

CHAPTER FIVE
CONTENTIOUS VOICES: RESISTING CARIBBEAN
AND AMERICAN HEGEMONY

Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the “content” of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses.... (Bhabha, *Location of Cultures* 157-8)

It...enables a form of subversion, founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention. (*Location* 160)

Hybridity reverses the formal process of disavowal....Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence. (*Location* 163)

Signaling both...disguise and subterfuge, as well as the capacity for agency...the 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. (Donnell, *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* 139)

This chapter focuses on the survival and resistance strategies adopted by women migrants in Caribbean American fiction as they fight hegemonic and other pressures at the same time. It tries to show how the Caribbean women migrants seen as triply invisible, shake off the dominant structures (black and white, male and female). This chapter also examines if the new home which they tend to create at the end for themselves is an amalgamation of both the cultures, or something else, or a step towards their self-validation. They act as rebels who try various options to survive safely in America or in the Caribbean. In most cases it is seen that either individually or with their children and family they emerge as fighters who resist the counters of race and gender, class and culture, in America as well as in the Caribbean. It may be mentioned that the different Caribbean countries from which these people hail, were once under European colonial control. The islanders already had to negotiate the repressive measures of colonial authorities and in the case of women, of patriarchy as well. They have had to meet the challenges of the discriminating gaze which commodifies and/or marginalizes them. The chapter shows how the women migrants resist racist and gendered structures of subjugation and control.

The multitude of challenges that come the migrants' way are actually what force them to live a life of difference. Their transnational attitude shifting between the Caribbean and America develops in them the power to meet the predominant culture. It has been also observed that the migrants do not find a proper home either in America or in the Caribbean. Their search for a proper living turns futile which makes them unhappy and resistant towards both the cultures. In reality, the search for an alternative home either in the Caribbean, that is their erstwhile motherland or in America, the land to which they migrated, is indicative of their continuing search as they try to balance the options available to them.

Finally, the chapter deals with the multiple modes the migrants adopt to resist and escape the racism and other related conflicts in America and at times in the Caribbean too. The novels deal with the rebellious spirits of the female characters as they resist or contest the views of the mainstream society.

In *Migrancy, Culture and Identity*, Chambers draws attention to the dilemma faced by migrants in the course of situating themselves:

We imagine ourselves to be whole, to be complete, to have a full identity and certainly not to be open or fragmented; we imagine ourselves to be the author, rather than the object, of the narratives that constitute our lives.... (25)

However, the migrant is made aware of his marginality vis a vis the idea of home is the natural citizens who take it upon themselves to assess and label him/her as they deem fit. Given this kind of a situation where the migrant is no longer certain of where he stands, Chambers suggests adoption of "the subjunctive mode, 'as if we had' a full identity, while recognizing that such a fullness is a fiction, an inevitable failure" (ibid). This would help to push back the fragmented labels even as the migrant is forced to recognize his/her own fluidity, his less than solid identity. Chambers holds that acceptance of this state of things will help the migrant to position himself:

It is this recognition that permits us to acknowledge the limits of ourselves, and with it the possibility of dialoguing across the subsequent differences...both towards us and away from us. This fictive whole...this knot, the interminable tying together of the stories across the 'resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic

life'... holds us together. (ibid)

Once the limits imposed on the migrant by the mainstream are acknowledged or recognized, it allows the former to create his own space, his own fiction for a sense of being and even becoming. Chambers explains that “These partial forms, these incomplete encounters, like language itself, provide the thresholds for new encounters, new openings, unrehearsed possibilities,” leading to “a state of hybridity in which no single narrative or authority – nation, race, the West – can claim to represent the truth or exhaust meaning” (27). Denial, dismissal or resistance opens up more possibilities in hybridity.

As Bhabha puts it:

Hybridity is the...name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal....It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the...demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (*Location* 159- 60)

The migrant can resort to resistance through disavowal and subversion of dominance. Bhabha points to “the ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject...disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (*Location* 162). This subversion of dominating discourses through ambivalence further allows for induction of figures from other cultures. The strategies adopted by the Caribbean women writers to counter dominant white discourses can be seen in this light.

As pointed out by Donnell:

Caribbean writers do not adopt the terminology of the West – queer, homosexual, gay, lesbian – in order to name this experience or desire. Their writings are rather characterized by an un-naming of this desire and sexual practice....[A]ny gesture of naming may in fact make the positions and choices with regard to sexuality more limited and closed rather than more open and visible. (*Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* 184)

Without resorting to names and ‘isms’, writers like Audre Lorde and Michelle Cliff are seen defining themselves as black lesbians without using those words as branding labels.

They choose to draw upon their folklore and popular myths to express themselves.

The hypotheses and contentions examined in this chapter are:

- that women under colonial rule are subject to patriarchal control
- that race and gender feature significantly in matters of identity
- that women writers contest hegemonic pressures through female figures of resistance in their fiction
- that resistance to authority begins with abolitionism
- that women's resistance, even for political causes, is seen in gendered terms
- that Caribbean Americans through their links with the erstwhile homeland and culture, leave open the possibility for escape or return
- that in the U.S.A. Caribbean Americans resist fragmentation of identities through maintenance of 'fullness', however fictional or unstable
- that fluidity being the norm, migrants are seen exploring new forms of hybridity in America
- that Caribbean American women resist gendered norms through fluid sexual identities that resist definition

The novels included in the chapter are Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* (1990), Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise* (1993), Angie Cruz's *Soledad* (2001) and *Let It Rain Coffee* (2005).

1

Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* is about the character Lucy, who is a fighter in her own little world; a battle that she wages with her mother, family, Mariah (under whom she works as an au pair) and most importantly with herself. Lucy came from Antigua to America to work as an au pair in a wealthy White family. It is her mother who sends her to America to work and be independent, disregarding Lucy's interest in continuing at school. Lucy finally detaches herself and tries to live a life on her own terms. Neither her mother's love nor the love of her land could hold her close to her land. Even in America, Mariah's care and love were not much for Lucy to come to a decision to embrace America. She at last is only left with herself. She resists being marked a Caribbean or an American.

Lucy's resistance grows with her growth. From a tender age working as an au pair

at an American's house and then facing the world at her own cost frames her into an individual strong enough to deal with the atrocities of her maternal hometown and the migrated nation. Antigua forced her to adopt the English norms of life; even her parents were not comforting to her. Also when in America, Mariah and her family too could not accommodate the troubled soul of Lucy. At the end of the novel, one finds Lucy's oppositional attitude to the Caribbean way of life, the English dominion in Antigua and the American way of life too. Along with the presence of the humans in her life, it is the system and its coercive attitude that repels her from everything. Assimilating with any one nation poses a challenge in Lucy's life. Though initially Lucy had high hopes in America, but with her prolonged stay she understood the division of race amidst the Whites in America. Alongside her experiences of growing up in the Caribbean and America is the growth of Lucy's hidden wave of resistance to lead a life all alone. Managing life with both past and present experiences in the city and her hometown regenerates Lucy into a complex being. At various levels, from lack of motherly care from her mother, lack of fatherly support, sacrificing her studies to fend for the need of her siblings, to living and working as a maid with Mariah, along with the racial tag, Lucy had to undergo an extreme state of mental conflict, chaos and hardship. She could finally take resort, only by living all by herself.

Lucy's search for belongingness and its failure thereafter forces her to accept a life of loneliness. Lucy's narrative leads the reader through a life fraught with insecurity, loneliness, identity issues and racial conflicts. Critics like Gary E. Holcomb:

[R]eads the novel through the lens of black transnationalism, characterizing Lucy as a "sexual migrant" whose travel and sexual liberation work together to resist the "dominant notions of national identity [that] endeavor to enforce homogeneity" through "colonial, racist, and nationalist values. (Jennifer J. Nichols' "Poor Visitor: Mobility as/of Voice in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*" 187)

The concept of home in *Lucy* is not a place with which she can associate herself or completely deny its presence in her life. As such the alternative home she was trying to find for herself left her all the more homeless. This feeling of an alternative space despite having two places to stay is one mode of resistance Lucy undertakes for the rest of her life.

After her migration to America, Lucy's initial days were filled with comfort and

love from Maria, her employer and surrogate mother figure. But with time even the new home in America makes her realize her racial status. Her experiences in Antigua where she was denied education and a free life only to feed her younger siblings were unbearable to Lucy. For that reason, to her the idea of home holds no charm. Despite the two different homes in Antigua and in America, Lucy was looking for one where she could be just herself.

Apart from seeking a different place for herself, Lucy in a way challenges the meaning of home by countering the so-called unresolved issues in her life. Detached, Lucy was not ready to accept the lessons provided to her about the beauty of the English and American lives. She was also not ready to accept subordination of any sort. Lucy resists identification. By resisting all bonds and ties of blood, race and culture of her motherland, Lucy at the end of the novel chooses homelessness over everything else. Lucy's search for home correlates to her identity conflict. As Veronica Majerol argues in "Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* and The Aesthetics of Disidentification":

Lucy [can] be read as an artist figure of "disidentification" that creates an alternate form of aesthetics borne out of the contradictions inherent in the attempt to assimilate such a subject into a larger narrative of progress or development. (18)

When she denies herself any proper location and home, Lucy moves away from the realm of boundaries and borders. She constructs and situates herself in a place from where she only resists. She rejects and refutes to be identified with any nation, group or community.

While Caribbean American narratives are often replete with the characters' desire to return to the homeland, in the case with Lucy, despite the psychological connection with her land, there is that deep image of suppression and forced acceptance of White dominion due to which she refuses to go back to her homeland. Her perplexed mental condition is seen when she says:

I longed to be back in the place that I came from...I longed to be with people whose smallest, most natural gesture would call up in me such a rage that I longed to see them all dead at my feet. Oh...my one swift act—leaving home and coming to this new place—I could leave behind me...my sad thoughts, my sad feelings, and my discontent with life. (*Lucy* 7)

The atrocities she faced while in her homeland made her initial days easier in America though she was only kept as an au pair. But with time, her homeland's memory and desire to return again came back. America could not hold her long and erase the memory of the Caribbean land. She felt like a "“Poor Visitor, poor Visitor,” over and over, a sympathetic tone” (14). The newness only made her ‘uncomfortable’.

Though everything was made comfortable for her, somewhere she could not accept them, she felt:

But I was not cargo. I was only an unhappy young woman living in a maid's room, and I was not even the maid. I was the young girl who watches over the children and goes to school at night. How nice everyone was to me...as myfamily and make myself at home. (7)

Again, she feels that returning home will only provide her with a dark life in the future. This desperation to go back home and again feel the dark and gloomy life is her struggle with the ambiguity and decision over one place.

There are stark colonial impressions in Lucy's life which she could never erase from her mind. The poem on daffodils which Lucy was asked to memorize haunted her every night. She is unable to understand and acknowledge the beauty of the flower which her teacher forced onto her. She dreamt of being chased by bunches of daffodils and how she fell down and then were choked by them. Later these were the same daffodils which were in reality shown to her by Mariah. On encountering it for the first time after she read it in her class, she could make no difference. It was still dreary and fearful, and Mariah like her school teacher (both White) could only praise the flower's beauty which Lucy could not relate herself to but had a desire to kill them:

I did not know what these flowers were, and so it was a mystery to me why I wanted to kill them...I wished that I had an enormous scythe; I would just walk down the path, dragging it alongside me, and I would cut these flowers down at the place where they emerged from the ground. (29)

Lucy further demonized the daffodils as ‘brutes masquerading as angels’. Somehow the very picture of the flower inculcated a strong sense of upheaval in her mind from where

she could only cast the flowers as ‘a scene of conquered and conquests’ (30). Lucy reacts strongly to the sight and mention of daffodils because she relates it to her teacher forcing her to memorize the lines from the poem in her school days. She sees it as some kind of hegemonic control over her sensibility. Otherwise, there should have been no reason for her to react so strongly to the flowers. Lucy who has felt the pressures of the colonial establishment throughout her life feels that she has to now reject anything connected with colonial culture and control.

Mariah, who acted as her mother substitute, was also a colonial representative to Lucy. She hated the perfection, the beauty, her liking for the daffodils, her pleasant attitude etc. Lucy could not hold on for long everything beautiful or perfect because everything Black was not under the realm of perfection and beauty. Lucy has been so sublimated by colonial ideology and customs that when she gets the chance to decide she chooses to reject anything connected with colonialism, even if it is something as lovely as the daffodils. Her attitude to such things appears to be similar to the conduct of native people in the early stages of decolonization where pulling down everything or destroying all cultural signs of colonial authority is deemed most important. Consideration of value or quality is no longer acceptable. All colonial structures are razed to the ground in newly liberated countries throwing off the yoke of colonialism. Lucy’s resistance gains momentum with age and may be seen in terms of debunking of colonial ideas and customs.

One incident that leaves in Lucy a deep imprint was that of the dinner scene in a hotel with Mariah and the family, where the diners looked like Mariah’s relatives and the people who were waiting on them, like her’s. Though Mariah did not herself say anything, the very scene made Lucy feel the racial difference and her inferiority.

The realization of her racial status forces her to rethink about the subordinate status of her people. Being a close observer of things and incidents since her early years, Lucy finds everything attached to her motherland as scary. Lucy voiced her confused feelings when she said:

I came from a place where no one wanted to go...where a visitor was turned into a pebble on setting foot there; somehow it made me ashamed to come from a place where the only thing to be said about it was “I had fun when I was there.”
(65)

Lucy could not understand what she wanted until she came to America. She was sent to America to work which she hated from the beginning. Running away from her family or homeland was never her dream. Rather she wanted to fight it out in her classes or with her family. But once in America, though sad and angry at the beginning, she adjusted to the beauty and grandeur of the people and place. But no sooner did she experience the gap between Whites and Blacks which is a part of American life only then could she understand the inferior status she held in America amidst the Whites. To Lucy, both, Europeans and Americans seem similar. Because of the baggage—both emotional and intellectual—that she carries, her fights appear to be with herself, with her motherland and at another level with America. She makes clear that:

My past was my mother; I could hear her voice...she spoke to me in language anyone female could understand. And I was undeniably that—female...I was not like my mother—I was my mother. (90)

Here, the fact not only remains limited to her original mother but also Antigua, her motherland. Lucy felt that it is only with her intelligence and personal space she can build a life of her own. She considers her upbringing a failure on her mother's part who disregarded her talent and intelligence. She repeatedly refuses to imagine herself as her mother's daughter. Having seen the drawbacks in others, black or white, she wants to model herself on nobody but herself. Lucy looks toward a new beginning by fending for herself:

My life could not really be explained by this thick book that made my hands hurt as I tried to keep it open. My life was at once something more simple and more complicated...for...half of my life, I had been mourning the end of a love affair, perhaps the only true love in my whole life. (132)

Neither Mariah's explanation of life nor her own mother's could suffice her need. Lucy is resistant to both, without a viable option. All she knows is that she has to look out for herself. She cannot connect with others. She knows within herself, that there is a need to move ahead from such a situation which would otherwise crush her individuality.

Lucy knows that the only way out is for her to strike out on her own by "inventing" or even reinventing herself. She has to resist stereotypes and dominating structures:

I did not have position...money at my disposal. I had memory...anger...despair ...I was born on an island, a very small island...yet when I left it at nineteen years of age I had never set foot on three-quarters of it. (134)

She realizes that she had not had much scope to see the world around her, including her island. Anger and pain overburden her from where it becomes difficult for her to decide on a path to follow. She believes that Antigua holds no great future for her with the dominance of the Whites, and neither can America promise her anything better. She refuses to be civilized after the White fashion neither in Antigua nor in America.

Jamaica Kincaid builds Lucy as one such character whose life is embedded with darkness, despair and gloom and it is from that deep dark life, Lucy emerges as one strong individual refuting everything at the end:

Both literally and figuratively, Lucy uses contigual mobility to resist the circumscription of her identity. The novel can be read as a series of attempts to fix Lucy's identity countered by her own moves to undermine such an agenda: literally, she leaves behind places and relationships that threaten her unlimited movement. (Nichols 189)

She comes out of the injustices done to her race in the Caribbean and in America too. She struggles in both countries to ultimately free herself and achieve a position of in-betweenness. Lucy finally renames and baptizes herself, Lucy short for Lucifer. She will fight her own battles without any attempt at representation, Antiguan or American. She will be herself in a space of her own.

2

Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise* narrates a revolutionary story of resistance led by two Black women and their fight for abolition of slavery. The novel has its setting during and after the Civil war and shows how the slave trade can be called an enterprise. *Free Enterprise* brings into light the character of Mary Ellen Peasant, a historical character, who is an entrepreneur, an abolitionist, an activist so to say. In the novel she runs a boarding house at San Francisco to offer shelter to people fleeing from unscrupulous traders as well as ordinary people requiring a place to stay. Apart from this she has her investment in

mining and real estate from 1850s to 1880s. She also quietly helps John Brown and other likeminded people with funds for their rescue and resistance activities—during the raid on Harpers Ferry and after. With her income from her restaurant which also serves as a boarding house, she supports the cause for abolition of slavery.

The novel is a reworking on the politics and social outlook of America. It looks at America from the point of view of the Blacks/African Americans/ Caribbean Americans/ Jews/Natives/lepers who had to suffer their cruel fates in America. Though the central voice is that of Mary Ellen Pleasant (MEP), a real historical character and Annie Christmas, a young Creole Jamaican immigrant who too like Pleasant had decided to dedicate her life for the cause of the slaves, there are many others like Rachel de Souza, a Jewish immigrant, Quasheba, mother of Pleasant, another strong woman, Captain Parson, Pleasant's father etc. who contributed to the framing and structuring of the undocumented truths of American history. Michelle Cliff draws upon the history of Pleasant's family to intertwine it with the narrative of the novel. She tries to foreground the 'unworthy' and ignored issues and find a place for them within the larger history of America.

Picking up a non-linear narrative with multiple voices in between 1858 to 1920, Cliff sets forth the stage with characters telling their story of survival, death and fear amidst slavery. Through her focus on the women characters who fight slavery, she tries to draw a comparison between the structures of colonialism in the Caribbean and in America. By offering the reader a story of flight and fight for survival, Cliff reopens vistas of undocumented truth. Annie Christmas is one such central character who flees Jamaica and her mother's commands. She renames herself and joins Mary Ellen Pleasant as an activist in their common pursuit. Both of them plan together to reach Harper's Ferry, help and take part in John Brown's raid, but fail. Then, after the unsuccessful raid they part ways and in their own way work for racial justice.

In the case of Pleasant, her role in the Harper's Ferry was not clearly recognized and that is why Pleasant wanted it to be inscribed in her tombstone by declaring, "Friend of John Brown" (*Free Enterprise* 18). On the other hand, Annie had to suffer as a prisoner and was recognized in the raid. Her jailers, as a part of their entertainment had her raped by her fellow prisoners. Later, Pleasant returns to San Francisco and Annie lives in a cabin by the banks of Mississippi, Louisiana, like a hermit, helping the outcasts from the nearby leper colony.

The novel contains several layered stories of oppression in America against many classes. Pleasant herself was one historical character whose father was a sea-captain and a slave who fled from slavery in Jamaica. Her mother too fled at a young age from the South. Pleasant narrated her life story in the form of letters written but not sent to Alice Hooper, another wealthy abolitionist and Annie Christmas. Pleasant's business actually served as shelter for runaway slaves. Though she was labelled with many names, like 'voodoo queen', 'Mammy Pleasant', 'zombie', etc., Pleasant was not easy to define as a particular type (18). In the novel she is presented as an entrepreneur and not just as the historical Pleasant.

Cliff's draws Annie Christmas, the powerful black woman on the Mississippi as a reflection of Mary Ellen Pleasant. Though Annie is different, Cliff attempts to replicate Annie's character more as a foil to Pleasant. Annie Christmas lives a lonely life in her later days on the bank of Mississippi. She stood for all those who ran away from slavery. Her cabin by the river was her universe from where she remained connected to all the other strong and weak slaves. She had completely cut herself off from the Caribbean, her family and the city life of America and devoted herself to the larger community of slaves and former slaves. Unlike all her siblings who never felt the need to follow her cause or help anyone, Annie was adamant to lead her people, especially the ones who suffer the most, from the front.

Annie's mother wanted her to take up a business of lace making and go for proper convent education from where she can lead her people or else she will bring disgrace to her people. But Annie chose to lead her people in a different way:

She'd turned her back on her people, all right, but not in the way her mother meant it. She fell into the movement on the mainland, believing the island to be without hope...Believing also, although she hated to admit it, that she was not strong enough to resist on home ground; it over-whelmed her. (10)

In this way, Annie started her revolution with her 'own escape'. At the outset it was quite difficult for her to leave her people and lead a different path, but she had her zeal to come away from the Caribbean like one Harriet and Ellen Craft, who left their motherland in search of a new place.

Annie renamed herself as Annie Christmas once out of home. She was christened Regina, which she discarded. Annie, though light skinned, prefers to join the revolutionary group for the betterment of her fellow brothers. She denied her somewhat better condition at home and decides only to fight for the abolition of slavery. When the novel begins, it is a grown up Annie one meet as readers from where she recalls her past connections with many from the abolitionist group especially, Mary Ellen Pleasant.

Another emblematic concept that Annie adopted in her cabin/new home by the Mississippi was hanging glass bottles:

In front [of her house], forming a crescent, were live oak and mimosa and cypress trees, each branch bearing bottles she had fixed there herself....Trees adorned with Moxie, Dr Pepper. Royal Crown. Milk of Magnesia. Frank's Louisiana Hot Sauce. Coca-Cola. Jamaica Ginger Beer. Electric Bitters. Lea & Perrin. Hood's Nerve Tonic. Major Grey. Sal Hepatica. Aunt Sally's Witch Hazel. Bogle's Bay Rum. Mr. Bone's Liquid Blackener. Khus-Khus Original African Scent....A chaos of residue...Ingredients from here, there, and everywhere. (4-5)

These bottles ranged from skin darkener to soda bottles. Their tingling sound in the wind reminds her of the colonial regime and when it merges with the sound of the river it creates a new sound hoping for a new world. These bottles were the connecting links or even reminders of all the people she had helped and who had moved on. They were, also remnants of her Caribbean community, in America.

Living “on the very edge”, Annie lived like one in a hermitage (3). But this life appealed her as she was consciously and actively involved in establishing and building global connections to resist slavery. Her active participation with the abolitionist cause and helping Mary Ellen Pleasant in the raid gave her the energy and spirit to fight for her people in the later part of her life. Though her’s and Pleasant’s ways were different after the unsuccessful Harper Ferry raid, yet she remained rooted to the cause of the slaves.

Annie’s yearning for her homeland was there, but the present call of her people, to rescue them for a life time was more of an urgent need. She knew her people were both “a bit of both”, slave and free (25):

Never settled, never at home on the continent to the north, even after a lifetime in exile there, Annie Christmas thought of her island each day of her life...She thought every now and then of returning....It was her fantasy, and she knew it, that there was a solution to the placelessness which had always been hers, even as a girl behind her mother's skirts. (19)

Annie tries to control her feelings in the face of adversity in front of her. The challenge and the cause she was a part of made her strong enough to bear the distance from her family and nation. She yearns for her erstwhile homeland but knows that there is no going back, caught as she is in the important work of saving lives.

Her strong connection to this abolitionist movement started when she met Mary Ellen Pleasant at the 'Free Enterprise', the name of the restaurant owned and run by Pleasant herself. It is from there her intentions became stronger than before. Later, Annie herself became an active member of it.

Mary Ellen Pleasant, the fictionalized historical character was also shown in a strong light by Cliff. Her strong self and determination in history is very clearly foregrounded by the writer. Mary Ellen Pleasant alias M.E.P was in herself a strong individual who secretly fought for the abolition of the slave trade across the world. She was born a slave in a plantation near Augusta, Georgia, and who later became a wealthy widow and settled in San Francisco. Pleasant runs a restaurant which she named 'Free Enterprise' which is a pun on the word, indicating the enterprise or the business of slave trade. It is through this business of the hotel, Pleasant helps the runaway slaves:

She began her empire building by embodying Mammydom, as much as she grated against the word, the notion, taking care of the guests in her hotels, washing their linen in her laundries, satisfying them in her restaurants. To further quell any unease that she was stepping across, over, and through, Mary Ellen Pleasant dressed as a dignified, unobtrusive house servant. (105)

In a very dignified way her restaurant catered to the needs of her White customers and the money earned from them is spend on the needs of the revolutionary group who were working as a part of the abolitionist cause.

Pleasant, not to overlook was framed into such a strong personality by her mother, Quasheba who taught her daughter to take up a revolutionary urge. She was a revolutionary figure who died fighting for her people. She wanted Pleasant to continue the path and had passed on to her daughter the revolutionary zeal. Pleasant was also given a hand-wrought revolver by her mother, which she always kept with her:

Quasheba taught her daughter the need for movement, even as a woman, especially as a woman. Movement in the sense of moving against, against, and toward, and away, and across, but not in circles, that was the danger, to go around and around and around. (126)

It is this strength from her mother that forces Pleasant to move forward and take every risk for the sake of her people. Also Pleasant's father too with his free status and some wit of his own rescued a barrel full of slaves from a ship. Pleasant with such parents as her mentors, decides a life, where under her real self she hides her agendas, from where she helps the distressed slaves.

One of her major initiatives was to help fund John Brown to raid Harper's Ferry. John Brown was born in Connecticut and was strongly against slavery. He independently did everything possible to help the runaway slaves:

John Brown is written down in the history books as a madman, fanatic, whose last sentiment act on the way to the gallows was to kiss a black baby; none of which is true. (193)

Mary Ellen Pleasant helped him with thirty thousand dollars to buy fifteen thousand rifles to raid the Harpers Ferry which was carrying slaves in it. Pleasant and Annie Christmas helped Brown to transport wagons of guns to the Ferry.

Another name worthy of mention like John Brown is that of Malcolm X who in the 1960s fought for the Civil rights of Black Americans. It may be mentioned that both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were assassinated within a couple of years of each other. This draws attention to their personal sacrifice and the movements they led for Black rights in America. In the context of the novel, the writer implies that as an abolitionist, Mary Ellen Pleasant's name should have been recorded somewhere alongside the men.

Pleasant had been rather open in her support of John Brown and the characters in the present context of the novel celebrate her memory as “Dedicated fighter in the Cause, Mother of Freedom, Warrior and Entrepreneur,” who had given her lifetime’s efforts towards mitigation of the ill effects of slavery and colonialism (203). Somewhere history and official records failed or willingly never accepted or acknowledged the feat of Pleasant and her role in the movement. After the failure of the raid, Pleasant barely managed to escape to San Francisco by passing off as a blacksmith. She refused to give up even after the defeat. Her only comfort was the fact that at least they had fought. “There was war at least” (193). Pleasant was instead charged as a witch, casting spells with her one blue eye and her one black eye, poisoning the city water supply, wreaking havoc at the stock exchange, souring the milk of nursing mothers. (203)

Such strong and powerful characters like Pleasant were relegated to the background as there was little space for recognition of women activists. By fictionalizing Mary’s character Cliff wants to give it new life and contours of meaning in the novel. History intentionally at times obliterates such names and facts and Mary Ellen Pleasant is one such. As such, sometimes fictionalizing history reveals hidden and unsaid truths.

Given the silence and silencing of history in the case of Mary Pleasant, Cliff’s efforts to breathe life into her character shows how fiction writers can contribute to the foregrounding of facts and focusing on long buried stories and memories about their service to humanity. As pointed out by Dunick:

Cliff’s novel revises traditional modes of history by suggesting that fiction can function as a mode of historicity, because they are able to enact a recording of national identity....However, viewing Cliff’s text simply as another example of the novel representing or containing a historical record means falling into the trap of not recognizing the oppressive regime that History conflated with Literature may represent. (“The Dialogic of Diaspora” 40)

Free Enterprise does not only act as a type of replacement for those histories which erased personalities like Pleasant. Rather, it tends to bring to focus characters like Pleasant who alone and independently could do so much for the abolition of slavery. Cliff wants to remind the reader of Mary Pleasant as both a character and a real life activist who fought against heavy odds for others.

Also to mention the famous painting of Joseph Turner, “Slaves Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying-Typhoon Coming On” is another emblematic movement inscribed in the text by Michelle Cliff. Through the character of Pleasant, who while journeying on a ferry writes letters to Annie and the pictures serving its background has a lot more to tell. The violent history of the slave trade and the upheaval in the mind of Pleasant swing together at this moment in the text. By drawing upon both literature and art at the same moment to describe the deep history of the slave trade, Cliff ensures that she contributes her little bit to preserving and celebrating the life and work of Mary Ellen Pleasant. *Free Enterprise* works as key to the secretive agendas of the Whites in the business of slave trading in America. In the words of Edouard Glissant:

The Slave Trade came through...the slave ship....African languages became deterritorialized, thus contributing to creolization in the West...The only written thing on slave ships was the account book listing the exchange value of slaves. Within the ship's space the cry of those deported was stifled, as it would be in the realm of the Plantations. (*Poetics of Relation* 05)

Glissant’s words voice the truth behind the slave trade. It is this enterprise of human beings and the accounts of their lives that Cliff wanted to shed light on. The human enterprise or human traffic is what Mary Ellen Pleasant wanted to end.

By locating her characters in a historical setup, Michelle Cliff is trying to contest the historical falsities laid forth by the Western or American world. Cliff by bringing in a real historical character vis a vis a strong fictional character with other minor characters tries to challenge the dominant enterprise of slavery controlled by the Whites. *Free Enterprise* addresses the power politics behind slavery and its commercial aspects.

In *Free Enterprise*, Cliff adopts the method of story-telling, letter writing and a sort of passing on the stories of slavery and its aftermath. She gives her readers a strong character in the role of historical Mary Ellen Pleasant (M.E.P) and fictional Annie Christmas and various other unnamed ones who fought for their people. They are not one individualized character; they could be any one who came to America from their homeland, the Caribbean with an aim. This time it was not any individual’s wish of getting settled in America with many positive perspectives towards life to earn a hefty living, but it was a fight for a cause. Abolition of slavery and the slave trade was their only aim. They

lived for their people. Their lives were sacrificed to shut off the free enterprise of slavery. The multitude of voices that speaks from the novel raises a concern for the Blacks in America.

Michelle Cliff's fiction acts as a form of resistance to the official version of history writing. The marginalized or silenced voices, like many fictionalized Annie Christmases who silently fight against the slave trade and associated activities are simply denied their moment in history. The only hope of revival is provided by fiction or fictionalized histories.

3

Angie Cruz's *Soledad* is another story of resistance towards the Dominican parentage, culture, roots and acceptance of the American standards of life. A stark duality is highlighted in the character of Soledad, who was born in New York and lives apart from her mother. She gets a scholarship to attend Cooper Union as an art student, and a job at an art gallery in her spare time. While Soledad had her freedom as an art student and managed to make a life for herself away from home, it was in no way comfortable or her dwelling place decent.

On being called back home to nurse her mother, Olivia who was physically and mentally a bit unstable, or can be said to be in a spiritual coma where she sleeps, sleep walks, dreams odd things, Soledad was not very eager to go and attend to her. It was planned by her grandmother, Dona Sosa and Aunt, Tia Gorda to bring back Soledad to 164th Street Washington Heights, where they stayed after the whole family migrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic after Trujillo's assassination in May, 1961. It took two weeks for Soledad to visit her home even after she learns of the seriousness of her mother's condition. Unlike Soledad, her younger cousin Flaca, who was raised in America, embraces the Dominican heritage quite happily. She is placed in opposition to Soledad's character in the narrative.

Angie Cruz, by drawing a parallel between both the characters, tries to show how two girls brought up in America, of Dominican origins, can be poles apart in their views regarding life and their choices. Also, very tacitly, Angie Cruz shows how despite Flaca's adamant acceptance of everything Dominican, she still remains unconsciously attached to

the American ways of life. This resistance to Caribbean ways, open or tacit, shows their openness to the American ways of life.

Soledad had the desire to assimilate into the American culture and leave her Dominican roots which was only attached to her through her mother. 164th Street, Washington Heights was inhabited by many migrants like them. The moment she enters the locality, Soledad considers it demeaning to have entered it with all its dirt, noise, squalor, humidity etc. She considers her stay in Washington Heights as a 'prison sentence' (*Soledad 3*). Her job at the art gallery and her time spent at Cooper Union had exposed her to a world at odds with the neighbourhood where she had grown up. She preferred to stay in an area where she would not be judged as a Dominican. But the manipulative call from her grandmother regarding her mother forces her to leave her wishes mid-way and go back to the home she had left behind.

Soledad even fantasizes that her mother is dead. Her life in America, her job at the art gallery appeared to be under threat if she were to go back and stay with her family. Her family, especially her mother, Olivia, pulls her back to a space she wants to free of:

I fantasized about finding my mother dead. I dreamed her in accidents...slipping in the tub and accidentally stabbing her head....I thought I was switched at birth, hoping my real mother would one day appear at the door to take me away....I don't look like my mother....(*Soledad 6*)

Soledad has such strong feelings of antipathy towards her relatives that she starts to hate anything Caribbean. Her experiences as a child make her dislike her parents and the culture they represent. Her confused feelings and her antipathy to home life make her reject her own roots and culture, her homeland and her family.

Her life at Cooper Union, initially, when she was selected as a student with full scholarship for having so much talent and later the job at the art gallery, were a milestone for her. From the day she left Washington Heights, she left all her leanings for the Dominican Republic. The feeling to be in America and being well established was so deep in her, that can be felt and understood when she left her mother with her grandmother to pursue her dreams:

That I was going to a place far away from my mother...I was an artist, lucky to be selected from thousands of artists to attend Cooper Union...that found me a job at an art gallery...for being accepted as an art student with a full scholarship and having so much talent. (8)

Soledad left her mother in this way only to pursue her dreams. Within her, Soledad had that zeal to accomplish something in America. She desired to excel amongst the Americans at any cost. Family ties did not weigh much on her and she could very well dissipate emotions and feelings that hampered her growth.

But not for long was Soledad allowed to fulfill her dreams in America. Soledad was called a “blanquita”, meaning a female Caribbean, “a sellout”, “a wannabe white girl” which rather tormented her (2-3). She chose the American life to be at par with the White culture.

By mapping herself as part of the American landscape she is trying to create her own individuality, alongside the Americans. She resists any identification with her mother or her motherland. Soledad is trying to create for herself an alternate home in America through her work at the art gallery, a new identity, a new home all for herself. She does not want any associations with her immigrant status.

By providing an unsentimental outlook of Soledad towards her family, which is otherwise very central to Caribbean American migrants, Angie Cruz delves at a level from where she tries to show that not all migrants prefer to go back. Neither, as readers can one surely say that Soledad hated her mother or her motherland. But the desire to mingle in America and raise her level of living was so rich that she cannot think to leave New York. It took her two weeks to return to her mother even after being reported of her mother’s poor physical health.

The narrative forces one to look at Soledad as one who prefers to identify herself with America. Her search for home is not her homeland but America. She fails to share any emotional attachment to her ancestral land and has no desire to return to her homeland. She even resists frequent reconnections with her homeland and hence psychologically distances herself.

When later, Soledad was called by grandmother to nurse her mother, it occurred to her a forced call. She could not in any way heal her mother's illness. Also she could not accept the ways in which her grandmother was trying to heal her mother with some irrational methods instead of taking her to a physician or buying her medicines from a pharmacy.

Soledad's frequent and clear narrative regarding an alternative home is in itself an act of resistance towards being designated as Caribbean. Her resistance to Dominican culture and the extreme repulsion towards anything Dominican, clearly shows how much she desires to be recognized as American. She is equally unhappy about Washington Heights, the locality in New York, as it is full of people from the Dominican Republic. She has little feeling for the home she grew up in Washington Heights, as she is constantly reminded of her parents' and neighbours' Dominican cultural practices. Instead, Soledad tries to shape an identity for herself as an American.

Soledad's desire to fit in American standards, is supported by life as an art student on a scholarship at Cooper Union and her job in the art gallery that the Admissions Director helps her to find. Despite the congested accommodation in East Village and the poverty, she is still able to be herself. It is where she can claim to be American, without overwhelming reminders of her former neighbourhood and her relatives.

In the novel, the forced return of Soledad is only a reconnection of the mother and the daughter. The ultimate deterioration of Olivia, tames the otherwise unruly mind of Soledad. The only cure to her mother's health is taking Olivia to the Dominican Republic to perform some rituals in water inside a cave. The family could only find this belief in their homeland as the only solution to Olivia's health which does not respond to any other medicine. The constant dream sleep state Olivia has been facing for long is affecting Olivia to a state from where recovery seems a difficult and far away path. Her inner turmoil and her past are affecting her to the core of her nerves. She is struggling for survival. Her past encounters with different men in Puerto Plata when she was facing pangs of poverty constantly troubles her present. She was even unsure with who Soledad's real father was. A series of negative images revolves her and she is overpowered by them:

I am filling myself with hope that one day I can return to Dominican Republic...
Hoping for the day Soledad finds comfort in her own skin. ... Maybe she is holding

something back from me like I have done with her. Maybe if I wait here in this bed she will tell me so I can help her. (69)

Olivia was somewhere guilty of hiding the facts from Soledad regarding her real father. She feels she weighs high on her mother and father and rest of the family. Her degrading physical condition has forced everyone to be beside her. She yearns to go back to the Dominican Republic and feels only its ambience can heal her.

But repeated dream images and sleep disturbances of Olivia was only worsening her condition and affecting her. Soledad could only realize the traumatic condition of her mother when she saw the list of descriptions of unknown men who visited Olivia. It was then she understood the situation her mother underwent. Acting as prostitute for livelihood and then getting pregnant with some unknown man, made her all the more worse. Top on that, later her husband, Manolo could not accept her with Soledad. After these, Soledad is only left to realize that Olivia should be taken to the Dominican Republic which is the only rescue left and with some irrational (according to her) healing she can be nursed back to health. This was the last hope even Soledad had to succumb to.

Though initially, she was not eager to accompany her mother, but then she willingly decided to go and complete the entire cure her mother needed at that moment. In this, Soledad is seen as one who cannot resist despite her disagreement with the Dominican culture but once she reached the Dominican Republic, Soledad had a totally different experience.

It is there, one can have a view of a totally different character of Soledad who was enthralled by the deep waters inside the cave where they tried the rituals to cleanse Olivia of the pain and suffering. In this cleansing process, one also encounters a sight where Soledad is seen suddenly jumping into the water and undergoing a process of epiphany where she realizes her real self, and the bond between herself and Olivia, the bond which she was unable to get connected for all her life. She could find solace and answers to all the doubts she held within herself all throughout her life.

But before that the thought of returning to the Dominican Republic even if it is for healing was quite unacceptable to Soledad. Rather she wanted to go to Europe and see the world:

Soledad: No way. Before I go to D.R. I'd go to Europe. ...To see the world. Gorda: Europe is not the world.

Soledad: Dominican Republic isn't either.

Gorda: But it's a big part of your imagination. And that's your world. (127)

Soledad's main aim was to soar high in life which is possible only if she leaves the Dominican Republic and being Dominican.

There was a certain fear in her about the Dominican Republic. It even scares her in dreams. She cannot imagine her life in out there:

Sometimes I have nightmares about it, where I somehow land in Dominican Republic and I have no papers to get out of the country, no extra clothes to wear and I need to go to the bathroom but the toilets don't flush. (ibid)

Soledad despises her motherland so much that it terrorizes her. It is only a distant image of her roots which she is not ready to accept.

Soledad was able to decipher her feelings to Gorda before the trip she made to the Dominican Republic. Her distancing from her mother, family and the whole race of Dominicans can be understood when she says:

Gorda, all my life I've wondered why I am the way I am. I never wanted to be like my father...Mami always looked so unhappy, hiding, and pretending to be so strong to save me from her pain....she pushed me farther away from her, until she didn't have to push anymore. I just left. But this is my chance to give me and her another way to live free from all this crap. (206)

Soledad undertook this journey to the Dominican Republic only to heal. But there was no community or homeland feeling involved. The urgent and only cure left her with no other alternative.

Though the cure as Angie Cruz provides seems successful for both Olivia and also Soledad, yet the author has also made it clear how despising the Dominican Republic was for Soledad. How the moment she entered the place, she had the worse feeling about

the people the place:

The thought of going to D.R. all by myself is terrifying. With my mother even worse. I remember the way people ask for so much...Just send a small TV...my jewellery, my clothes...I will have to give it to them because you can't say no to family. They will want me to watch them kill the goat in the backyard. (207)

All these repel her from visiting the Dominican Republic. Their raw and poor life, untouched by modernity fails to relate her to them. Soledad on the opposite yearns for a modern life which adheres to the American way of life and culture. Even her grandmother's house at Washington Heights is a temporary one with her Aunt Gorda and Uncle Victor. They settled there only to earn some money and return to the Dominican Republic. They never considered it their home.

But, finally Soledad understands why the family had to migrate to America after the economic crisis in the Dominican Republic and how they could not go back to their homeland since they sold their lands to come to America. Also, why Olivia had to hide so many things from Soledad about her past, from her days in Puerto Plata, to her first days of settlement in America when she had to make a living through prostitution. She had told people back home that she worked in the tourism sector. In addition to these, how she got pregnant with Soledad and cannot exactly recall her father. All these memories from her first day in America to not being able to go back to the Dominican Republic, left Olivia all broken physically and in a mental void from which she cannot come out. Her temporary stay in America forced her to live there for a life time and it is then she decides for a good life with education for Soledad. She at the same time was unable to bear her husband, Manolo's repeated torture and she forced him outside the window of the apartment thereby killing him. All these experiences of Olivia converted her to one spoiled in mind and soul from where the return was not possible from her end. It is then, Gorda and Dona Sosa decide to take her back to the Dominican Republic to enable her to find some healing and closure.

Flaca, Soledad's cousin, unlike Soledad, though born in America could not adapt herself fully to the American culture. While she is drawn towards American fast food, American movies, English TV programmes, at the same time she is rooted in the Dominican culture much unlike Soledad. Her liking toward American things was there

because of the constant things she gets by her side. But, she has in her the dominant Dominican trait in contrast to Soledad. Even Richie, one boy from the neighbourhood whom both Soledad and Flaca likes, who is also a Dominican American and is educated and has keen interest in music, can control or balance his feelings for both the Dominican Republic and America. He does not, like Flaca only embrace Dominican life and culture but also develops himself as an individual in the American society. Richie never fails to accept his Dominican heritage or disregard his stay at Washington Heights. He was also not fully like Soledad preferring only the American mainstream while refusing to accept or get acknowledged being a Dominican American. Whereas, Soledad takes education as an opportunity to leave the neighbourhood, Richie at the same time embraces both, he does not try to escape either. He presents shades of hybridity at variance from both Flaca and Soledad.

Nevertheless, Angie Cruz made it explicit through the character of Soledad that despite family pressure she was somehow unable to detach herself from the American life. She resisted being designated as a Dominican. Though at the end she went through the spiritual healing in the Dominican Republic beside Olivia, where she could recognize the roots of her family and can attain that mental peace, yet Angie Cruz nowhere makes it clear if Soledad fully accepted the Dominican heritage and escaped the American. It is the gap between herself and her mother and the family that is bridged but Soledad could not resist her American self.

4

Angie Cruz's *Let It Rain Coffee* is another immigrant family's story where diverse resistance strategies are seen. If one generation tries to resist the American life, the other refuses to accept the Caribbean. Centering on the story of a Chinese-Dominican father, Don Chan Lee Colon de Juan Dolio who was originally a Chinese/Asian boy found in the shores of Juan Dolio at the age of six by one Don Jose Colon who later adopted him and thus named him as such. Don Chan married his adopted sister Dona Caridad, whom he met when she was four years old. The novel also deals with next generation of Don Chan's son, Santo, his wife, Esperanza and their children, Bobby and Dallas. The novel initially shows the family of Santo, his wife and his children who migrated and settled in New York and trying to adjust their lives accordingly. It is Esperanza, who had a strong hold over her family and tries to control them according to her wishes. She wanted a

good life for her family amidst America and always wanted to soar high like her father who supported Trujillo when the latter was in power and after his death was scared to live there. Having the opportunist trait in her, she too always wanted to get herself out of the Dominican Republic (D.R.) and settle in America. Don Chan never approved of her and Santo's marriage. It was much against his wish they married and then migrated to America. Don Chan was of the belief that if it had not been for Esperanza, then Santo would have survived quite well in the Dominican Republic and would have been active with the revolutionary zeal, which was quite strong in him. There was also a time when he and Santo were quite active in their fight against Trujillo on the Dominican soil. But now after his marriage, Esperanza is one kind of supreme authority over him.

Don Chan after Dona Caridad's death which was quite unbearable to him was called by his son to New York. This was in fact a very difficult decision for him. His old worn out house in the Dominican Republic was dear to him as much as the nation. He felt:

Many from the valley had taken off to live in the developing cities in search of jobs, but Don Chan and Dona Caridad stayed behind. I can't close my eyes without the city coming back and spitting on me, he said to the younger folk who accused him of being afraid of change. (*Let It* 01)

To Don Chan, the Dominican Republic was more than his own home. He could not think of an identity apart from his land. Howsoever dreadful the Dominican Republic might turn to him, he will stay rooted to it.

Don Chan is shown in a very different and strong light by Angie Cruz. Don Chan who was actually one minority amongst the marginalized fought hard for the betterment of his nation. He could so well relate himself with the soil that he was proposed by the people to contest in the elections. But, Don Chan believed in leading the people together. He with quite seriousness and also with the involvement of Miraluz, one revolutionary educated young lady, along with his son, Santo led the people of Los Llanos, D.R. against Trujillo and the American superpower.

Don Chan was instilled this legacy of country love from the moment he was adopted by Don Jose Colon, a poor Afro-Dominican. Don Chan was made aware of the several nationalists who fought for the Dominican Republic. Don Jose wanted Don Chan

to carry on the tradition of country love so that his looks never become judgmental in front of others. He wants his adopted son to be so engrossed in the love of the people and the race so that people cannot question his racial identity. With these thoughts instilled in him, Don Chan without worrying of his Asian lineage carried forward the love for his countrymen, the Dominicans. In the process of getting involved with the nation and its people, Don Chan became a politically active insider amongst the people of Los Llanos.

Angie Cruz by enabling one such character as Don Chan take the lead role in the struggle for independence of Dominican warfare, highlights one historical aspect of resistance, where in reality, maybe such personalities were there. His insights on leading the poor farming class whom he called the “invisible ones” to the level of engaging them through talks and techniques is in itself a strong power of Don Chan over his people (60). He even went to the extent of stealing one object, a knife from the national palace to show how he can go above security and power as and when required for his fellow beings. He also makes people aware of their voting rights, and with the help of Miraluz urged them to go to Santo Domingo and vote for their candidate.

Another small but significant incident glorifying his character was the sudden finding of the sealed aluminum soup pot by Don Chan which when deeply seen contains a lot of money hidden inside it. With this money in hand, Don Chan decides to release the land of all in Los Llanos.

Angie Cruz by showcasing one very different character is trying to give voice to the minority amongst the marginalized. Don Chan’s character is crafted with such acuteness that a reader tends to sympathize with the old man in whom innocence brims and after his wife’s death one cannot but have full compassion with him.

Quite opposite to Don Chan’s character who resisted the foreign pressure while in the Dominican Republic and never thought of leaving his land until left alone after his wife’s death, is the character of Esperanza. Esperanza saw life in its glitter and awe only in America. She dreamt to go to Dallas some day. It was she who forced Santo to migrate to America. She herself took up the job of a home aid and Santo that of a cab driver. Despite such low profile works, America seemed welcoming to her. She was also able to convince Santo of the challenging and beautiful life America had to offer to them:

To Esperanza, New York City had always been Nueva York—an oasis of opportunity.... She didn't think twice about the threat of nuclear war, the stock market crashing, the lack of trees, or the fact that the streets had the smell of an impossible dream. (09)

Rather, New York was only one place where she feels she can change herself and family for good. She even changed her son's name from Roberto Maria to Bobby and named her daughter as Dallas because she wanted her to fly. Esperanza is quite a stark contrast to Don Chan's character. She cannot embrace anything Dominican.

According to Don Chan, "Esperanza wouldn't have risked her life to save her country from Trujillo. No, no, Esperanza was more like a moth. Attracted to the lightbulb, plain and pesty" (13). The power and pain he underwent to make Santo realize the same when the latter was young was all changed and ended the moment Santo fell in love with Esperanza. Esperanza's father supported Trujillo which suggested that even in the Dominican Republic they were not at par with the "invisible one", the poor folk of Los Llanos. Esperanza's flight from the D.R. is in itself a belittling attitude:

Esperanza hid out in the bushes...befriending the other passengers who shared their food with her...No one whispered words of fear. They knew there was no turning back. All seventy-eight travelers took the journey into the unknown...Esperanza didn't think about how her departure would make Santo feel, or that she might never see her son again. She looked at the horizon. (18)

She had her dream tied on to her to be in New York, no matter what. She left her son and husband and took on a sudden journey to New York to chase her dreams. She did not think twice of her family before leaving for America. It is then, Don Chan had to send Santo after her. Don Chan was quite sure regarding the opportunist trait she possessed that she inherited from her father.

Later, after Don Chan's coming over to New York much against his wish, Santo's earlier vigor rejuvenated. With his revolutionary father in front of him, Santo felt like going back to his people, his homeland, the Dominican Republic. The urge, the fire which for so long had been burning inside him was again ignited once his father is with him. Whereas, Esperanza like before never approves of the D.R. Rather, she wanted her family to take up

a family trip somewhere else because they had not gone anywhere after they came to New York.

But Santo, overtaken by a strong urge to return to the Dominican Republic, decides that he could not face any more of New York. He is reminded of the people of Los Llanos and regrets his absence for the last ten years. Santo decides that he has to convince Esperanza to leave New York that they do not belong there:

That he wanted to go home. It wasn't his father's fault...But he didn't do anything more than remind Santo of what he had forgotten about himself. That he hates the cold weather...If he was going to waste away his life struggling in Nueva York, why not in Los Llanos, where at least people understood him when he spoke. (77)

Finally, Santo decides his move towards the Dominican Republic with strong disapproval from Esperanza. But to his utter fate, he was robbed and killed on a riverside drive.

After Santo's death, the whole family fragmented. Don Chan was losing his sanity and started to forget things and Esperanza as always was busy in feeding her family by working as a home attendant. After working for a long time, now she holds a credit card whose bills are quite unpaid, and then there is Bobby who was arrested and jailed as a juvenile delinquent on possession of a deadly weapon and assault with the same, and there is Dallas growing on her own. The whole family is running on a broken line.

The dreams that Esperanza saw for her family in New York seems unfulfilled even after their arrival in New York. She did not want to live in any fear. Rather, she wanted a life where she can travel the world and have fun:

Esperanza had no intention of living like her father, who lived in fear when Trujillo was alive and had been even more afraid of him since his death.She wanted to travel. The study of maps was her favorite lesson in school, as well as the stories of people who took long journeys despite the odds. (165-166)

Her dreams and aspirations took its toll on her. She could not provide for a safe environment in New York for her children or her husband. Bobby's charge was purely accidental as he took the revolver from one of his White friend, Arnold to save Dallas and her friend Hush. Later on, Bobby was also ready to accept, Hush's newborn child, whose

father was not known to them. Also, Santo's death was also a big shock to the family as murders go in any fashion at New York. All these led to the fragility in her life which she was yet to understand.

Nevertheless, Esperanza looks forward to Don Chan no longer being alive so that she would be able to sell his property in Los Llanos and pay back all her debts in New York. She also plans to start saving for their new home. The land in Los Llanos holds no emotional ties for her. She was sure that "Los Llanos was never a place she could call home" (286). She has nothing to take her back to the Caribbean. Desire and a strong wish to be in New York, amidst the Whites was always Esperanza's need. Be it harsh or cruel she was ready to face life at all costs but not return to the Dominican Republic. Where, Don Chan and Santo were willing to grip down and resist Trujillo or the American dictates, Esperanza holds New York dear to her heart and resists being called a Dominican. Angie Cruz was delving at two traits of character, one who accepted the Caribbean and the other's strict avoidance of the same.

Thus, the characters in all the novels are seen as striking out on their own. Lucy wants to chart her own path in life by looking for an in-between space. In *Free Enterprise*, both Mary Ellen Pleasant and Anne Christmas prove to be great survivors despite the violence they are subjected to. Although they are separated by circumstances they continue their earlier project in different locations and on their own terms. In *Soledad*, the character by that name continues to resist complete immersion in her native Dominican culture despite the efforts of her aunt and grandmother to draw her interest. Cruz in this novel brings out the reactions of three different characters—Soledad, Richie and Flaca—as they negotiate a line between American and Dominican culture. Soledad takes her mother to her homeland and is happy to note some positive changes in her mother's bearings as she appears to respond to her daughter. However, Soledad is not willing to completely embrace Dominican tradition. In *Let it Rain Coffee*, the author allows the resistance put up by characters to American or Caribbean life to control their futures. Esperanza is all for New York whereas, her husband and father-in-law are committed to the Caribbean. In the case of the all the women characters their resistance to Caribbean colonialism and patriarchy or American hegemony is seen in gendered terms as they set out to define themselves and the lives of those around them.