues of migration and identity.

## **Objectives**

The study seeks to examine, in the fictional texts selected for the purpose, the areas mentioned here. To this extent, attempts are being made

- To study Caribbean American migration fiction by women writers
- To focus on migration as a natural process of life in the Caribbean
- To show that like all migrant communities the settlers from the Caribbean in America face problems of culture, race and acceptability
- To bring out the diverse backgrounds pertaining to language and culture, geographical location and politics in the Caribbean region
- To bring out the Caribbean difference in the migrant experience and its articulation in Caribbean American women's fiction

## **Hypotheses**

- The project will deal with the following hypotheses
- that issues related to migration dynamics feature prominently in Migrant writers including Caribbean American Women Writers
- that these women writers address the problems of identity as constantly shifting and adapting to new counters
- that displacement results in conditions leading to mutant identities
- that second generation Caribbean Americans who are shaped by life in the U.S.A. continue to share aspects of their parents' original cultural and racial ties

- that migration for the Caribbean Americans takes a circuitous trajectory with return to the Caribbean being a temporary event or final settlement
- that the experiences depicted in Caribbean American women's fiction are not always autobiographical

### **Methodology/Approach(es) Applied**

Given that the primary thrust of the dissertation is to analyze the interconnectedness between the diasporic subject and location in Caribbean American women's fiction, this project uses an eclectic methodology. In fact, the thesis combines tools of Migration and Diaspora Studies and socio-cultural theories of migration, paying special attention to the politics of race and ethnicity, Black feminism as well as sexuality and gender. This combination helps us explain different shades of migration dynamics by contextualizing migration through cultural and historical instances made available in Caribbean American writing.

### **Review of Literature**

Broadly speaking, the material under review can be divided into four main groups:

The **first category** includes works on the theories of Migration: Soren Frank in *Migration and Literature* (2008) draws attention to increasing globalization allowing for borders to be blurred and permeable, allowing migrants access and transit through more than one country. This leads to a complication of human identity as more and more cultures and ideologies have a bearing on such individuals and communities. He also talks about migration literature extending itself to accommodate not just words written by migrants but by others focusing on migration issues. Robin Cohen's *Global Diaporas: An Introduction* (2001) examines the reasons, categories and consequences of diasporas across the world. He identifies labour, trade, cultural communities amongst other reasons for migration and resettlement of people in different countries. He refers to the Caribbean communities formed at one time through forced and voluntary migration from Africa, Asia and Europe; subsequent migrations are seen as another swing of the curve (double migration). Cohen supports Stuart Hall's claim that despite the multiethnic groups in the Caribbean, together they can be brought under one umbrella and a Caribbean identity.



Linda Joyce Brown's *The Literature of Immigration and Racial Formation* (2005) connects immigration with issues of race and ethnicity and their impact on the social dynamics of the host country. She also focuses on issues of gender and whiteness in migrant narratives; Donna R. Gabbacia and Colin Wayne Leach in *Immigrant Life in the U.S.* (2004) focuses on the complexities like issues of nationality, daily life, economy and labour faced by several immigrant racial groups in America. They point to migrants maintaining ties with the hostland (America) and their erstwhile homeland resulting in cultural hybridity and transnationalism.

Inderpal Grewal in *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (2006) points to the gap between the political setup and the market in the reception and accommodation of migrants in America. An aggressive and affiliative consumer culture promoted by the market ensures that migrants are given the status of 'provisional national subjects' recognised by society but not endorsed by government agencies; Russell King and Katie Kuschminder in *Handbook of Return Migration* (2022) deals with the economics, politics and social dynamics in and behind the phenomenon of return migration. In this collection, some of the critics examine transnationalism and look at return migration as an extension of a person retaining links across borders. Some others like King choose to examine return migration in terms of gender and family dynamics. It is also seen as a return of the diaspora as people return to lead retired lives in their erstwhile homeland. Kuschminder examines the return strategies which are planned out and implemented by various agencies. Return migration may also be temporary or periodical, allowing migrants to reconnect with their roots and sometimes to establish business ties.

Dennis Conway and Robert B. Potter in *Return Migration of the Next Generation: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transnational Mobility* (2009) examine the return home of first generation migrants but more specifically the younger second or third generation descendants of migrants who try to reconnect with their original or family homeland. They also study first generation migrants who return after working abroad while still in their prime as a result of the pull factors like the climate and relatively peaceful atmosphere of their erstwhile homelands.

The **second category** includes works on the nature of Caribbean migration: Carole Boyce Davies *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones* (2013) examines issues

of Caribbean diaspora created through migration to the U.S.A., Canada and European countries. She looks at the social and cultural spaces that extend the understanding of the Caribbean in these migrant and diasporic communities. She also focuses on the nature of Caribbean migration writing in English highlighting issues of identity, sexuality and community which reflected elements of Caribbeanness.

Holger Henke (2001) in *The West Indian Americans*, suggests that economic links and public policy have shaped the flow of immigrants from the Caribbean to the U.S.A. He holds that it is a combination of problems rooted in class, gender and race within the Caribbean islands which have contributed to the steady flow of migrants to the U.S.A. in search of a better life. Stuart Hall in his essays focuses on the fissures and hybridity within the Caribbean identity. Paul Gilroy (1993) in *The Black Atlantic* addresses the hybrid nature of the Black people and how they cannot be fixed into group or category—be it African, American, Caribbean or British. According to him they are beyond one nation or culture, transcending nation or ethnicity. Dwaine Plaza and Frances Henry in *Returning to the Source* (2006), choose to look at return migration to the Caribbean as the final curve in the trajectory of migration. Unlike migration to other countries, Caribbean migrants in America or Europe continue to retain ties with their original homelands through family and other ties. Plaza and Henry look at return migration in terms of a yearning for reconnection with all that is familiar either because of genuine ties or idealized memories, more through nostalgia and commercial hype. Mary Chamberlain in *Caribbean Migration: Globalized Identities* (1998) discusses issues of return of diaspora, migration narratives documenting the experiences and the challenges to identity in the host land. She also examines the relationship between ethnicity, identity and community, along with questions of gender and survival in Caribbean communities. Conway and Potter pay special attention to return migrations to the Caribbean and look at family ties, climate, community and culture as some of the reasons attracting the returnees.

The **third category** includes works on identity and space politics: Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (1994) for issues of identity, hybridity and resistance; Hall for issues of diaspora and identity in the Caribbean; Jonathan Rutherford in his collection on *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (1990) brings together numerous postcolonial thinkers including Bhabha and Hall on questions of culture and identity. Hondagneu Sotelo's *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends* (2003) focuses on the experience

and categorization of women migrants in the U.S.A. She also talks about “feminization of migration,” that is allowing female migrants from developing countries to form a major labour force in domestic spaces, as well as in factories and the hotel industry. Doreen Massey in *For Space* (2005) presents ‘space’ as a product of inter- relations, multiplicities and simultaneity of things or events. Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974) presents geographic spaces as social products. He uses the triad of perceived-conceived-lived spaces. Edward Soja in *Third Space* (1996) looks at space as part of the interwoven complex of the historical and the social. Critics like Stuart Hall argue that Caribbean American identity is limited to continuity and rupture, while others argue that it is based on a dialogic relationship between similarity and difference.

The **fourth category** includes studies in Caribbean American fiction: Malachi McIntosh’s *Emigration and Caribbean Literature* (2015) looks at the early Caribbean writers—Naipaul, Lamming, Aimee Cesaire, Edouard Glissant and Sevlon—who had earned fame on the global stage as the background against which later writers could perform or draw upon; Boyce Davies (2013) as mentioned above draws attention to the Caribbean cultural influence in Caribbean American writing including fiction; Caroline Rody in *The Daughter’s Return: African-American and Caribbean Women’s Fiction of History* (2001) focuses on Caribbean women writers, including migrant writers of Caribbean origin who rearrange the conventions of historical fiction by offering their versions of slavery and colonialism in their fictional works. Drawing upon folklore and religious practices, they challenge the ‘rational’ narratives of the White patriarchal world.

Alison Donnell’s *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* (2006) draws attention to the lack of historical dimensions in discussions of women characters in Caribbean writing. She suggests that till recently there was a lack of coordination between feminist historiography and Caribbean literature. Caribbean women writers have taken the task of placing themselves and their characters in a historical context or at least of equipping themselves with a sense of history for a better perspective on women.

Jennifer Rahim and Barbara Lalla in *Beyond Borders: Cross Culturalism and the Caribbean Canon* (2009) focus on the cross cultural influences in Caribbean writing. They highlight issues of ethnicity, language, gender and genre amongst others in their study of Caribbean writing (including writers of migrant origin like Caribbean Americans).

Barbara Christian's *Black Feminist Criticism* (1985) offers a reading of Black women writers including African American writers, Caribbean American writers and African writers and their attempts at self-definition. The women writers try to create a space for themselves as they realize that somebody has to speak on behalf of them or else they will be defined by others including the White patriarchal world. Instead of silence the Black writers encourage other Black women to articulate their own positions. Instead of accepting White frames of reference and assessment, Black women try to devise new frames for assessment of themselves and their writing in their terms. Christian draws upon African women's community values for assessment of Black women's writing as she holds that such values continue to inform Black women's culture.

Patricia Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* (2000) offers useful insights into the thinking processes determining Black women's consciousness. Apart from examining the different relationships, the Black women enter into, in the course of their lives, Collins examines the sexual politics, love relationships, motherhood patterns which determine Black womanhood. She also focuses on the empowering of Black women's consciousness through modes of resistance at the level of thought and action. She holds that Black feminist thought "affirms, rearticulates and provides a vehicle for expressing" Black women's consciousness which is often taken for granted or even stereotyped (32).

### **Rationale/Relevance**

This topic is relevant in the sense that this is an area which has not been examined in depth. While Migration Studies in general and American migration fiction cover a wide ground of migration narratives from across the world, Caribbean American migration fiction has not received as much critical attention as it should have. The writers of Caribbean diaspora in America or Caribbean American writers as they are known have not quite been given their place and identity by publishers and critics alike.

### **Chapter Plan**

Apart from The Introduction and Conclusion the dissertation is divided into six core chapters.

Chapter 1 titled "Examining Migration Dynamics in Caribbean American Writing"

addresses issues of migration and diaspora in the United States of America and their representation in fiction and nonfiction. This chapter will try to look into the key tools used in migration studies and will examine it from several counters. It will try to focus on migration as a discourse in literature, especially, American and Caribbean American literature. It provides the critical grid for analysis and assessment of Caribbean American women's fiction and the issues they highlight.

Chapter 2 titled "Negotiating Displacement: Between Settlement and Cultural Memory" foregrounds the issues of displacement in conjunction with disillusionment and dislocation amongst the migrants in Caribbean American women's fiction. It will show how immigrants who have to reassess their positions in America in the face of racism and racial discrimination which is new to them, fall back upon their original cultural values. The migrants are often seen trying to 'reterritorialize' themselves. Even as they try to contest American values, they are made to acknowledge that good culture of hard work and openness of attitude is no match for White American racism. This problem is highlighted by some of the women writers like Danticat and Marshall. The chapter bases its arguments on Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Edwidge Danticat's *Behind the Mountain*, Iris Gomez's *Try to Remember* and Angie Cruz's *Dominicana* to interrogate such notions of home and space.

Chapter 3 titled "Troublesome Pasts and Unresolved Destinies" deal with characters trying to overcome early problems in their homeland including family pressures, poverty, political upheavals and personal tragedies in Caribbean American novels by women. The chapter shows that individuals and families as they change places and homes to pursue job opportunities elsewhere take on the risk of facing an unknown future. Often they take up dangerous or ill-paid work to try and earn money for themselves and their families back home. Sometimes they are taken advantage of by unscrupulous persons. Such migrants invariably lack proper documents and have to face legal action including imprisonment and deportation. Despite the risks involved, people continue to migrate in search of new but uncertain destinies. The novels included in this chapter address some of these problems. This chapter focuses on the shifting positions of the migrants, especially the female migrants as they negotiate between their Caribbean roots and newly acquired American values. The novels included in this chapter are Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Esmeralda Santiago's *America's*

*Dream* and Loida Maritza Perez's *Geographies of Home*. It is seen that all these novelists try to highlight the predicament of their characters in the Caribbean as well as in the United States.

Chapter 4 titled "Towards Mutant Identities" focuses on the fluidity of migrant identities as they struggle to settle down and form a sense of self and community in the host country, America. In the case of Caribbean Americans, their connections with their erstwhile homeland and their family members, ensures that the break is not complete. Some such migrants may wish to assimilate completely with the other Americans but their accents and their skin colour, not to say their cultures mark their difference from therest. For people of colour, it is the same as African Americans may include the Caribbean Americans when they need numbers but at other time consider them asseparate when it comes to opportunities. As such Caribbean Americans are forced to accept their hyphenated positions and identities which retain some fluidity depending on the classification or relegation to categories by the citizens and their own efforts towards maintaining fictions regarding identity. To make such contentions clear, the chapter takes the help of Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls' Lost their Accents*, *In the Name of Salome*, Naomi Jackson's *The Star Side of Bird Hill* and Elizabeth Nunez's *Boundaries*.

Chapter 5 titled "Contentious Voices: Resisting Caribbean and American Hegemony" focuses on the acts of resistance by the migrants (especially the females). It deals with the problems faced by mainly women characters and the ways in which they try to counter both Caribbean and American ideologies and policies. It 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. The novels selected for this study are Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise*, Angie Cruz's *Soledad* and *Let It Rain Coffee*.

Chapter 6 titled "Reclaiming Home and Territory" deals with the power of cultural memory and family ties which make the migrants and their children reconnect with what they had left behind in the Caribbean. Sometimes individuals decide to visit and stay back or return to their place of origin, the Caribbean. This chapter focuses on migrants reconnecting with their roots through return migrations, temporary or permanent. Sometimes migrants choose to return home after having worked in another country for a

long time. At other times, return migration may be temporary, taken on by descendants of the early migrants to look up their family and cultural ties. Return migration could also be forced and at the same time partially planned by the persons themselves. Whatever the reason, it helps the returnees to renew their ties or their relationship with their erstwhile home countries, make new plans and build for the future. This chapter looks at the different trajectories of return in novels like Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Cristina Henriquez's *The World in Half* and Julia Alvarez's *Finding Miracles* and *Return to Sender*.

### **Novels (An overview)**

*Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) - Paule Marshall

*Brown Girl, Brownstones* narrates the story of a Barbadian family migrating to New York for a better life. The novel focuses on the family of Deighton Boyce, Silla Boyce and their children adjusting to the norms of American life. It further highlights the conflict between the husband and the wife having two different views regarding America. Where Silla accepts the life in the Brownstones and New York, Deighton yearns to go back to Barbados. In this process, their daughter Selina remains a confused individual till the end, once siding with the Caribbean life and the next moment with New York and finally deciding to live life in her own terms.

*Behind the Mountains* (2002) - Edwidge Danticat

*Behind the Mountains* is a story of migration from the point of view of a thirteen year old girl Celiane Esperance who along with her mother and brother goes to New York from Beau Jour, Haiti to be with their father. The troublesome political situation of Haiti acts as a sharp contrast to the cold climate and life style of New York. Celiane found both Haiti and New York disturbing in different aspects leading her to a confused state to choose one.

*Try to Remember* (2010) - Iris Gomez

*Try to Remember* narrates the story of a Colombian immigrant couple and their three children in Florida. It is story of a family's struggle to fit into the American way of life where their daughter, Gabriela helps them as an interpreter to the American system.

Gabriela balances her life amidst her personal work as a babysitter and on the other hand trying to control her delusional father so that her mother and brothers stay unharmed. Gabriela's life as a teenager is a challenge when she wants to uplift herself but is tied to her family's needs.

*Dominicana* (2019) -Angie Cruz

*Dominicana* is a story of a 15 year old girl, Ana Cancion who is married to a man twice her age. Behind their marriage is the need of Ana's family to migrate to America as her husband will take her to America with him. Ana shares a very cold relationship with her husband and plans to flee from his hold. She has no yearning to be in America. She even attempts once, but is caught by her brother-in law who befriends her and they share a comfortable relationship during her husband's absence. Ana also take into enjoying her life in the beaches, learning English lessons in the church, watches movies etc. during her husband's absence. But finally, she is caught between her personal freedom and desires and her family's need.

*No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) - Michelle Cliff

*No Telephone to Heaven* details the story of a family of four who migrated from Jamaica to New York. Boy Savage, the father assuring his distant connection with being mixed blood tries to assure his and his family's stay in New York in a comfortable manner. But the racial discrimination in New York never allows him that peace he sought for. Also, Kitty Savage, his wife who was adamant to any change could not adjust to the racial discrimination in New York and returned to Jamaica despite the internal conflicts there, with her younger daughter, leaving her husband and her elder daughter, Clare. Clare later became a replica of her mother and finally after the problems faced by her in New York, goes to Jamaica to work for her people.

*Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) - Edwidge Danticat

*Breath, Eyes, Memory* is a novel on the struggle of a Caribbean rape victim, Martine and her daughter, Sophie Caco, who was a result of the rape. Martine lives in New York to live at a distance from her traumatic past in Port-u-Prince. But every night she had to undergo the haunting effect of the rape on her. Even Sophie Caco does not find peace



in her life and searches for an alternative home between the Caribbean and New York. The novel foregrounds the mental turmoil of both mother and daughter. Martine's continued struggle with her past trauma ends in suicide at a time when she was looking forward to a new life with a loving partner. Sophie, who had suffered because of her mother's troubled life, cannot find closure and move on completely.

*Geographies of Home* (1999) - Loida Maritza Perez

*Geographies of Home* narrates the story of a family of fourteen children and their parents migrating from the Dominican Republic to New York. The novel further stresses on the predicaments faced by the family as a result of migration. Almost all the characters are in a destabilized state due to some or the other reason further complicating their survival in New York. The better life which the parents sought for their children in New York only remained a dream.

*America's Dream* (1975) - Esmeralda Santiago

*America's Dream* which begins in Puerto Rico details the struggle of its main character America as she tries to first address problems caused by her rebellious daughter and her violent father, Correa to whom she is not married. America who had become a mother at fifteen sees the same mistakes been repeated by her daughter who elopes with a young boy at fourteen. In her daughter's case, the father manages to bring his daughter back home and after sometime she decides to go and live with her father's aunt on another island to continue her studies without the scandal shadowing her. America realises that she has been working hard all her life without much thought for her own comfort. When her partner repeatedly beats her up at the smallest pretext, her mother and her mother's friend and her employer, the hotel owner (where she works) advises her to look for work in the U.S.A. When a family visiting the island with the children offered her a job as a housekeeper cum attendant for the children on their return to New York, America is persuaded by her mother and friends to accept it. In New York, she meets her mother's sister who had settled down after her marriage and her family. As America gets to know people in the course of her work, fellow child-minders, all immigrants from the

Caribbean and South America, she gets to compare notes and learn of the problems faced by undocumented people in America. She also tries to secretly build her life without

fear of violence from Correa in New York.

*How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* (2010) Julia Alvarez

*How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* is a story on a family's struggle for survival and assimilation in New York after they migrate from the Dominican Republic to escape the political oppression of Trujillo. The novel narrates the individual daughters' fight and struggle in New York. It further shows how initially they wanted to go back to the Dominican Republic and later managed to eke out a living thereby creating their own identities in New York.

*In the Name of Salome* (2000) -Julia Alvarez

*In the Name of Salome* depicts the life of two Dominican women, Salome Urena and her daughter Salome Camila Henriquez Urena. Camila worked as a professor in a university in New York and during the last days of her retirement, lectures to her students on the role of her mother as the political 'muse' of the Dominican people. Salome Urena is presented as a revolutionary poet who had devoted herself to her country's political struggle. Camila tries to build herself in the image of her mother and finally decides to go back to the Dominican Republic to carry on the task her mother had started. Both the mother and the daughter were portrayed as strong individuals fighting for their people.

*Boundaries* (2011) - Elizabeth Nunez

*Boundaries* narrate the life of a Caribbean American woman, Anna, working as a head of specialized imprint publishing house. It details how she suffers at her workplace challenged by an American upstart. Migration denies them even a good position in the American system and it is here, she starts facing tribulation of sorts. Even in her romantic relationship with Paul, Anna faces subdued feeling since he too accepts the inferior status.

*The Star Side of Bird Hill* (2015) - Naomi Jackson

*The Star Side of Bird Hill* is a story on the life of a mother, Avril and her two daughters, Dionne and Phaedra who migrate to Brooklyn from Barbados. Avril initially worked as a teacher, then a nurse to the AIDS patient in America finally leading to her death one day. Unable to provide for her daughters a decent life, Avril sends them to

Barbados to live with their grandmother. Dionne and Phaedra show two different views regarding Barbados, where Dionne yearns for American lifestyle, Phaedra accepts the culture of Barbados.

*Lucy* (1990) - Jamaica Kincaid

*Lucy* narrates the forced migration of Lucy from Jamaica to New York by her mother to work as an au pair in a White family. The novel is on the individual's struggle on both the Caribbean and in America to create a place of her own. She struggles amidst the colonial pressure and her mother's taunting in Dominica and suffers the similar Whites' pressure in New York too from Mariah, who acts as her owner and surrogate mother. Though there is no direct pressure on her in America, yet the very ambience makes her uncomfortable from where she decides to live a life on her own terms.

*Free Enterprise* (1993) - Michelle Cliff

*Free Enterprise* is a novel on the historical character Mary Ellen Pleasant and a fictional character, Annie Christmas who waged a silent war to stop the enterprise of slavery in America. Both tried to help John Brown on his raid of Harper's Ferry. Annie Christmas flees from the Caribbean to fight for the rights of her people. And Mary Ellen Pleasant lives a covered life by running the business of a restaurant named 'Free Enterprise' which actually worked for the emancipation of slaves.

*Soledad* (2001) - Angie Cruz

*Soledad* is a story of a daughter who resists her Dominican roots. She even avoids being with her family who stays in a community of Dominican people in Washington. Despite her mother's illness she refuses to visit her, but finally had to take her to the Dominican Republic which was the last cure left for her. There, Soledad for the first time experienced a healing moment realising her roots.

*Let it Rain Coffee* (2005) - Angie Cruz

*Let it Rain Coffee* is a novel on two opposing views regarding one's nation. Where we have characters like Don Chan (who is originally Chinese American but adopted by an African American in the Dominican Republic) and his son, Santo who were revolutionary

figures and deeply loved their land, the Dominican Republic; on the other hand, there is Esmeralda, Santo's wife who flees the Dominican Republic leaving her husband and son to be in America to chase her dreams of being in a developed country. The novel highlights on the trajectories in Don Chan's life while fighting for his people against Trujillo's regime and Santo's involvement in the same paralleling Esmeralda's personalized life.

*Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) - Cristina Garcia

*Dreaming in Cuban* deals with the spiritual connections between characters (family members) living apart in New York and Cuba. One of the central characters, the grandmother Celia whose long life is documented in the novel decides to support the political cause of the revolutionary communist government. Her zeal for that cause frightens her husband and children. Her daughter, Lourdes who had been subjected to extreme violence by some revolutionary soldiers, has no love for her erstwhile homeland or her mother's cause. Lourdes' husband whose family had owned casinos and property in Cuba were deprived of their wealth by the revolutionaries. In order to save their lives number of them left Cuba for the U.S. This forced migration to the U.S. appears to affect different characters differently. Lourdes makes a moderate success of her bakery business, while her husband Rufino who had been a farmer chooses to work on mechanical gadgets. Their daughter, Pilar who appears to be a budding artist (she is thirteen years old when the novel begins) shows signs of rebellion as she resists the control imposed on her life by her domineering mother. Lourdes realizes that her husband was not happy in New York, something which their daughter too realizes. There appears to be a bond between Celia and her grand-daughter and between Lourdes and her recently dead father who communicate at a spiritual level. The return trip to Cuba is in response to appeals by Celia to her grand-daughter and by the recently dead Jorge's to his daughter to return home to sort out matters with her mother. This novel stresses the value of psychic connections between persons who are alive and apart as well as between the living and the dead.

*Finding Miracles* (2004) - Julia Alvarez

In this novel a young school girl, Milagros, who knows that she is adopted meets a new classmate whose parents have come from the place where she was born. Her parents had picked her up from a convent in a small Caribbean island when she was a baby. Since then she has been living as part of a loving family with her sister and brother and her

parents. The new boy, Pablo, keeps looking at her as he connects her with some people he had seen in his homeland. His presence disturbs Milagros as she is reminded of her birth in another country to unknown parents. When she asks her American parents they can only tell her of the convent from where they adopted her during the violent days of the revolution. As Milagros becomes friends with Pablo and he invites her to accompany his family on a visit back to their home country, she agrees. With the support of her parents she sets out to search for her birth parents. While she does not meet with initial success in her search for her birth parents, a visit to Pablo's relatives in another area offers her sufficient information to proceed with her search. They meet an old lady who knows the history of that area and after running through her accounts of possible parents, learns that the most likely couple were a pair of young revolutionaries who disappeared without trace during the height of the agitation. Returning to the city she gathers sufficient information to convince her that that couple had given life to her. With her search complete, she agrees to return to the U.S.A. with her parents who had joined her there.

*Return to Sender* (2009) - Julia Alvarez

The title of the novel is taken from a project by the American Homeland Security Department to capture undocumented migrants of criminal origin from some of the American states. In the process of picking up people without proper official papers, Homeland Security agents brand a lot of harmless people as criminals simply because they panic and run or try to resist arrest. The novel deals with the plight of the Cruz family consisting of three brothers and the three young daughters of one of the men as they try to work on a farm in Vermont. These men and the girls had come up from North Carolina, looking for work opportunities. The Paquette family, who own the farm, have their doubts about the legitimacy of their migrant employees, but they cannot afford to be choosy as the main person is recovering from a serious tractor accident and unable to tend to the 200 odd cows on the farm. As such the three Cruz brothers do the work of looking after the cows and milking them twice a day, while the children attend school. Gradually, the employers learn that the girls' mother is missing and not confirmed dead. They hear that the mother was on her way back to the U.S. from Mexico when she disappeared and for nearly eight and more months they had not heard from her. The Paquette's young son, Tyler feels guilty about his parents employing undocumented Mexicans and worries about their breaking the law. The situation becomes complicated with the U.S. renewing its

efforts to stop migrants from entering the country and the series of raids on such people across the country. While the mother who was held captive by smugglers is released for a ransom, the younger brother, Felipe is arrested and after a period in jail deported to Mexico. Other raids follow with further legal problems for the Cruz family.

*The World in Half* (2009) – Cristina Henriquez

*The World in Half* is a novel about a daughter's search for her father whom she has never met since her birth. Miraflores is an undergraduate in Geology at University of Chicago and after learning of her mother's deteriorating condition she leaves her college to serve her. She searches for her father and her roots in Panama to heal her mother who was suffering from Alzheimer's. For Miraflores, the trip to Panama was a search for her missing father and at the same time an attempt to understand life in Panama. She hopes to find her father not only to bond with him but also if possible, get him to speak to her mother to trigger her memory back. As she continues to search she makes friends with a local boy, Danilo and his uncle, Hernan, who offer her hospitality and support. She meets a couple of people who had known her father at one time but have no information about his present whereabouts. Finally, she meets a lady who turns out to be her father's sister and from her gets to know what kind of a man he was. Her aunt also hands her a box of letters and photographs that had belonged to her father and tells her that he died ten years ago. Miraflores is angry with her mother for depriving her and her father from knowing each other. At the same time, she tries to understand the constraints under which she must have lived at that time. She realizes that her mother, who had at one time tried to cut off parts of her life, is now suffering from a disease which will make her forget some more parts of her life.

The thesis examines the issues of home, territory, identity, apart from displacement and resistance, and finally return migration with the help of illustrations from the above-mentioned novel

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**EXPLORING MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN**  
**CARIBBEAN AMERICAN WRITING**

To come from elsewhere, from ‘there’ and not ‘here’, and hence to be simultaneously ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the situation at hand, is to live at the intersections of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routes. It is simultaneously to encounter the languages of powerlessness and the potential intimations of heterotopic futures. (Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* 6)

In the migrant landscapes of contemporary metropolitan cultures, deterritorialized and de-colonised, re-situating, re-citing and representing common signs in the circuits between speech, image and oblivion, a constant struggling into sense and history is pieced together. It is a history that is continually being decomposed and recomposed in the interlacing between what we have inherited and where we are. (ibid 15)

[M]ovement and migration...from rural space to urban life, from ex-colonies to metropolitan centres – involves a complex transformation. For, beyond the generalities of ‘modernity’ or ‘capitalism’, there is no single frame or cognitive map that unites these experiences and histories. This implies that there is no privileged representation of reality, no single tongue or language in which ‘truth’ can be confidently asserted. (ibid 26)

Talking about diaspora or transnationalism without placing them in the broader context of displacement is to diminish the weight of exile, the notion of home, or conversely the act of recreating the new home place and thence the construction of new identities and community within the nation-state in which the group has resettled. (Anderson and Lee 10)

[T]he literary system as a whole...is influenced by the political and social processes of migration and not merely the part of the system that involves books written by migrants. Consequently, “migration literature” refers to all literary works that are written in an age of migration —or at least to those works that can be said to reflect upon migration. (Rebecca Walkowitz, qtd in Soren Frank, *Migration and Literature* 2)



The aim of this chapter is to put together a critical frame for examination of issues of migration and diaspora in Caribbean American fiction. This chapter tries to look into the key tools used in migration studies and attempts to identify specific ones pertinent to this thesis. It focuses on migration as a discourse in literature, especially, American and Caribbean American literature. Along with this, it tries to provide a necessary frame for analysis of Caribbean American women's fiction.

It is seen that migration literature is not limited to works written by migrants, with some autobiographical input under pressure of the market but includes works dealing with issues of migration by authors who have no direct experience of migrating from one country to another. As pointed out by Frank, there has been a shift from migrant to migration literature, "a move away from authorial biography as the decisive parameter, emphasizing instead intratextual features such as content and form as well as extra textual forces such as social processes" (3). This shows the changes in migration literature from direct reports on experience to literary artifacts combining texture and structure as well as drawing upon social developments and processes. While migration and the displacement which follows are major events in the lives of different generations of migrants, the issues and complications at the personal, social, and political levels are not similar and can be addressed through the critical/creative lens of people not directly affected by them.

## **Migration**

Migration has been a part of human nature but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the movement of people from less developed countries to Europe and America became a steady event which has turned problematic for the host countries in the twenty-first century. Migration to the U.S. has been greater because of its size and location, allowing for people from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean and Latin America to make their way there. US foreign policy has been framed and amended periodically to admit different categories of immigrants from across the globe to come to America. As such the US has become a "popular destination for a culturally more diverse group of mobile people than most other countries" (Gabaccia *Immigrant Life in the US* 3). This has made "the United States...a hyper-present model of a culturally plural or multicultural nation of individuals with complex identities" (ibid). Despite its mainstream White society, the constant flow of migrants shows how "globalization may be transforming human lives in the paradigmatic nation of immigrants" (ibid). Even as she takes stock of the recent

multicultural ethos in the United States, Gabaccia observes: “Are these transformations pushing newer immigrants in the direction – away from the importance of the nation – that some theorists of transnationalism have posited? (ibid) She further asks: “Do transnational flows of people necessarily produce transnational selves, and if so under what conditions”? (ibid 7) Bringing together critics from different disciplines, in her book on migration, she suggests “a rapprochement of social and cultural analysis and of social scientists and humanists will further redefine our understandings of race and gender with their attention to age and generation, to class, and to the meaning of national identity itself” (ibid 6).

Gabaccia contends that “Migration both binds and transforms the countries it links; it affects the collective identity of receiving and sending countries as well as the identity of migrants themselves” (ibid. 6). People entering a new country take with them the culture and knowledge systems of their erstwhile homeland which can be put to new use in the US. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Asian migrants, especially the Chinese, carried with them mining, irrigation, and railroad technologies which they could apply to good effect in America. Once they could put down roots, they sent for family members and friends to gradually build Chinatowns across the US. Migrants also contribute to the economy of their earlier country through investments and donations at various levels. Both countries stand to benefit from such exchanges.

Migration may be voluntary or involuntary. While a majority of migrants leave their homelands for education, work or some other form of advancement, there are others who have to be evacuated because of crises brought on by war, natural disasters, famine or political turmoil and genocide. A huge number of migrants to the US from Asia and Africa as well as Latin America in the twentieth-twenty-first centuries were in flight from war and political conflict in the regions.

### **Caribbean Migration to the US**

Those in the Caribbean territories/islands, mostly left for the US to fight for a better life or to escape from repressive regimes like that of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. As pointed out by Holger Henke:

Both structural factors (such as economic links) and public policy have shaped the flow of immigrants from the Caribbean....from the late nineteenth century on,

the United States increasingly came to play a role in the region.... America's growing role in the international and regional economies provides "bridges" for potential migrants. (*The West Indian Americans* 23)

Caribbeans who, according to Henke, were wrongly called West Indians, chose to move to the United States in search of training and employment as there were few opportunities in their homelands. Caribbean migrants to the US, despite being dark skinned, prefer to be known as Caribbean Americans and not be blanketed with the African Americans. Henke points to the colour prejudice on the part of the White Americans and mentions that the Caribbeans who experience problems of skin colour back home are aware of the subtleties attached to it. According to him:

Prejudice, classism, racism, and various forms of dependence have historically formed a tight system in which the disenfranchised majority of Caribbean peoples have little choice than trying to rise above these obstacles by working in several jobs. (21)

He adds that:

[A]n important part of this multi-occupational strategy has been their migration to metropolitan countries in order to attain professional skills and/or employment. Thus, travel...migration, (temporary)return...have been regular features of life in the English speaking Caribbean from the very beginning. (ibid)

This accounts for the competitiveness amongst the Caribbean Americans:

West Indian women are...very independent...Historically they were forced to accept many of the roles that Western society attributes to men, which strengthened their position within the family. Nevertheless, women remain at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder....West Indian women work outside the home and at the same time assume full responsibility for child care. (Henke 61)

Families migrating to the US could not do it together as one unit and often had to bring back the children or a partner after some time. They go back to visit and collect their families, often giving rise to stories of return. Some actually choose to return after retirement.

## **Caribbean American Migration fiction**

Like all writers of migration fiction, Caribbean writers address issues of displacement, reasons for migration, conflict and political strife in the Caribbean, settlement and cultural identity in America, establishment of a community in the US, family ties back home, discrimination and racism as well as gender and contestation of patriarchy. Apart from the specific characteristics or points of difference from other migration writing in Caribbean fiction, the issues common to Migration literature, especially fiction need to be examined.

### **Displacement—Physical and emotional**

In Caribbean American fiction like other migration fiction there is always the emotional pain of leaving their homeland besides the physical distancing. It covers different kinds of displacement beginning with leaving the homeland and moving to a new work and social culture in the U.S.A. It is this double load of balancing displacement that the Caribbean American fiction presents:

There are a variety of aspects giving shape and substance to the complex process of adjustment and adaptation of Caribbean-Americans to their new home. Like all other immigrants, Caribbean people in the United States regularly compare their memories of home to the realities of their life in a new country. (Holger Henke, 37)

A shift in place results in a shift in the realities they have to face including official scrutiny, racial discrimination and numerous problems of earning a livelihood and settling in the new land. While in the Caribbean they suffered under Trujillo's dictatorial regime, or some other political/military dictator who robbed them of their common human rights, not to mention the underlying structures of European colonialism, in America they had to face racism, lack of proper job opportunities, gender discrimination etc. Drawing upon works by Caribbean American women writers, the dissertation examines the strategies adopted by the migrants to deal with their fractured and fragmented lives in America as well the Caribbean.

In this context it may be noted that displacement centres around the issue of cultural identity along with the change of place as pointed out by Bammer in Anderson and Lee:

As a theoretical construct, displacement shares with diaspora the notions of physical dislocation, banishment, and exile, but emphatically draws attention to the cultural dimension; that is, how one's ancestral culture or the culture of the birthplace has been dislocated, transformed, rejected, or replaced by a new one, one of "cross-connections, not roots" (Bammer 1994, xv qtd in *Displacements and Diasporas* 11)

It calls for accommodation and acceptance of new ideas and values along with the older ones the migrant carries from the homeland.

### **Clash of cultures**

Displacement also leads to the clash of cultures within and outside the Black community. Where on one hand, they had to face the stark reality of racism in America from the Whites, there is also the discrimination from the African Americans, though belonging to the same racial group. Also, the clash of cultural practices once outside their homeland leaves in the mind of the migrant a feeling of uncertainty and a sense of not belonging there. It is to fill this void they make trips to their erstwhile homeland either by themselves or by sending their children to retain the ties with their homeland, the Caribbean. "In many cases, there seems to be a close emotional connection with their home country, sometimes because of a lack of acceptance in the host country" (Henke 124). It is this connection with their homeland that the dissertation seeks to address. Even though they left the Caribbean for several reasons like seeking employment and other opportunities in America, they cannot do without their own culture and tradition. Whether voluntarily or involuntarily, they tend to retain elements of their Caribbean culture, even when they try to assimilate in the U.S.A.

### **Shifting/Mutant identities**

Chambers in the following passage refers to the fractures, gaps and the fluidity of identity which may be applied to the study of Caribbean American identities. He says:

None of us can simply choose another language, as though we could completely abandon our previous history and freely opt for another one. Our previous sense of knowledge, language and identity, our peculiar inheritance, cannot be simply rubbed out of the story, cancelled. (24)

He points to the fact that identities cannot be discarded or assumed at will. Adoption of a different language, English for example, does not necessarily change the migrant's original cultural background and memory. A person continues to be shaped/governed by the values he has acquired throughout his/her life. Acquisition of something new does not suggest a disavowal of something already there but an intertwining of both or more. Migrants who are exposed to a different language and culture in the new country may experience difficulties but that does not affect the original culture they carry with them. Even when clashing with each other, cultural/social values can coexist in the person's mind to be used according to the situation and context.

Chambers observes that:

What we have inherited – as culture, as history, as language, as tradition, as a sense of identity – is not destroyed but taken apart, opened up to questioning, rewriting and re-routing. (ibid)

The migrant's culture and identity are subjected to constant interrogation in the host country. In order to show them that they are different from the natural citizens, migrants are made conscious of their cultural difference—including his customs, manners, food habits, dress, celebrations, work ethics to name a few—which are interpreted or branded by the sons of the soil. His ways are shown to be either inadequate or excessive, lacking in balance.

Again, the migrant's efforts at assimilation which is only partial, ensures that his original cultural identity undergoes fractures, however minor under the impact of the dominant culture. That is why Chambers suggests that:

The elements and relations of our language and identities can neither be put back together again in a new, more critically attuned whole, nor be abandoned and denied. The zone we now inhabit is open, full of gaps: an excess that is irreducible to a single centre, origin or point of view. (ibid)

What follows is a hybridity, not necessarily of resistance, but of compromise. The migrant has to admit the various influences, the push and pull of cultures he/she negotiates in his everyday activities. As a means of sustenance, there is a tendency in migrants to create

fictional wholes out of the gaps and cracks in identity. As there is a constant pressure of new elements, it is seen that “other...languages and identities can also be heard, encountered and experienced” allowing multiple ideas/values to make their impact in varying degrees (ibid). Consequently “Our sense of being, of identity and language...the ‘I’ is constantly being formed and reformed in such movement in the world” (ibid). Fluidity and hybridity become the norm in migrant identity as a kind of off the centre position.

### **Gender and Resistance in Caribbean Writing**

The dissertation draws upon what Donnell has to say about the role of Caribbean women in fiction and in life:

In one sense my choice of the alternative descriptor, ‘double agent’ is a direct challenge to the term ‘double colonisation’ that has served...the very complex position of black women within the colonial and patriarchal social order imposed by colonialism and its after-effects. Rather than seeing postcolonial women (writers) as always inevitably doubly disempowered, I want to consider how Caribbean women writers can be seen to mobilise gender, as well as ethnicity and cultural identity, as a site of resistance and affirmation. (*Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* 138)

Instead of presenting such women as passive victims of patriarchy or colonial structures, Caribbean women writers both fictional and otherwise have acknowledged their agency and efforts towards self-definition on their terms. As such Donnell suggests that:

[T]he term ‘double agent’ will, I hope, enable an opening up of the possibilities for Caribbean women and their literary works to be read as resistant, rebellious texts that demand a more specific and differentiated understanding of ‘Caribbean woman’ as both subject position and positioned subject. (139)

The dissertation focuses on such works by Caribbean American writers who in their fiction create roles which pose a challenge to the domain of patriarchy and the structures of colonialism both in their homeland and in America. The rebellious attitude they are pushed to adopt creates strong and uncompromising individuals who never submit to the system

or society.

Further Donnell also comments on how Caribbean women and women writers as doubly colonized are relegated to the borders of any discussion. She argues that:

[W]omen writers are ‘literally fighting for visibility’, a notion that is intimately connected to the concept of their double-colonisation...as a silencing device as well as a platform. In critical studies of Caribbean literature in which women’s writing is often a marginal category, annexed in a single chapter, the myth of a spontaneous genesis is rarely challenged. (140)

It follows that women writers have to be given their space and their own terms of definition. Women’s history, and the assessment of women against their layered history is necessary to examine their positions in the present. That is why Donnell focuses on the women writers and the grounds they could cover in the subjects they study.

### **Return migration**

It is seen that return migration is common in the case of Caribbean migration. As pointed out by Plaza and Henry, King et al and Conway and Potter, in their works, return migration is seen as the completion of the curve of migration as far as the Caribbeans are concerned. As observed by Plaza, in the Caribbean migrants:

These twice-migrants (first from Africa and India and then from the Caribbean) are today reacting to the initial trauma of forced removal from their ancestral lands and have embraced a form of identity politics informed by a spiritual yearning for rootedness and symbolic return to “home”. (*Return to the Source*,17)

According to him, “Return is seen as tied to a yearning for reconnection with family, friends and all that is familiar and suggests comfort” (xi). Plaza also points out that,

Migration and re-migration may not be definite, irrevocable and irreversible decisions....Even those migrants who have settled for a considerable time outside their country of origin frequently maintain strong transnational links. These links can be of a more informal nature, such as intrahousehold or family ties, or they can be institutionalised, such as political parties entertaining branches in various



countries, both of immigration and emigration. (ibid)

Irrespective of the nature of the ties—whether personal or social or political—the desire to connect with past and with family, Plaza identifies some factors behind preoccupations with, “identity and belonging (identity politics of race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, nationalism and so on), which also speak to the Caribbean immigrant and her or his urge to “return to the source” (ibid). He puts down the reasons: as “alienation and rootlessness associated with living in huge, impersonal, fast-paced, industrial megalopolises” which “isolate people from traditional communities of meaning and acceptance” (ibid).

King identifies “the importance of ‘pull’ factors in promoting return migration” along with “assimilation and adaptation problems in ‘the other man’s world.’ Negative experiences in the metropolitan societies from which they were returning, such as being made to feel like second-class citizens...racial discrimination and harassment, feelings of alienation brought on by unfortunate experiences, economic hardship, social disquiet, lack of familial support,” all of which contribute to the returnee’s decision (*Handbook of Return Migration* 225).

Conway and Potter look beyond the parents returning to spend their retired lives in the Caribbean. They look at the succeeding generations as mulling over “the need to return in order to full family duties, such as providing care for these ageing parents. In more than a few instances, the agency of national pride and wanting to do something for the ‘motherland’ was revealed as a motivational factor prompting return migration (*Return Migration of the Next Generations* 16).

### **Caribbean Women’s Fiction**

According to Alison Donnell:

Caribbean writing calls into question the dominant matrix of race, ethnicity, gender, class and nation through which Caribbean literary forms and cultural identities have been discussed for the past decade, both locating a significant absence within models of identification and supplementing this model by writing sexual identities onto the Caribbean matrix. (*Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History* 182)

She adds that:

[S]ome of these texts address issues of historical and present cultural identity and revisit the past, which is also a literary past, in order to make visible the politics that operate around sexuality by demonstrating how specific cultural practices play into wider relations of power. (183)

Donnell cites Makeda Silvera to point out that “the models of heterosexual identities historically demanded in these societies have impacted on the repression and oppression of queer subjects.” Silvera holds that:

[S]lavery and the post-emancipated colonial order defined the structures of patriarchy and heterosexuality as necessary for social mobility and acceptance. Silvera’s position on postcolonial studies and gay and lesbian studies draws attention to “marginal voices, social identities, silences and silencing, as well as self-representation and the theorisation of difference.” (202)

This makes for a nuanced identity politics in Caribbean American writing.

Caribbean Women’s writing examines the oral traditions to preserve traditional knowledge and values meant to empower women and constitute female subjectivity. This shared knowledge forms a site of resistance and emotional sustenance for the Caribbean women. Boyce Davies offers a perspective on the issues which could be deemed Caribbean through the counters of seeing, reading and imagining that authors will have to negotiate. According to her:

Seeing refers to a way of engaging with Caribbean space, in a dialogue or conversation of the eyes, as opposed to surfing, spectating, voyeurism, or detached tourist engagement. In Caribbean context, seeing refers to having high-level vision, the ability to see and read, that is, interpret beyond the given, into the past, in the present, and into the future. (*Caribbean Spaces* 35)

Seeing, as far as Boyce Davies is concerned, includes vision and the visionary aspect of foretelling or diving things. A seer can go “beyond the surface, to see what is hidden or yet to be revealed” (35). She affirms that this kind of seeing is necessary to “pursue the levels of critical engagement that allow us to really see the Caribbean” (ibid). Next, by

reading she refers “to pursuing the signs, the codes, the hidden meanings, the silences, erasures, absences” (ibid). In order to emerge as more informed readers, she calls for a process of active engagement with all textualities (oral, scribal, performative, carnivalesque, literary, scholarly) that emanate from the spaces we call the Caribbean.

Further, as “reading...implies contestation over meaning” through multiple readings, by the same or different readers, it brings under purview both print material and oral cultures drawing sustenance “from Caribbean folk and obeah traditions” (ibid). Obeah is explained as a spiritual, therapeutic and creative system which informs Caribbean culture. Boyce Davies’ next counter, imagination follows from this act of multiple readings. It allows the mind and the senses to move “outside of what is given reality, material or concrete, to pursue other realities” (ibid). She sums it as the work of the liberated imagination which can be transformative and creative. “The Caribbean embraces all of these forms of engagement and more, for they are sites of invention and reinvention” (ibid).

The project examines displacement in multiple terms and identity as fluid and even fractured at times. Hybridity is not a matter of ethnic assertion as in the case of Asian Americans but a matter of being in an in-between position, of wry acceptance instead of celebration.