# Chapter Five

# ‘Extra Dimensions’: Constructing ‘Homelands’ beyond Africa

I

In this chapter, the study examines representations of constructing a 'homeland' beyond Africa in new locations. Here, the focus is on novels that do not suggest a physical or literal desire for a 'return' to the past or ancestral roots in Africa or the Caribbean. In Tracy Fisher's terms, the novels instead move "beyond the homeland-exile dialectic" (67). To elaborate on this, the chapter will do a close reading of Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* (1998), Jenny McLeod's *Stuck up a Tree* (2005), Diana Evans' *The Wonder* (2009), Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012), Sarah Ladipo Manyika's *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* (2016) and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019). In this regard, we can refer to Stuart Hall who argues against using the term 'diaspora' to refer to "those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea" ("Diaspora" 235). Moreover, with the presence of black British identity as a powerful model of resistance, it is important to examine whether Africa still exclusively remains the metaphor for a source of identity. Thus, this chapter argues that for Black British writers, though Africa or the Caribbean functions as the embodied absent-present consciousness, it may not incite a 'return' to the geographical space, but to an individualised memory of the past that has become distorted in the process of migration. In congruence to this, the chapter observes that it is not a specific moment from the past or a specific image of the homeland that writers look back to, but those that are entangled with diverse other histories. For instance, as it will be examined in the chapter, Africa or the Caribbean is imagined through memories of Cuba, Wales, and Scotland. The chapter also examines that in the process of imagining a 'return' to areas beyond Africa or the Caribbean, black British women writers seek to "reinvent home in other spaces" and also consequently redefine "the migrant's sense of self" and belonging (Nasta, *Motherlands* 7, 26).

The narratives of journeying back or returning to the homeland, accompanied by mysticism, as discussed in Chapter Three, have played a significant role in shaping black British identity. In other cases, as analysed in Chapter Four, these journeys lack mysticism and therefore, further incapacitate the black British migrants from asserting their Self. Then, there are those like Charlotte Williams who, in her memoir *Sugar and Slate* (2002), discusses her repeated journeys back to Africa, and then to Guyana from

Wales, but rejects the idea of finding roots through a specifically defined route and in a particular geographical place. In her terms, "Alex Hayley had committed us all to the pilgrimage. I found myself thinking about all those African-Americans straight off the Pan-Am in their shades and khaki shorts treading the trail to the slave forts on the beaches of Ghana" (3). Williams' reference to 'Ghana', the 'slave forts' and 'Pan-Am', in a satirical tone, is also a direct indication of the recent 'back-to-Africa' projects that rely or are based on commercialized tourist agendas and implicitly illustrate an inclination towards the blacks in America. An instance of funding campaigns like *Help Send Us Back to* Africa and *Black and Abroad* can be cited here[1]. In their descriptions, both campaigns seem to extend their support to only those whose history in America or Europe lies in slavery. Those who voluntarily immigrated from Africa do not seem to be included in its appeal for funds. The campaign and its motives exclude the realities of black British immigrants, most of them who travelled during the post-war demand for labour. A binary is created here between those who have a history of settlement and those who recently immigrated. Thus, Williams' critique of Alex Haley patronizing the 'Pan-Am' discourse, shows her insistence on alternate strategies needed to address contemporary issues in the African diaspora. Williams, whose father, an acclaimed artist from Guyana and whose mother is Welsh, relates in her memoir her quest for identity as a black and a Welsh, not British, woman. She specifically, by recalling her childhood memories and connecting with her present experience of her paternal homeland, constructs an idyllic trans-racial picture, where she acknowledges the Afro/Caribbean-Welsh community existing in a village in Wales. Williams specifically mentions Llandudno as one of those places where racial intermixing has led not only to hybridity but also solidarity against the hegemony of English culture. She also states that the transnational connections she has are experienced primarily through a constant crossing of borders and re-discovering the collective histories. Regarding this, Williams asserts:

> We arrived into an exile; into a state of relocation that was both hers and his. And the journeys were more than physical journeys. They were travels across worlds of thinking, across generations of movements. These boat stories and seascapes, I now know, are part of a collective memory lying buried below the immediate moment. (7)

Similar to Williams' insistence on being "in-transit", Carol Boyce Davies, in her book *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (1994), introduces the concept of "migratory subjectivities" by detailing her mother's experiences and strategies of connecting space to identity. She states:

> My mother's journeys redefine space. Her annual migrations, between the Caribbean and the United States, are ones of persistent re-membering and re-connection. She lives in the Caribbean; she lives in the United States; she lives in America. She also lives in that in-between space that is neither here nor there, locating herself in the communities where her children, grandchildren, family and friends reside. (1)

Davies and Williams's observations, which lead to a convergence of places and cultures, are both related to re-shaping and re-negotiation of identities and can be contrasted with Grace Nichols' idea of a split consciousness affecting the exiles in black diaspora: "divided to de ocean/ divided to de bone". However, the idea of to-ing and fro-ing lies at the centre of these discussions on diasporic identities. Here, Williams also gives the instance of relatives who allow black migrants to create "wider family networks" and imagine "flexible family structures" (Scafe and Dunn 130). About such 'family networks', Williams states:

> There are those travelling outward from Georgetown. Like the wide-bottomed auntie who, despite the heat, is already dressed in her London coat, hand luggage straining at the seams to accommodate two dozen rock-hard mangoes, a jar of achar, and four bottles of XM rum – that little taste of Guyana for the relatives outside. (14)

These people, who "live in two places at once", are also seen as "mobile returnees" (Scafe and Dunn 129). The chapter essentially examines the influence of 'flexible family structures' that either defy the idea of family based on traditional heterosexual, monogamous relations or those that trace biological relations. Thus, the chapter argues that to build a sense of belonging in the host land, black British migrants create a 'Fantasy Africa', an Africa that constitutes an individualised memory or imaginative construction of the homeland. Remembering and forgetting form a crucial part of this practice of constructing an imaginary homeland, primarily through stories and objects

from the past. In the process, the black migrant characters reconcile with the unpleasant details of their past and form "family constellations" that are not defined by a specific genetic lineage (Ifekwunigwe 146).

The questions of who is 'black' or 'British' or 'black British' in the contemporary period have undergone a tremendous change since the technological development of DNA tests to trace one's ancestry. Paul Gilroy states this as an opportune moment in the evolution of the "meanings of racial difference" because it will possibly lead to the devolution of the hierarchies related to 'raciology' and generate trans-racial/transnational connections (*Against Race* 15). When Bernardine Evaristo talks about the "preoccupations in (her) DNA", in an interview with Michael Collins, she too indicates the fact that African/black history is enmeshed within the Western/European context and neither can be divulged from the other (1203). A decade later, her novel, *Girl, Woman, Other*, develops on this idea to show how Penelope, a white British woman who supports purist ideologies on whiteness and Britishness, traces her lineage back to a black woman named Hattie, who has inherited her father's Greenfields farmhouse in the Northumbrian countryside. Derek Purnell in her article "Do a DNA test to 'find out my roots'? That's complicated for a black woman like me" (2020) published in *The Guardian* appropriately points out that "this generation's Back to Africa movement starts with a swab and an envelope". However, while this has made it easier for people to trace their origins, its consequences are engulfed in suspicion and apprehension. Purnell points out that these DNA testing companies are owned by white people and therefore "black people are particularly vulnerable: our DNA is disproportionately collected, stored, planted and used against us in criminal proceedings…(which) heightens the risk for abuse…" Black people in Britain already have a long history of struggle against stereotypical constructions that portray them as intruders, outsiders, and even as perpetrators of disorder in society. Black British women writers actively engage with these issues in their novels by challenging the binary dichotomies constructed between the notion of blackness and Britishness or Englishness. The prominence of movement to urban areas forms a commonality in such novels. For instance, Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Othe*r opens in an urban setting as the narrator takes in the infrastructural beauty of London, the Waterloo Bridge, St Paul's dome, and then the National Theatre, where a black British woman Amma's play will be performed for the first time. Similarly, Joss Moody in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* migrates from a small town in Scotland

to Glasgow and then to London to seek a music career. Morayo in *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun*, who is married to a diplomat from Nigeria, travels to different countries around the world, but finally settles and feels at home in San Francisco. The opening description of the fast-paced life in San Francisco parallels the noisy, but vibrant environment of the megacity, Nigeria. By giving instances from the novels, the chapter observes that transnational and 'translocal' explorations of urban spaces enable black British women writers to re-imagine the city of London and establish their sense of belonging to it. Like in Williams' memoir, the notion of constantly traversing borders or boundaries lies at the centre of these discussions.

Contrastingly, Ekow Eshun's account in his memoir *Black Gold of the Sun*: *Searching for Home in England and Beyond* (2005), points out that a periodic to-ing and fro-ing to homeland may not necessarily incite the realization of a coherent black identity. It rather complicates an individual's understanding of his 'self' due to the absence of a stable idea of 'home'. Ekow's father was a Ghanaian diplomat and so, his repeated movement from his birthplace, Ghana to London and vice versa was due to the political unrest in his home country. As a consequence, it leads to financial strains and separation from his brother, which causes a deep impact on his socialization process. In associating the personal and social histories, Eshun decides that a 'return' to Ghana's past may bring him a sort of healing. However, on reaching the place, he discovers the history of his ancestors who were involved in the slave trade. He encounters the Big Men who police the everyday lives of ordinary residents. In a church, he also finds a priest fishing out money from devout Christians. After every encounter of such incidents, Eshun is filled with more repulsion and goes farther from the answer to the question, "Where are you from?", with which he begins the journey (1). Towards the end, when he reaches the Pikworo slave camp in Bolgatanga, situated in the upper east part of Ghana, Eshun realizes that he had never left Ghana and had embodied the past, that constituted the collective history of slavery including the military coup and subsequent violence. In context to this, while acknowledging Stuart Hall's argument of a 'deferred' return to the hybrid syncretic past of the Caribbean instead of Africa, the chapter argues that a performative and imaginary return to the cultural memory of Africa attests that it is deeply embedded in 'black carnivalized bodies'. Again, the idea of 'home' that is suggested by black queer migrants, conflates essentialised constructions of 'outsiders' in Britain as 'alien bodies' contaminating homogenised concepts of both Britishness and

Englishness. Concerning this, Afua Hirsch also comments in *Brit(ish)*: *On Race, Identity and Belonging* (2018) that "the 'English stock' or 'British nationality' in their imaginary notion of Britain was both untrue and irrelevant. Untrue because Britain has always been an immigrant nation". Instead, she states that the British identity should include the growing number of immigrants because they are its "core constituents". Hence, black British writers stress the aspect of fluidity and variability of an identity. Grace Nichols declares in one of her poems that "wherever I hang me knickers- that's my home" (*I Have* 659). Again, Charlotte Williams, too states: "I've been going and coming so long now I can hardly see that this itself is my return, nothing to do with the places at all. I guess this is home for me… 'Here,' I say tapping my forefinger on my temple" (187). This fluid image of home, as something erased from its permanent physicality, allows migrants, especially with mixed ancestry, to come to terms with their 'double consciousness' or identity of 'in-betweenness'. Instead of identities being located in one geographical location, the stress is on exploring moments between "somewhere and elsewhere" or being "in transit" (Williams 7). These ideas challenge the concept of home being restricted to specific spatial and temporal boundaries. Charlotte Williams pertinently describes these moments during her travel to Jamaica from the USA, when she is stuck in Piarco Airport in Trinidad, "eight hours from Manchester and one hour from Georgetown" (7). In context to this, the chapter explores how black British women writers problematize the idea of in-betweenness women by tapping on the complex ethnic identifications with Africanness, Caribbeannes, Scottishness, Welshness, and Englishness as part of a larger British identity. By doing so, the writers seek to intersect diverse black subject positions and re-determine "locations of Englishness" with black diasporic 'presences' (Baucom 4). In the novels, black British women writers perceive the English locale "as spaces of memory that alter the identities of the persons inhabiting, viewing, or passing through them, and that simultaneously suffer a sea change as wave after wave of empire's subjects wash over them" (Baucom 39). This results in the creation of 'extra dimensions' that function as liminal spaces for reassurance and a radical idea of hybridity. The Notting Hill Carnival, as one of the most dominant expressions of black culture in Britain, is considered a metaphor for problematizing the debates on multiculturalism, integrationist politics, and subsequent gentrification. Here, the chapter takes into account John McLeod's suggestion of the 'extra dimension' as a "progressive mode" or "new steps" of envisioning contemporary Britain for blacks and the idea of home ("Extra Dimensions" 48). In this way, black British writers construct an

image of "the contemporary nation as a post-racial space of linkages, synchronicities and equivalences that far surpasses the solipsism of cultural diversity, racial difference or narrow national exclusivity" (McLeod 48). Although the discourse of race and gender, in association with national identity and the creation of 'home' forms a major part of the discussion, the chapter has also explored the significance of Africa as part of an embodied social and political reality. Thus, based on the core arguments, the chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section deals with the significance of memory in diasporic spaces. The second involves an exploration of transnational and 'translocal' elements in the re-shaping of the city and the third section examines how black, queer migrant bodies re-create spaces of belonging and in a way critique multiculturalist politics of erasing 'differences' for the sake of endorsing a homogenised ethnic identity.

II

When Afua Hirsch opens *Brit(ish)* with a quote from Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* (1986) which states that "the ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned", she primarily points to the exiled lives that pervades most black migrants in Britain. As much as the quote indicates both the 'homing desire' and the 'nostalgia for home', in terms of Avtar Brah's categorization of diasporic experiences, there is also a sense of 'memory' playing a significant role in it. Memory, as an integral part of historical and political revisionism, has often been "gendered, appropriated, politicized, nationalized, medicalized, and aestheticized" (Hua 197). However, keeping in mind the hegemonic practice of active forgetting, silencing or selectively remembering repressed memories, the theorization of memory can act as a strategic tool to critique the linear mode of historical processes. In this regard, Anh Hua points out that "rather than mental imprints… memory is formed through elaborate mental mappings that change over time…memory does not revive the past but constructs it" (198). Hence, Hua contextualises "oppositional memorializing" with a gendered dynamic where individual memories of women are converted to a "collective remembrance" (201).

This theorization of memory and diaspora can be used to analyse Sarah Ladipo Manyika's *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* which deals with the experiences of a black woman named Morayo Da Silva in her mid-seventies. Manyika begins the novel with a quote from Ritesh Joginder Batra's *The Lunchbox* (2013) where the central

character states that: "I think we forget things if we have no one to tell them to". The protagonist, Morayo's story too can be seen as a narrative that is to be remembered as part of the collective stories that have been silenced. Battling with her aging body and failing eyesight, Morayo struggles to maintain her vivaciousness in congruence with the fast-paced cosmopolitan life in San Francisco. As a retired professor of English, Morayo boards in an old building, 500 Belgrave, which she claims is as "ancient" as herself (2). In her old age, her everyday routine includes checking important letters and getting elaborately dressed in traditional African clothes. It is in between her regular chores that the memories of Nigeria crop up. Morayo, whose name has origins in Yoruba, had travelled to various countries with Caesar, her ex-husband, and a Nigerian diplomat. Sandra Sousa, in her article "The Nigerian Diaspora in the United States and Afropolitanism in Sarah Ladipo Manyika's *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun*" (2019), specifically highlights Morayo's Afropolitanism as more than a "celebration of cultural hybridity and transnationalism" (39). Without simply reducing the concept to commercialisation, Sousa believes Manyika delivers a critical stance at it by including "subjective politics" in the character of the protagonist (48). Morayo's nostalgia for her home in Nigeria, rather than a "genuine desire of longing", presents the fact that her existence is divided into two planes – past and the present (Manyika 5). The former lives in her memory. When she leaves the UK to settle in San Francisco, she is constantly reminded of her birthplace Jo in Nigeria where she spent her childhood. Every time she wears a traditional African attire, the fragrance from the clothes metaphorically transports her to her homeland, reminding her of the "smell of Lagos markets still buried in the cotton – diesel fumes, hot palm oil, burning firewood" and "the flamboyance and craziness of the megacity" (4). She even imagines settling in Nigeria with her relatives close by, where everyone would call her 'Auntie' or 'Mama'. As a child, she remembers helping her mother in the kitchen and being frightened by the image of a madman in their neighbourhood. In her mind, she appropriates the story of Goldilocks with Afrolocks. Morayo is unable to accept the fact that her country has undergone changes and therefore attempts to consciously recall the past as an act of documenting the existence of vibrant and harmonious societies in Nigeria. She describes her birthplace, Jo as "the place where Muslims celebrated Christmas and Christians broke fast during Ramadan with their Muslim brothers and sisters…the place where weddings and funeral and naming ceremonies and baptisms and graduations and independence celebrations and governor's parties were lavish and celebratory" (50). She also states that the place is

"the warmest, most generous place on earth…the place where old people were never relegated to stuffy barracks to sit for hours waiting for death" (49). This nostalgic desire for her homeland that makes her construct idyllic pictures of her birthplace, is however cut short when reality hits her. Morayo is then reminded of the impending fear of violence and uncertainty that grips the daily lives of the people in the city. Recalling her childhood friend, Jocelyn who has perhaps passed away leaving her children alone, Morayo is filled with grief. Through her narrative, we see the gruesome details of the violence, some of which are also reported in an American newspaper. The report is attached with a picture of the disaster, "an aerial shot showing bodies in Jos, wrapped in brightly coloured Ankara prints" (48). To Morayo, the visual "looked almost beautiful, scattered like crayons in a jumbo-sized box" but when she takes a closer look, she sees that "the bodies were splattered, and many soaked, in a deeper red not belonging to the original fabric" (49). The 'distance' that she refers to when she looks at the picture, may indicate her losing eyesight due to old age or the physical distance to the Africa of her past as well. Driven by sympathy for the people of Nigeria, she starts sending funds to an account holder, who turns out to be a fraud. However, ignoring these fallacies, Morayo still believes in re-creating that positive imagery for others who have never been to the continent. In an attempt to reverse the fate met by her friend and the people of her homeland, she wishes to re-write the stories of women in English literature where "Mrs. Manley didn't die in a fire, Firdaus wasn't executed, and Magda never went mad. Ophelia didn't go mad. Diouna didn't go mad. Tess didn't go mad. Nor did Jane Eyre and Antoinette Cosway" (51). Morayo's nostalgia for her homeland is accompanied by nightmares, which intensify when Sunshine discards a huge section of old books from her house without her approval. The immediate expression of annoyance that is seen in Morayo comes from the fact that books are the only way of retaining her memory. Hence, disposing of those books meant abandoning or erasing a part of her past and the collective history of black people preserved in them.

Besides Morayo's narration, the novel also includes the voices of other people who give a perspective on their relationship with Morayo and how they look up to her. Morayo's Indian neighbour and friend, Sunshine, considers the former like a mother. In her narrative, Sunshine recounts how Morayo had supported her when she felt lost and alienated as an immigrant in America. From the perspective of Morayo's ex-husband, Caesar, she was not only ambitious but had the quest for an individual self. However,

immediately after their divorce, Caesar explains Morayo's decision as a fault in her genes of having a nervous breakdown that she inherited from her mother. When Morayo meets with an accident and has a minor injury, she is admitted to the Home, meant for the care and treatment of elderly patients. There she encounters a black man named Bailey, who is with his wife suffering from dementia. She introduces Bailey to the Caribbean and African-American writers and relays to him how these writers helped her understand herself. Reggie Bailey too recalls feeling an instant connection with Morayo when he saw her walking on Cole Street one day, before meeting her at Home. In one of their conversations, Morayo mentions Paul Auster's *Winter Journal* (2012) where the author describes life "through the history of the body" (84). While the book intrigues Morayo, who already has an interest in tattoos, the conversation deeply influences Bailey, who begins to understand his past experiences with a distinctive insight. He recounts his time in Georgetown, British Guiana, as a young man by stating how "my body was told by the governor that I was a coolie; that I must never, ever, set eyes on his daughter, Rose, for she was white and I, my body, was not white" (105). Morayo's awareness of her blackness and her African ancestry also inspires the young black chef named Touissant in the Home who had learned to cook from his mother and from the people of the building where he lived. Morayo instantly feels the same connection with him as well. Consequently, she begins to narrate her experiences of the continent with the hope that he will visit there someday. To present a dignified representation of their ancestors, she tells him about "all the good things – the weather, the food, the spectacular landscapes, but above all I spoke of the warmth of Africa's people. Told him how modern the continent is" (100). Morayo also intends to give him a list of books written by black writers from the diaspora, assuming "his mother had already made him read *The Black Jacobins*" (101). Such attempts indicate Morayo's conscious desire to pass on the collective history of violence, oppression, and resistance remembered not only through her memories but also through a reading of influential black writers.

To add to it, Morayo's interest in tattoos is a significant aspect associating her unique way of expression through the language of the body. For her seventy-fifth birthday, Morayo decides to get a tattoo while remembering its significance among indigenous tribes in Africa. She relays to Sunshine that many tribes differentiated themselves based on these tattoos or "facial markings" (70). For women, it was a form of "bodily adornment" usually painted in green colour (70). These practices, Morayo

recalls, gradually came to be considered primitive, but in the modern era "writing in the body" is a form of expressing oneself (70). She describes her fascination with seeing a Chinese dragon tattoo painted on the back of her friend, who stated that it represented "her family heritage" (26). Taking inspiration from this, Morayo decides to get a tattoo of a "small sprig of bougainvillea", symbolizing the "tropical climes" she loved and also the memory of the loved ones in her life (26, 27).

Morayo's encounter with a white homeless girl named Sarah makes her understand an individual's connection to diverse roots. Working in the food industry, Sarah, who later changes her name to Sage considering it to be gender fluid, finds a book on Africa in a garbage bin and promptly keeps it. Her interest in the continent comes from her assumption that her ancestors might probably be Africans who came through "Europe across the Bering Strait, then down the West Coast into the land of my other ancestors – the Cherokee tribe of the southeast and the Apache from the southwest" (42). The book coincidentally belongs to Morayo and almost immediately after Sarah finds the book, she also meets Morayo in person. Their chance meeting and this coincidence is perhaps a deliberate attempt by the writer to accentuate how characters connect because of their identification with common interests, made viable through globalisation. Sarah is captivated by Morayo's appearance and charisma and instantly recalls her mother and grandmother. Similarly, Morayo is enamoured by the elaborate tattoos on Sarah's body, each telling a story of her life as a young American woman in a cosmopolitan society. Both Sarah and Morayo share a moment of connection when the former describes the meanings of the images painted on her body:

> This one is because I love the Zen, cos I want to practice more. This one is in Chinese and it says, "The best is yet to come.' That a song my father loved. This one is my middle name, Rachael, which means 'little lamb' in Hebrew, and I put it with a lion because I see myself as a lion too. (116)

It is almost like an epiphanic moment for Morayo as she finally begins to feel at home in San Francisco. The imprints on Sage's body and Morayo's African identity, unambiguously are an indication of a mnemonic performance and the body as a source of historical testimony. Both implicate the idea that their identities are still in the process of 'becoming'. For instance, instead of wishing for an African fruit or food from the Asian market on her birthday, Morayo wants baklava from Dawoud and Amirah's humble

shop. Since that meeting, Morayo accepts the reality of her ailing body and the fact that she can no longer drive her "beloved old Porsche" (10). Towards the end, she decides to give away her car to Reggae Bailey but also dreams that she is back in Lagos in her car with Touissant to give him a tour of their homeland. The novel represents how transnational and diverse cultural influences in the urban space allow the characters to re-create the idea of 'imagined communities' by merely developing a sense of acceptance. She creates a community of her own through an affective bonding. It includes people like Li Wei the mailman who is Chinese, Dawoud, and Amirah the florists who are Palestinians, Alonzo and Mike the white policemen, Sunshine and her husband Ashok (Indian), Reggie Bailey from the Home (Caribbean), a homeless white girl named Sarah (American) and Touissant (African-American). It perhaps also indicates that it is easier to make such connections in urban areas due to an effortless confluence of such influences. Morayo's interest in traditional African attire, tattoos, building connections with people from different nationalities, and travelling adds to the process of self-fashioning that is constantly transforming itself.

In Jenny McLeod's *Stuck up a Tree*, the story of the Brightwell family is not so much about self-fashioning as it is about the complex dynamic of remembering and forgetting while asserting one's black British identity. In this context, the family as a site of recollecting memories is accentuated. The novel is set in a town called Hanville in the northern part of England. As graphically portrayed in the novel, the town "was set in a gully on either side of two huge hills, it had a river running through it and houses that fanned out around it" (McLeod 40). It is through the eyes of a thirty-year-old protagonist named Ella that the countryside, inhabited by mixed-race people, and her family members are represented. The narrative opens, without mentioning any specific temporal frame, with the description of Ella's birth on a road that lies between two towns and is filled with darkness. This then proceeds to her stage of "namelessness" when she is referred to as the "It child" (7). Beginning the novel with such a scene lays the ground for Ella's sense of withdrawal from the strangeness of Hanville town and her family. Ella also feels isolated from a very young age due to the absence of closer kin in terms of age. She contemplates that "within the family of them, everyone else seemed to have someone. Brownie and Daddy Ned had each other. Donna and Della…. Lambert and Kellit… Patrick and Johno", except her (38). Therefore, when she meets Larry, a mixed-race boy of her age from the neighbourhood, "he (brings) a perfect harmony to her life"

(250). Born in Hanville, Larry is the son of a white man named Harry Rose and a black woman. Being abused by her husband, Larry's mother leaves the place and her family. Left alone with his father, Larry is often ill-treated and he ends up in Ella's Pink House with brutal injuries, sometimes even a broken bone. Under the care of Ella's mother, Brownie, Larry heals his wounds and finds a sense of belonging in them.

In the Pink House, as the third-person narrator describes, emotions are expressed through food because Brownie believes "food had soul" (McLeod 9). Everything in the house was pink except the kitchen, which is where Brownie prepared West Indian cuisines and pickle recipes, she learned from Aunty Rosa in the neighbourhood. If Hanville town is considered a microcosm for Britain, then the kitchen functioned as a space of resistance, where first-generation women migrants celebrated and preserved their black culture. The elaborate description of Brownie preparing each meal gives an instance of this. When her eldest son Johno is arrested without proof for being a suspect in setting fire to a house and later deemed as a consistent lawbreaker of the locality, Brownie stops cooking till the time Johno is set for trial. Moreover, it is in the kitchen that Ella overhears all the gossip from 'Back Home' i.e., Jamaica, where women play tricks to lure rich white men or sometimes even "work the obeah" to get things they desire (37). Among such conversations was the story of Brownie told by her sister Aunt Julie. The latter states that when Ned came to ask her hand for marriage, Brownie used sorcery to grab Ned's attention and that eventually ended up in both of them getting married. Aunt Julie also mentions that the use of such dishonest means led to a child being born ugly. Ella readily assumes that she is the ugly child. These stories of her parents' past unsettle Ella and add to the mysterious image she has of her mother. Ella extends this feeling to the Pink House and Hanville, both possessing a sinister quality under her focalisation. This is the reason why she tries to escape to London on several occasions. It is finally after Larry dies in a fire accident that she leaves for London.

In London, she opens a restaurant and serves the food Brownie fed her all her life. The specific location of the restaurant on a hill and the striking red door seems like Ella's attempt at replicating her childhood home. However, the series of disturbing events that happen in Hanville and stories from 'Back Home' disallow her from gaining stability in her life. In the process, she even ignores the confessions of her boyfriend, Ludo. His apparent whiteness and the unacceptance of her blackness lead her to avoid

her family for thirteen years. When she suddenly gets a call from her cousin informing her of Brownie's death, she returns to Hanville without realising that it is not only Brownie but other unknown deaths that she will have to reconcile with. On reaching the Pink House, she meets with a reality she thought she had forgotten. For Ella, "remembrance is a necessity to retrace [her] life's journey, to reconsider the choices [she] has made" and for the writer "to arrive at the destination of feminist and diasporic theorizing" (Hua 204). Therefore, it is important to emphasize Jenny McLeod's detailed inclusion of Jamaican men and women involved in the communal service of Brownie's funeral ceremony in the Pink House. Along with songs and praises to God, the ceremony also included people recalling memories of 'Back Home' and their experiences in Hanville. This speaks of the continuation, following the dislocation, of collective memories that first-generation black migrants held and passed on. The people reminded her of her childhood, but her change was apparent: "[Ella] was from the same stock as they, but was different…. She had once the smell of them, but now she was perfumed… and coiffed in an odour they hardly recognised as theirs" (McLeod 91). However, it is important for Ella that she finds the answers to her problems and begins the search for her 'self'. Her first quest is to find the key to Brownie's "spice and herb cupboard" (10). which has always drawn her attention since she was a child. When she opens the cupboard, Ella gets hold of Brownie's diary and escapes to the Woodlands. On opening the diary, she discovers tuffs of hair, clipped nails, and a baby's handprint of dried blood, which is apparently of her twin who died during childbirth. Right after this discovery, she hallucinates meeting Brownie and Larry and resolving her equations with them. The heaviness after finding these new facts leads Ella to a nervous breakdown, but she is nursed back to health by her elder sister, Donna, who has now taken the role of Brownie. After this, a renewed life begins for Ella as Donna bathes her with "Brownie's stock of cerrassee, ackee, pimento, sage, velvet, guava", etc. (270). She then makes peace with her past and decides to begin a new life with Ludo. The complexities of bi-racial associations that are portrayed in the novel initially, assert a change in the end. Ella's sense of dispossession is placed opposite Ludo's immediate familiarization with Jamaican culture and practices performed during Brownie's funeral. As stated by Ole Birk Laursen, for Ella "a return to a shared, collective history of the Caribbean… is less available", due to Britain's inevitable tradition of selective forgetting (87). Yet, the black community in Hanville makes use of the fragmented stories of survival and retains the practice of traditions, despite the obvious rupture and social annihilation. The partially

remembered personal pasts of each turn into a collective history to be retold and passed on to the next generations. Ella's recuperation with her past, thus, is not achieved through a 'return' to the geographical space of her homeland, but to its cultural memory that is embedded and enmeshed with the history of the host land i.e., Britain. In the end, as she looks at the unfamiliar dead ancestors from the photo frames on the wall, she desires acceptance.

Like Morayo and Ella's attempt at remembering their past, Joss Moody's Nigerian father in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* also describes how the alien setting of Scotland, literally manifested through the "wraith mist", disintegrated or distorted his memory of Africa (Kay 273). Set both in England and Scotland, the novel brings in three temporal frames vis-a-vis, the late 19$^{th}$ century in Scotland, the 1960s, and the 1990s both in England and Scotland. The story deals with the life of Josephine Moore, who later disguises as a man, changes her name to Joss Moody, and becomes a famous jazz trumpet player. Besides the predominant theme of Joss' queer identity and the apparent homophobia pervading the hegemonic British society, *Trumpet* also deals with the loss of memory of homeland and the creation of new ways to address that crisis. Joss' father, John Moore, whose original name remains unknown, states that he felt "disembodied" by the "dense fog", just as he struggles to recall his past through the fragmented images of "the hot dust on the red road, the jacaranda tree", or the sensation of "his mother's hot breath on his cheek" (271). Sent by his father to Scotland at the age of six to stay under the guidance of a Scottish man, Robert Duncan Brae, John Moore initially works as a domestic servant. However, he eventually learns the skill of painting doors, apprentices under a house painter, and sustains a reasonable living. He even retains the memories of his homeland by singing the Scottish folk song, "*Heil Ya Ho, boy, let her go, boys, swing her head round, and all together*", but every time holding a "far-away look on his face" (emphasis original, 275). Unlike John, for his Scottish wife Edith Moore, the past is as "vivid" as the present (216). Their daughter Josephine Moore/Joss Moody, acquires the father's dual feeling of nostalgia for her homeland and the desire to re-build a home in Scotland at the same time. Therefore, even after Joss migrates to England with his Scottish wife Millicent Moody, he maintains his Glasglow accent. The fact that Jackie Kay affiliated her identity both with the African and Scottish lineage of her parents is also expressed in her memoir, *Red, Dust, Road* (2010) when she brings in parallels between Lake Oguta in Nigeria and "the Dee and the Don", "like two silent sides of a

family feud" (220). Likewise, Kay wishes to converse with elderly people of the Igbo community and that of the Scottish Highlands to grasp how each place transformed during their time (217). In the novel, Joss Moody expresses a strong sense of connection with the cultural memory of Africa that is rooted in music, particularly jazz, blues, slave songs, and work songs, emerging from the history of slavery. According to Joss, "music was the only way of keeping the past alive…. There's more future in the past than there is in the future" (190). He had an ingenuity in travelling to places across the world and translating the essence of each place into his music. Yet, the imaginary presence of Africa was the strongest in his compositions, though he had never been there. Before physically visiting the continent, Jackie Kay herself states that:

> Africa itself could only ever be imagined in the way that I imagined my father, with bright picture-book colours and bold outlines. Part of me came from Africa, part of me was foreign to myself, strange to myself since I had never been to the *dark continent* and could only really have it burning away, hot and dusty, in my mind. (*Red, Dust* 38)

Joss too constructs a 'Fantasy Africa', "an imaginary landscape within himself" that he believed "would affect his music" if he experienced the 'real Africa' (*Trumpet* 34). He even composes a song with the same title that brings him enough acclaim in the music world. However, he exposed none of such references to Africa in association with his past and his father. Thereby, Joss and Millicent's adopted son, Colman Moody, recalls the absence of old family photographs in their house. Even when Colman asks Joss about his past, the latter often replies with ambiguous answers, complicating Colman's assertion of his black identity. Instead of stating how John Moore reached Greenock on the ship *HMS Spiteful* and settled there, Joss makes it a story of the diaspora. Joss also tells Colman to make his own bloodline and "trace it back. Design (his) own family tree" instead of searching for his 'originary' roots (58). Here, Kay critiques "the value normatively assigned to origins, birth, and reproductive lineage" or tracing a genetic genealogy (Homans 124). In an article on "Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*: Transnational and Transracial Adoption, Transgender Identity, and Fictions of Transformation", (2020) Margaret Homans examines the common aspect of adoption, naming or re-naming, and displacement, that binds John Moore, Joss Moody, and Colman Moody in the same lineage. Like his past generations, Colman recalls that his earlier name William

Dunsmore would have given an entirely different implication to his identity, and therefore he did not prefer it. As Joss reaches his death, however, he decides to pass on the actual story of his father and the material remnants of the past like photographs, documents, and certificates to his son. If observed in terms of Joss's unconventional definition of family lineage, Colman is a third-generation British migrant who is associated neither with the African identity nor the English. The moment he crossed borders, he would often raise questions regarding his identity and realised that he felt closest to his Scottish lineage because it was his birthplace. At the end of the story too, as Colman accepts his father's black, Scottish queer identity and resolves to preserve his legacy, he returns to their family vacation home in Torr, a small town in the suburbs of Scotland.

Set in Ladbroke Grove of Notting Hill, London at the beginning of the millennium, Diana Evans' *The Wonder* also deals with a third-generation British migrant and his complicated journey of finding his father's history as a famous black dancer in Britain. The novel reminisces the formation of a dance troupe called the 'Midnight Ballet' and its rise and fall in the 1960s. The main plot revolves around the leading performers of the troupe i.e., Antoney, Carla, and Simone, and the trajectories of their path to success. Family, home-making, and separation form a central aspect of the lives of these characters as they become entangled in the complexities of forming an identity, establishing fame, and maintaining stable relationships, all at the same time. Born in Annotto Bay in Jamaica, Antoney recounts that he is constantly troubled by his "flying dreams" (Evans 27). The dream, as it is later seen, not only suggests Antoney's passion for dance but also his desire for movement. He recalls that he inherits this desire from his father, Mr. Rogers, who travelled to Cuba for work and one day does not return, leaving Antoney and his mother alone. Left with few prospects in Annotto Bay, Antoney and his mother, Florence, leave for England in 1958. The separation from his father and the departure from his homeland are articulated in similar terms in association with his loss of identity. As he crossed the Atlantic, "he felt himself sinking, growing thinner and transparent until he became completely invisible" (58). He even keeps his mother's surname, Matheus, and settles in a rented house of a Dutch woman in "the western side of Ladbroke Grove with a history of Edwardian splendour" which is now filled with squalor and rubble (58). It is in this locality that Antoney finds Oscar Day's dancing club in an old church's basement and meets people like Carla, Simone, Ekow, The Wonder,

Milly Afolabi, Ricardo Morris, Rosina Moris, and Benjamin Ojo. For the first time since his arrival in England, Antoney feels at home and seeks to create a family with them. Carla and Simone are second-generation black migrants from the Ladbroke Grove locality and have been friends since childhood. Simone, whose father was an Oxford-educated scientist from Barbados, belonged to a middle-class family and was the only person among the troupe members to be trained in dancing. She had taken ballet classes in Kilburn. Carla had a mixed-race lineage in Wales and Dominica. Her Welsh grandfather, who migrated with his family to London in 1929, dictated his family like a tyrant particularly her mother, Toreth because she was the only girl in the family. Hence, when Toreth courted a black man named Freddy from Dominica, she had to leave her house and settle in the Notting Hill area. After her father's death, Carla states that there were many memories of him around the house, but his "threadbare Dominica tea towel" represented for Carla an island that remained "far away" (113). Llandudno, however, "still hadn't been any further" for her (113). This differentiated her from Antoney, who had many things to say about Jamaica and a lot more about Cuba from the stories his father told him. Here, memories play an important role in charting the journey of self-discovery for the characters. Parallel to Antoney and Carla's memories of home in congruence with the success and disbandment of 'Midnight Ballet', the novel reveals how personal and cultural histories intertwine and complicate younger generations' engagement with issues. Lucas and his sister, Denise, who are Antoney and Carla's children, yearn for a solid ground to deal with their present. The untimely death of their mother, Carla, and their father's "suspicious disappearance" effect particularly Lucas, who is still searching for a sense of identity (8). Contrary to Lucas, Denise finds comfort in growing and selling flowers, something their mother would have appreciated. Moreover, Lucas is hesitant to believe the stories he has heard of his father from his maternal grandmother, Toreth. Hence, he traces the history of his parents and the dance troupe through his mother's diary, his conversations with Simone, and Edward Riley, a white journalist in the 1960s who is preparing a manuscript of his latest book 'Antoney Matheus and the Midnight Ballet'. As Lucas explores his past, he also charts the history of black music from America and its influence in Britain. Lucas resonated with the music of Scarface, a rapper from Texas who was of the same age as him and started his career in the late 1990s and early 2000s. During an adolescent indulgence in intoxication, Lucas engages in a serious discussion with his friends, Jake, Mc Crow, and Nigel about the future of the hip-hop scene in America. They also talk about the need for a "homegrown

sound" in Britain along with Tony Blair's politics, while Roots Manuva and A Tribe Called Quest play in the background (261). Lucas is not fully involved in the conversation because the past of his father keeps bothering him. Therefore, he breaks into Riley's house to find out if there is evidence of his father being alive. In Riley's study, Lucas discovers a letter written by his father in the year 1982. The letter indicates that Antoney returned to Jamaica with his mother and was diagnosed as a manic depressive in a psychiatric hospital in Beaumont, but there are no details of him after being discharged. Therefore, in the last chapter of his book, Riley imagines Antoney back in Oscar's basement, falling into the most comfortable sleep in the company of Vaslav Nijinsky's spirit. Lucas reads the story and is aware that the end is only a fantasy, but seeks to believe it the way Riley has imagined.

Thus, what Morayo, Ella, Colman, and Lucas finally achieve is a fragmented sense of identity that is still on the road to 'becoming'. The two roads alluded to at the beginning of *Stuck Up a Tree* point toward Ella's complex cultural, and socio-political affiliation with Britain and the homeland of her preceding generation. It also suggests her in-betweenness, which Jenny McLeod further problematizes by the use of ambiguity to deal with the rhetoric of hybridity. Similarly, in Sarah Ladipo Manyika's novel, the character of the homeless girl, who is interestingly named after the author herself, revisions the idea of whiteness through the metaphor of tattoos and 'body markings'. The diverse connections and stories that characters in both novels recount suggest the possibility of forming "family constellations" beyond the idea of relating to one family history (Ifekwunigwe, 146). Joss Moody in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* hints at this idea when he tells his adopted son, Colman Moody, that they were somehow related and so were Joss's mates in the jazz band, some of them white and some black, who belonged to each other and were part of this big family. In the novel, Kay alludes to African-American jazz and blues singers like Bessie Smith, with whom Joss shares a feeling of kinship. In a similar vein, Diana Evans in *The Wonder* also gives references to Katherine Dunham, Nijinsky, Isadora Duncan, Josephine Baker, Gene Kelly, Tamara Karsavina, and others. The narrative also mentions how a dance troupe casually formed in a church's basement of Notting Hill, "danced to Paul Robeson and Mendelssohn's piano concertos, to Ray Charles, to an Egyptian flute player" (Evans 66). Such instances of influences beyond borders that have been made possible due to globalisation are termed "*transnationalism from above*" (Datta 90). Migration from the homeland brings along memories and

cultural influences, that are in turn translated in syncretized ways in the host countries. Hence, in the next section, the chapter will further explore how transnational connections and the concept of border crossings dismantle the idea of a unitary route to cultural identity and national belonging. In addition, Ayona Datta's idea of 'translocality' will enable the chapter to examine the liminal spaces of belonging imagined by black British writers as a means of negotiating the distinctive subjective positions held by black migrant characters.

## III

John Agard's poem 'Remember the Ship' (1998) describes the collective experience of movement that defines the human race. Agard argues that since all communities in the human race have migrated to other places at some point or the other, the citizens from erstwhile British colonies should also be welcomed without considering "boundary/ of skin" and "offer its wide harbours/ for Europe's new voyage/ to begin. The constant confluence of people, commodities, and culture has led to the need to study the transnational aspect of the diaspora. This transnationality as a consequence has given rise to a process of self-fashioning in the black Atlantic. Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* has explored it in terms of the dimensions of music, as part of black expressive culture, and how it has travelled and influenced other cultures around the world. Critics like Laura Chrisman, however, argue that Gilroy's notion of the black Atlantic "positions diasporic African populations as a sovereign class, or icon, of modernity that African populations then uncritically model themselves upon. Such vanguardism at times uncomfortably resembles imperialistic attitudes that structured earlier African-American relations with Africans" (8). Therefore, Chrisman states that:

> We now need the notion of a critical, interrogative black Atlantic political culture, based on dialogue not emulation. The peculiar density of this modern critical black Atlanticism is one that allows African intellectuals both to instrumentalise African America as a fictional space of self-actualisation and to demystify that construction. (92-3)

Instead of imitating the black Americans, Chrisman suggests the need to formulate alternate ways of cultural self-fashioning (92). In this regard, the chapter contends that black British women writers explore and transgress such constituents and create a

distinctive self-fashioning of their own while challenging established notions of whiteness and heteronormativity.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, can be read as an anti-establishment novel that narrates the story through the voices of eleven black British and one white British woman namely, Amma, Dominique, Yazz, Carole, Bummi, Winsome, Shirley, LaTrisha, Megan/Morgan, Hattie, Grace, and Penelope. As the lives of each of these marginalized characters are centre staged, the essentialized notions of race, gender, sexuality, age, and class are problematized in context to the idea of creating a home and belongingness in Britain. The novel opens with Amma's story who is staging the premiere of her play, *The Last Amazons of Dahomey* at the National Theatre in London. This is a feat considering the struggles black women have to experience in Britain as artists and creative writers. Amma and her compatriot Dominique, who are radical polyamorous lesbians, have strong political ideologies and attempt to challenge patriarchy and the grand narrative through protests and sometimes by directly heckling those who hurt their "political sensibilities" (Evaristo 2). Amma's narrative gives details of her radicalism and how it has been influenced by her parent's involvement in black politics. Her mother was a mixed-race with Scottish and Nigerian lineage, who then married a black socialist from Ghana. In Amma's description, her father is a patriarch, who "force-fed his politics" to his children (12). She also mentions the problems in white feminist and black liberationist organizations that form her own company of gay, lesbian, and queer friends. This is how she finds a confidante in Dominique, who was born in Bristol but has ties in Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese ancestry. Dominique, however, did not have the privilege of having politically inclined parents like Amma and therefore had to educate herself in black feminist politics and the history of black people. Dominique was still in her learning stage when she meets an African-American lesbian named Nzinga. She is enamoured by the fact that Nzinga is "so wise and knowledgeable about how to be a liberated black woman in an oppressive white world that she's opening my eyes too… it's like she's Alice and Audre and Angela and Aretha rolled into one" (80). However, Nzinga's ignorance regarding the presence of black British feminist politics becomes apparent when she scorns Dominique, Amma, and their compatriots for "sounding so Britissshhh" (82). Nzinga also equates Britishness with whiteness and assumes superiority over the black British women. Despite these evident issues in Nzinga's politics, Dominique decides to follow her to "wimmin's land" located in the

American South (89). The 'wimmin's land', also known as the Spirit Moon with "its endless space and vistas", is a protective space for lesbians of different racial and ethnic communities without the influence of patriarchal oppression and/or dominance (89). Gaia, who is the owner of the estate, bestows the land to lesbians to work there in harmony, "reclaiming the Feminine Divine, connecting to and protecting Mother Earth, sharing our resources, making decisions communally but maintaining our privacy and autonomy, self-healing the female body and psyche" (89). In the 'wimmin's land', while the women accept Dominique and her distinctive black British characteristics with awe and admiration, Dominique too immediately feels a sense of belonging towards them. However, Nzinga's regressive means of control over Dominique start to stifle her individuality, which largely stems from the latter's trauma of sexual abuse during childhood. Thus, after an arduous struggle of three years, Dominique escapes to the West Coast and joins a "marriage of convenience with a gay man" (108).

Other than the theme and content, the structure of the book also eludes a specific form of novel writing. Along with a lack of punctuation, capitalization, and disjointed line sequence, the use of adinkra symbols at the beginning of each chapter is one of the most noticeable features of her experimentation that dismantles the traditional structure of English novels. These are symbols used by the Asante tribe of Ghana, West Africa, in clothes, walls, pottery, etc., that have deep symbolic meanings inherent in them. Evaristo's inclusion of these symbols asserts the significance of her ancestral roots and its influence on the diaspora and particularly the English host culture. Before beginning the novel, Evaristo also dedicates her work to the diverse groups of gender who identify themselves by different terms such as sisters, sistah, sistren, womxn, wimmin, bruv, mandem, etc. but are bound in a common struggle for emancipation from hegemonic forces of control. This situates the work in a model of a transnational feminist approach. Further, there are instances of black women in Britain establishing their sense of style and self-fashioning that prominently manifests a transnational influence. One example can be cited of Amma, a radical lesbian feminist, whose "*sod-you style*" includes "denim dungarees, Che Guevera beret, PLO scarf and an ever-present badge of two interlocked female symbols" (Evaristo 3). Years later she updated her fashion by including African jewellery and an "African print patchwork bag" (33). Denim dungarees, or denim in general, which has a whitewashed history, are linked with the civil rights movement. Marlen Komar examines in "What the Civil Rights Movement had to do with Denim"

how denim was synonymous with 'Negro clothes' during times of slavery since the white slave owners bought them for their workers due to its durability and also because it functioned as a social barrier from their fine clothing. Hence, the use of denim in the Civil Rights movement acted as a radical political stand against the white hegemony. Again, Che Guevera's beret and the PLO scarf, used by rebellious Palestinians, were a symbol of revolution and resistance respectively. The beret was later adopted by Black Panthers of America in the 1960s to assert their separatist position (Bisset, "From Rembrandt"). Thus, Amma's "perennial signature style statement" is also a suggestion of the multiple positions and nonconformist political ideologies that define her as a black British lesbian (Evaristo 31). Along with clothes, there is mention of cosmopolitan markets in London that sell exotic items from diverse places like "parrot fish, yam, ackee, Scotch bonnet peppers, African materials, Dutch pots, giant Nigerian land snails, and pickled green eggs from China" (32). In *The Emperor's Babe* too there are references to markets occupied by "flower-seller(s)" and "ivory-vendor(s)" from Kenya, perfumes sellers from Arabia and Ethiopia, etc (40). In terms of music, the mention of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti, James Brown, Edith Piaf, and Mathilde Santing who belong to diverse regions like Jamaican, Nigeria, America, France, and Denmark respectively, further adds to the idea of cultural influence beyond national borders.

Similar examples of transnational influences can also be cited from Diana Evans' *The Wonder*. Antoney's choreographed pieces are a creation of "fluid and dramatic arrangements across varying vocabularies vis-a-vis, modern, Caribbean, and African. He boldly combined burlesque throwy shoulders, Senegalese jumps, and Merengue hips with gestures he'd seen in the street, a classical leap here, a little skanking there" (Evans 99)[2]. Due to the transnational influences evidenced in his dance forms, Antoney is applauded by the audience and critics with names such as – 'Shango Storm'[3], "dusky Adonais" and British Alvin Ailey (135). One of Antoney's desires, like Katherine Dunham's, is to visit Cuba, Paris, and America, and take inspiration from the diverse dance forms in the specific regions. Along with Antoney, each of the members of the troupe provides an addition to its transnational uniqueness. For example, Milly Afolabi brings in "West African moves" and Alphonsa the Kumina (also Dinki-mini and Brukins) drum rhythm that he inherited from his grandfather (90)[4]. The transnational aspects are thus evident in the novel not only through the mixed-genre dance forms and musical styles but also through cross-border performances of the 'Midnight Ballet' in

Ledbury Theatre, Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre in Holborn, Commonwealth Institute, Sadler's Wells, Cardiff, Oxford, Devon, Montmartre in Paris, etc.

In context to the examples cited above, the chapter observes that while transnational and transcultural confluences are significant in the assertion of diasporic identities, the exploration of "embodied, material and corporeal encounters within cities and urban spaces" are equally essential (Datta 89). The understanding of these urban spaces enables the identification of the creation, re-creation, and dismantling of borders and 'differences' within them, and simultaneously the negotiation of liminalities. Moreover, it is the individual experiences of first, second, and third-generation migrants that account for the formation and transformation of cities through the years. In Ayona Datta's terms, this is called "*transnationalism from below*" which is concerned with the "agency of the local" instead of the effects of globalisation (emphasis original 90). Consequently, the complicated aspects of shaping 'homes', a sense of belonging, and identity in the spaces away from the 'homeland', are deemed as crucial for the study. Here, Datta's notion of 'translocality' as a "subset of transnationalism," can be used to show how "deterritorialised transnational connections were emplaced through local politics, encounters, experiences and economies" (Datta 99). Elaborating further, Datta states that "the notion of the translocal city brings about a mixing of the political and personal – an essential step towards understanding how and why people build home(s), feel a sense of belonging, and are involved in urban life in ways that are not just to do with survival" but with the practice of home-making in the diaspora (102).

It is now a fact that contemporary black British writers, especially women, do not necessarily situate their writing in the context of restructuring the idea of nationality. There are, underlying traces of it, but the primary concerns are mainly based on "local affairs" (McLeod 47). Evaristo's fictional 'Londonium' in *The Emperor's Babe,* as pointed out by Jahan Ramzani, is not portrayed as the "hub of the Roman Empire, but as peripheral and marginal" (176). Ramzani's statement can be justified by the novel-in-verse itself which states that Londinium is an "underdeveloped backwater to the imperial centre" (176). Here, it can be said that Evaristo plays with this idea of Britain being a centre, by satirizing David Cook's speech on multiculturalism, where he mentions the nation-state as being the 'perfect hub of the globe'. As seen in the story, it is outside the gates of the Roman empire that the protagonist Zuleika discovers her 'self' and begins to

accept her Afro-roman roots. However, though not a hub or a centre, the London of the Roman times is represented as cosmopolitan in character with people from different parts of the world, engaging in cultural exchanges and trade. In the same way, the contemporary character of the city is also seen as changing with the influence of cultural exchanges facilitated by globalisation. Pubs and nightclubs are frequently taken as references to discuss the exchange of cultural forms through music, art, or ideas. In *Girl, Women, Other*, there are "women-only bars" like "Fallen Angel, Rackets, the Bell, the Drill Hall Theatre Bar on a Monday where the lesbianarati hung out, and Pearl's Shebeen in Brixton on a Friday night run by Pearl, a middle-aged Jamaican…" (20). Shebeens were significant because it functioned as a common ground for cultural, political and social exchanges among blacks in Britain. To elucidate from history, Mangrove Bar from the 1960s was one of the most influential and well-known shebeens. The Mangrove gained notorious fame, especially after the Mangrove 9 incident when the bar was raided by police multiple times, leading to violence and finally its closure. The bar, which was frequented mainly by Afro-Caribbeans, was used not only as a space for recreation but also as a ground for mobilizing revolutionary ideas. Black men were the dominant agents voicing out the concerns of their kind. In Evaristo's novel, it is a black woman who owns a shebeen and it is visited by radical black feminists. Similarly, domestic spaces like the living room also functioned as spaces for political mobilisation where independent, coloured women's organisations were formed. Amma's first involvement in a black women's group is in Brixton in a room where "women sat on sofas, chairs, cushions, cross-legged on the floor drinking cups of coffee and cider" (12). Later they both formed the Bush Woman Theatre Company, with the initiative to include Asian and black women's stories derived from their lived experiences. In the same way, Evaristo's depiction of the "Soviet-sized former office block at the back of King's Cross", which is known as "the Republic of Freedomia", shows how different radical and liberal ideologies disrupt the idea of a homogenous social set up in Britain (8). The debate between Marxists, environmentalists, Rastafarians, Gays, radical lesbians, and others, is satirically portrayed in the novel to depict a microcosm of the British society at large. Besides, the mention of Odeon Astoria, a theatre founded in 1930 on Old Kent Road, is significant here. Known to be one of Britain's oldest roads, the origin of Old Kent Road was traced back to an ancient route used by the Celts. In the novel, the Astoria is mentioned by Winsome when she recalls the time, she was courted by her now husband, Clovis. Again, Grace, the wife of Joseph Rydendale, describes how she "embroider(ed) a

tapestry of the exterior of the (Greenfields) house as it was in 1806, newly built by Joseph's ancestor Linnaeus Rydendale" (390). The reference to these old places and the act of embroidering is used by Evaristo not only as a means to show how black migrants document the history of Britain but also to develop the idea of a black, feminist diasporic consciousness. In parallel terms, in *The Emperor's Babe*, a "Verbosia Orgia" is organised at Zuleika's triclinium, where Hrrathaghervood in his "Pictish patios", Pomponius Tarquin with his "Roman nose and pursed lips, Calpurnius Tiro and Manumittio X with their poems on "mud, plough and sow" and "chains" respectively, create an atmosphere of cultural inclusivity (Evaristo 194-98). These examples suggest that black British women writers stress the aspect of self-fashioning in urban spaces where black women predominantly play a significant role.

Similarly, in *The Wonder*, there are references to the import-export food business and African grocery of Milly Afolabi and her husband in Harlesden. Then there is the Rushwood Sauna on Harrow Road built by a black woman from St. Lucia named Mrs. Earlene Rushwood. Every fortnight, Carla and Simone would visit the Sauna and feel the Jamaican experience, with middle-aged women eavesdropping on their conversations and suggesting probable life solutions. Along with it, the novel gives instances of characters who traverse through different localities within London and document the everyday details and changes in it. Different black characters of different generations, namely Toreth, Oscar, Carla, and Lucas, describe the changing demography and setting of Notting Hill and its innermost areas. In an article in *The Guardian*, Hugh Muir mentions how gentrification has brought in a "seismic change" in the Notting Hill area ("What Notting"). Through a third-person narrator, Evans' novel details some of these changes: "This was where the Grove's heart beat faster, where the clearest signs could be seen of the sweep of gentrification that was surging across the city, turning ghettos into hotspots and sending them shooting way out of the hemisphere for the average native househunter" (15). Antoney and Denise' maternal grandmother, Toreth recalls a time when "Portobello Road was just a rough country lane… barley fields…. It was a long, silent, potholed lane, dusty in summer and muddy in winter and, like most open spaces in the cities at that time…" (273). The fact that Toreth was a part of this massive evolution of Notting Hill asserts her position as a witness of British history. Her presence marks a symbolic connection between Britain and her blackness. As the only surviving family member, Toreth told stories of Antoney as a highwayman and how he bought the boat

house. She brought parallels in the stories of Antoney and an English highwayman, who had nine children and belonged to an age-old period. Moreover, instead of recalling an ancestral figure from her lineage, Toreth states that Denise was a reincarnation of a local English florist named Emily Kirk who died in 1969, the year Denise was born. Carla describes Ladbroke Grove through the "grotty streets, the litter, the overcrowded terraces" (225). According to Oscar, Ladbroke Grove was a place that needed a "social enterprise" because localities like Talbot Road and Powis Square were "the city's poorest and most neglected wards" (49). Again, Carla and Antoney's bus rides to the central part of London showed them the "bewitching" side of the place with lights in their so many different colours, the cascading loops of them over Oxford Street, the shop windows and streetlamps reflecting more light onto the pavements" (277). Through Lucas' focalisation, the Ladbroke Grove was depicted as "small and box-like" tower blocks looking towards the Grand Canal Union (96). While exploring his parents' past and the history of the 'Midnight Ballet', Lucas hears "many sounds, voices, drums, laughter, footsteps" coming from the basement of the old St Bernard church as he passes through Portobello Road and Ladbroke Grove (Evans 87).

Lucas and his sister, Dennis, who is a florist, live on the Grand Union Canal in a "fifty-foot narrow boat of faded green leaning slightly to its left (this was because of the wardrobe). Her name was Silver…. It was a relic of a thing, with paint peeling off the steel and a useless, rusted tiller at the stern" (6). As Lucas reflects, water may be a source of freedom for boat-dwellers to "untether" themselves and "sail away" whenever they wish to, but for Lucas, "this was a permanent, inadvertent mooring with no compassion to a concrete past" (7). Denise and Lucas are stuck in the boat with memories of their parents' past, which both literally and metaphorically weighs to such an extent that the boat slopes on one side. The interior of the boat consists of their parents' photographs, an old chair where Carla used to sit, Antoney's records (Beny More, Sam Cooke, and Robert Schumann), and an old cherrywood wardrobe that is portrayed as the last vestige of their mysterious past. The description of Lucas and Denise's life inside the boat resembles Clasford's dilapidated house in Evaristo's *Soul Tourists*. Clasford's house too represents a wrecked ship of 1986, that is immobile and remains frozen in the past. The house and the imagery of the ship, consequently, suggest Clasford's stationary existence. As it is evident, there is a persistent tussle in both *Soul Tourists and The Wonder* between ideas of mobility and stability and how it translates into the characters'

relationship with each other. Inside the boat, everything else seems claustrophobic and depressing except Denise's "bright, pink-blossomed" pillowcase that she straightened each morning, like a ritual, before going to work (Evans 5). The pillowcase and Denise's interest in flowers might seem out of place inside the boat and the equally dismal state of the siblings, but it speaks largely of both their parent's presence and influence in shaping their personalities. For their parents, the boat signified a sense of mobility as well as stableness. For Antoney, the boat carried the notion of flight, movement, and the desire for the sea that men like him, his father Mr. Rogers, the famous dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, and their dance teacher Oscar, always craved. Carla, on the other hand, considers this peculiar means of settlement as a "peaceful kind of nowhere" (225). In this sense, the boat serves as a liminal space for the whole family to denote their state of in-betweenness. Moreover, the discovery of his parents' past gives Lucas the ability to deal with his sense of belonging. He finally repairs the old, rusty boat, throws away the unnecessary objects that belonged to his parents, and begins his journey of travel by moving out of the Grand Union Canal. Though Lucas, like his father, has this desire to travel the world, the former begins by tracing the trajectories of the place where he was born, i.e., Ladbroke Grove, through "the liquid road that stretched tauntingly ahead", instead of taking a bus from Guantanamo to Baracoa like his father has (311). However, he is prompted by the vision of The Wonder behind him to take a train and reach the countryside setting of Penzance in the southwest of London, which seemed the closest to the exoticism of Annotto Bay in Jamaica. Thus, the presence of the boat and the story of two generations living in it "tells a history in a form which situates past and present as part of the same fluid realm, positioning a history as already 'finished' and as simultaneously being performed" (Kamali 217).

Unlike Carla's experience of a peaceful space of 'nowhere', in Zadie Smith's *NW*, the writer explores the trajectories of the protagonist, Keisha Blake's efforts to escape the space of 'nowhere', presumably an acronym for NW. The 'nowhere', according to Keisha, is the Willesden locality in the northwestern part of London, which is the implication of the novel's title. Divided into five sections, namely, 'Visitation', 'Guest', 'Host', 'Crossing', and 'Visitation', the novel portrays the various positions assumed and bestowed on people of different communities and how the writer refutes each of these positionalities. To add to it, the novels' experimentation with form and structure, varying from the stream of consciousness, verse pieces, and listings to texting

conversations, is aptly adjusted to the changing focalization of the characters. Chapter '37' appears repeatedly in the novel suggesting the interruption in the linearity of the narrative. Two distinct localities, namely Caldwell (dominated mostly by Afro-Caribbean people) and Camden Lock (working-class whites, particularly Irish) are presented in the novel to depict the characters' association with different influences from literary and popular culture. Common shopping malls, swimming pools, and schools are places where people from these two localities often meet but hardly connect. Examples can be cited of the protagonists, Keisha Blake and her best friend, Leah Hanwell's mother, who belong to those two different localities and have an almost similar class status. However, despite their similar economic background and professional position as a nurse, Pauline, Leah Hanwell's mother, who is Irish, do not acknowledge the reputation of Keisha's mother due to the latter's Caribbean roots, which tags along with it a 'guest'/ outsider status in the context of Britain.

Smith's indulgent distinctions of the localities can be conversely compared with Ngozi Onwurah's 1995 thriller, *Welcome II the Terrordome*, which deals with issues still relevant at present. The movie, which borrows its title from a song by Public Enemy, pays a tribute to the hip-hop culture and beckons for brotherhood and solidarity, which is problematized in the movie. Opening with a seaside scene in Georgia, where a couple of captured African slaves (both men and women) commit suicide, the movie sets the tone for the rest of the story that later proceeds in a ghettoised locality of Britain. There is a clear distinction between white and black communities, as barbed-wired fences, security toll gates, police raids, and the sound of sirens, repeatedly figure in and out of the lens. The movie revolves around the story of a black man named Spike and his white girlfriend, Jodie, who is also the mother of his child. Escaping from an abusive relationship with her white boyfriend, Jodie finds refuge in Spike and his sister, Anjela's run-down shack, and builds affinity with the community too. But this forbidden relationship ensues hostility both from the blacks and whites. It is later followed by a violent encounter between the two communities, which ends with the gruesome death of Hector, Spike's 11-year-old nephew. Anjela, who goes on a police rampage after her son's death, is led towards the path of execution, while the freedom speeches of Malcolm X play in the background. Drawing connections between issues beyond time and space, Onwurah opens up discussion for possibilities of racial harmony amidst such turmoil. In

a scene when everyone from the ghetto comes together to condole the death of Hector, Jodie places her stillborn mixed-race child beside him and anticipates a bleak future.

Smith's novel echoes a similar manifestation of separation between black and white communities, wherein there exist imaginary fences and borders. The localities portrayed in the novel have a ghettoised character to them like in America and, as observed by Patricia O. Daley, have a high level of "residential concentration" (1722). He considers this tendency as their "cultural strategy" for "sustainable settlement" (1722). Based on this, the accompanying assumption is that such segregated localities assure security and less violence. Smith's novel, however, breaks the idealistic image of a sense of community in Willesden, by depicting the gruesome murder of Felix Cooper by two young black men from his locality. Felix Cooper, a schoolmate of Keisha and Leah, experiences a false sense of identification with his community when he helps a pregnant white woman get a seat in a tube. The black men sitting opposite him express an unrelenting attitude as the woman stands above them and politely asks them to give her the extra seat they have occupied. Since they ignore her requests, Felix attempts to persuade them by addressing them as 'bruv', but instead of yielding they are provoked and hurl abuses at him. By helping the white woman and trying to defy what brotherhood means according to those black men, Felix becomes a traitor and they kill him. The fact that the two black men and their values are shamed in front of a white woman turns so much as a matter of self-worth that they do not prevent themselves from brutally murdering one of their 'kind'. This false sense of a community is also exaggerated in the novel through images of nature in the urban space, which equally reject the presence of Felix's character: "Trees shaggy overhead. Hedges wild over fences. Every crack in the pavement, every tree root…. The walls have grown taller outside the Jewish school and the Muslim one" (166). When he almost reaches his Irish girlfriend's place in Kilburn, a black woman informs one of the crooks on the tube of Felix's location. While being manhandled by the two men, Felix decides to give away his meagre possessions, a phone, and some money, because "he'd been mugged many times and knew the drill" (169). Felix's death signals the dangers of daring to reject his community. In the novel, Felix disassociates himself from the gang and drug culture that most men of his locality are engaged in. He believes that this change will lead him to a better life, and socially to a more acceptable position. Likewise, he ignores the past Caribbean history of his father

which is evident in the glossy pictures of the Marcus Garvey Project. In this case, Felix is an outsider not only in his locality but also outside it.

When he visits Oxford Circus on account of buying a second-hand car, his outsider status beyond the Caldwell area is revealed. Symbolically, Felix's story is largely narrated in the section titled 'Guest' which is appropriately suggestive of his social position. The locality surrounding the Oxford Circus, with houses that were "no less grand: white-fronted and many storeys high", forces Felix to feel a strangeness and he quickly slips off the hood from his head (117). This feeling of strangeness, Jackie Kay explains in her memoir *Red Dust Road,* is one that exists within the black person instead of outside (38). When the dominant becomes the norm, one begins to differentiate himself/herself as the anomaly, even without the perpetrator's expression of prejudice. Felix is aware that wearing a 'hood' in a white locality will provoke suspicion and he will be immediately associated with 'mugging' and the gang culture discourse of the black community that he has been attempting to withdraw from. These instances in the novel depict the existence of imaginary "territorial markers", based on ethnicity or class, that an individual might cross only in times of dire need (Rahbek 426). The markers suggest that the city of London is quintessentially "bordered" and the everyday street life in inner cities is practically a "war zone" (427). The borders are said to be "imagined not only because they do not exist in any material sense, but especially since they develop out of an inherited 'knowledge' that the kids in the estates pass on" (427). Therefore, Felix is extra cautious of his surroundings when he arrives at this place to confirm a deal. Such a threat to life on the streets of London, however, does not impose solely on black men. Vernella Fuller's *Going Back Home* (1992) gives an instance of a black female protagonist named Joy, being assaulted almost to death by two white men while going to her house in South London. It is a paradox how despite the enforcement of multicultural policies since the 1960s and 70s, the concept of inner city 'borders' is getting heightened and eventually re-established. Therefore, it can be said that in some contexts, the celebration of the concept of transnational border-crossings sometimes does not hold for the everyday reality of street life in London. Felix's alienness is also depicted by the fact that he has to refer to a "tube map like a tourist, taking a moment to convince himself of details no life-long Londoner should need to check", to reach that locality (Smith 117). Even during his journey back to Caldwell, he looks at the tube map again, but this time considers it in juxtaposition to his reality:

> The centre was not 'Oxford Circus' but the bright lights of Kilburn High Road. 'Wimbledon' was the countryside, 'Pimlico' pure science fiction. He put his right index finger over Pimplico's blue bar. It was nowhere. Who lived there? Who even passed through it? (163)

However, as an outsider, Felix also decentralises places like Oxford Circus and consolidates marginalised localities in the northwest part of London. The fact that there exists a stark distinction between the various localities and their communities in London, is established here. This example also suggests that class-based segregation separates northwest localities and other inner cities of London from the more affluent ones. The characters in Smith's novel, both black and white, namely Keisha/Natalie Blake, Leah Hanwell, Felix Cooper, and Nathan Bogle, all come from working-class backgrounds and are given a voice to narrate their stories. All of them, in their search for that sense of belonging, cross locale borders and class boundaries while also constantly confronting and challenging hostile people and situations.

The sense of belonging that they acquire, is, however, momentary which is probably Zadie Smith's assertion of the fact that communities and identities are conditional and subject to change. Characters like Keisha Blake, who grows up in the Caldwell locality in the northwest part of London, grapples with the idea of belonging and finds consolation for some years during her childhood through her association with her Irish friend, Leah Hanwell. Keisha herself is unaware of her 'othered' position until her relationship with Leah breaks for a while. She realises that:

> In the absence of Leah – at school, on the streets, in Caldwell – Keisha Blake felt herself to be revealed and exposed. She had not noticed until the break that the state of 'being Leah Hanwell's friend' constituted a sort of passport, leading Keisha a protected form of access in most situations. (191)

Keisha's detachment from Leah begins when the former realises that their material condition, their interests, and the prospects for their future differ. For Leah, Caldwell seems like an anomaly that simultaneously draws her excitement and philanthropic sympathy. It is particularly 37 Avenue Road that ignites in the teenage Leah, a desire for an exotic adventure. The fact that she consciously differentiates herself from the inhabitants of that locality is evident when she tells Keisha, "Actually I think I might get

on the 37, go to the Lock, see that lot" (Smith 185). The 'lot' here indicates the black immigrant working-class community and their social life that is portrayed as afflicted by gang culture, drugs, prostitution, and poverty. Leah thinks this 'lot' requires the empathy of the whites and therefore, every time she sees a beggar, she attempts to communicate with them and expresses her so-called compassion. But somehow that feeling does not correspond in the same way with Keisha. Keisha considers Leah's attempt at mixing up Camden Lock with Caldwell as unreasonable since residents of both localities have a distinct culture of their own. While Leah and the Camden community occupy themselves with "Baudelaire or Bukowski or Nick Drake or Sonic Youth or Joy Division…or Anne Rice or William Burroughs or Kafka's *Metamorphosis* or CND or Glastonbury or Situationists or *Breathless* or Samuel Beckett or Andy Warhol or million other Camden things", Keisha is drawn to rap and hip-hop music by artists such as Monie Love, Jay Z, and Rebel MC (182). As a result, when Keisha listens to their music and walks down Willesden Lane, she experiences a "kind of miracle and modern ecstasy" (182). However, Keisha is an outsider to her own community too:

> In the absence of Leah…. She was now relegated to the conceptual realm of 'those church kids', most of whom were Nigerian or otherwise African, and did not share Keisha Blake's anthropological curiosity regarding sin or her love of rap music. To the children of her own background she believed, rightly or wrongly, that she was an anomaly, and to the ravers and indie kids she knew for certain she was the wrong kind of outcast. (192)

Again, a distinct separation in the black community between those of African and Caribbean origins is also reflected here. Keisha strives to escape the working-class and racially discriminatory life in Caldwell in order to assimilate into the middle-class community of lawyers and advocates by vying for it and accordingly working hard. The presence of her Irish friend, Leah Hanwell, and her marriage to a half-African, half-Italian man named Frank, lends a cosmopolitan quality to her persona, which is in correspondence to Britain's multinational character. She also changes her name from Keisha to Natalie Blake in an attempt to fit in the new community, where she expects to be acknowledged through her professional achievements.

Racial bullying bothers Keisha and impedes her growth. People like Lorna Mackenzie, from her childhood, refigure in her later life even after she moves from the

disoriented life of Caldwell. The community of lawyer students in the university causes a sense of alienation in her not only because they are mostly white, but also because she is bullied and sexually harassed by her colleagues and seniors equally. At the same time, she was used as a token of black participation in court cases that dealt with black victims or criminals. This comments on how racism is still embedded in the British legal and social system as well. In one instance, a random person from a crowd in a bank, remarks, "These people don't know what is a British queue" (226). Then, Natalie's colleagues taunt her to-be husband, Frank's mixed-race origin (half-African, half-Italian) as "POLITICAL CORRECTNESS GONE MAD" (231). Again, during a court case where the victim is Jamaican, Natalie's senior and sexual abuser, named Johnnie, declares that "'It's not a trial about race'… directing the jury's attention to Natalie Blake with a slight move of his arm, 'and to allow it to become one is to submit the evidential burden – your first concern, as jurors in a British court – to the guilty-cos-we-say-so principles of our lamentable gutter press'" (235). A fellow female Jamaican barrister, Theodora, whom Natalie considers a role model, relates the same experience. Theodora states that:

> …when some floppy-haired chap from Surrey stands before these judges, all his passionate arguments read as "pure advocacy" …. They are understood by each other…. But Whaley's passion, or mine, or yours, read as "aggression". To the judge. This is his house and you are an interloper within it. And let me tell you, with a woman it's worse: "aggressive hysteria". (239)

It is evident, here, that the multicultural project, that has been promoted since Blair's government, is nothing more than adding a "local vibrancy" to the idea of British national identity (252). Natalie and Theodora's experiences as barristers are a testimonial representation of the British legal system, whose ethics are still questionable. However, their presence, though is an anomaly in an all-white establishment, is also a challenge to the system. During a Fresher's party, when Natalie sits amidst the horde of law students of the university, she no longer feels like a 'guest' to the place where she was born. This sudden realisation in her is impacted by the speaker's reference to old English history in the speech, which momentarily gives her the feeling of a 'host' as if she belongs there.

For Keisha, at least in the beginning, Africa holds no particular significance beyond the superficial image constructed through a person's appearance. During a planned weekend picnic with Leah, Natalie prepares an elaborate meal (including a Jamaican

ginger cake) and wears an outfit that makes her feel like an African, "although nothing she wore came from Arica except perhaps the earrings and bangles, conceptually" (257). She also refers to Africa as drawing the image of the continent "at an earlier point in time", when people were influenced by the "natural world and the collective imagination" (258). Therefore, even her longing to be amidst nature is never fulfilled. During occasional moments when she visits a park, her response to the natural surroundings is either, again, superficial or is expressed through a desire to be animalistic. Equally artificial are the regular weekend plans that her family and Leah organise on her lawn, imitating the lifestyle of traditional English families. It is only when Natalie starts venturing on a life of adventure that she begins to discover and map the inner cities of northwest London. Her false pretence of belonging to a typical higher-class community with a suburban lifestyle is finally broken when she re-visits her birthplace, this time without the presence of her white friend, Leah. As she walks and crosses through Queen's Park, Willesden, Kilburn, and then Caldwell, Keisha Blake becomes a 'translocal' black traveller reconstructing the urban spaces of London. This 'translocal' exploration of London is narrated in the section titled 'Crossings', which again connects to the idea of borders within the nation-state. Alternatively, Keisha's 'translocal' border crossings can also be understood as Keisha's 'return' to roots that lie in the city of London.

The writers adopt a transnational black feminist approach to highlight how black migrants shape and transform diasporic spaces. Along with it, the instances of cross-cultural confluences state that Britain will have to do away with its rigid imperialist ideologies to accommodate these diasporic identities. These instances point a way forward to re-conceive the construction of the idea of Britishness in terms of the post-war multicultural setup. In the next section, the chapter will specifically examine how black, queer identities attempt to create spaces of belonging and assert their agency amidst the hegemonic tendencies of erasing marginal lives from the spectrum of an urban renewal process.

## IV

The Notting Hill Carnival organised in the Notting Hill area of London is one of the biggest festivals held in Europe. Held every year in the month of August, the Carnival is now the most awaited festival in Britain and around the world. The use of

steel bands and sound systems are the cultural markers of the Carnival. However, with time the Carnival drew influences from the famous Rio de Janeiro festival and incorporated musicians playing a fusion of various African instruments, Afro-Cuban aestheticism in the attire of the dancers, and the use of more technologically advanced sound systems. Along with a celebration of roots, the Carnival formed a space of resistance to address the hegemonic forms of oppression across the diaspora. For instance, 2015's Carnival had an anti-globalisation stance. During the 2018 celebration, the participants of the procession observed a few minutes of silence in condolence for the gruesome death of 72 people in the Grenfell Tower, and in 2020 condoled the death of George Floyd due to police brutality in Minneapolis, USA. Keeping in mind the street carnival as a site that blurs imaginary boundaries, the chapter argues that black British writers refer, but peripherally, to the metaphor of the Carnival as a means to critique the politics of erasure and distortion of black expressive cultures. It also indicates how the performance of dance and music allows black migrant bodies to negotiate with their racial and sexual identities and, in turn, re-conceptualize the possibilities of belonging in the urban spaces of the host land. This is in congruence with the idea that despite the availability of references to the past, black British characters may not attempt to 'return' to the geographical space of Africa, or the Caribbean. On one hand, this is because the present generation of black migrants chose to refrain from the pre-destined route to self-discovery implied in the Middle Passage. As examined in the earlier section, transcultural elements are embedded in the structure of the host societies, and through the exploration of 'translocal' changes in the city, black British migrants trace their hybrid roots. On the other hand, there are no proper laws both in Africa (except in South Africa) and the Caribbean that protect the rights of LGBTQ communities. A large section of the society in both Africa and the Caribbean perceives homosexuality as unnatural and outside the norm of society's structure which leads to penalising, that includes imprisonment, flogging and in some cases even death, of members having same-sex relationships. Most places also criminalise cross-dressing and sex change through surgery. The recent protests over the retraction of 1864 anti-sodomy laws in Jamaica, Nigeria's anti-gay bill passed in 2022 followed by Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, testify to the precarious lives experienced by members of the LGBTQ community. Hence, the black queer characters in black British women's novels do not opt for a 'return' to their homeland, although the place is recollected through experiences of the past generation. Moreover, the significance of collective memories of migration

and survival is seen as experienced through a hybridised form of black expressive cultures that relieves intersectional dilemmas. Mojisola Adebayo's *Moj of the Antarctic*: *An African Odyssey* (2006) can be cited as an example where the protagonist, Moj, disguises as a white male whaler and escapes to Antarctica after her queer partner Maj, a filed slave, is killed by their white master. Based on the life of an enslaved woman named Ellen Craft, who cross-dressed as a white man and escapes slavery, the play uses multiple layers of stories from different periods to state how black, queer characters use performance as a form of resistance to negotiate with their marginalised positions. Adebayo, who also started the Afri-Quia Theatre, seeks to particularly deal with theoretical and creative discourses about black queer identities in Britain. The prime figure of her discussion is Muhammad Ali who "troubled gender stereotypes and racist beliefs about black masculinity being monolithic, inarticulate, even savage" ("Everything" 131).

Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* too deals with similar dilemmas by exploring the life of a famous British jazz trumpet player, Joss Moody in the 1960s. The story is said to be based on the life of the American jazz player named Billy Tipton in the 1930s, whose gender as a transvestite was revealed only after his death. The discovery of this fact created an uproar in the entertainment industry, as more details of his past relationships with women came into the picture. In the same way, Joss Moody's voice is almost absent throughout the novel, until at the end when his adopted son Colman Moody reads his letter written as the 'Last Word'. Joss' story is rather revealed through the voices of Colman, Edith Moore, and Big Red McCall which is interjected by Millicent Moody's narration of 'House and Home' at regular intervals. The white journalist, Sophie Stones, alternatively represented the heteronormative expectations of the society at large and their fear of deviant bodies. As Caroline Koegler mentions:

> Homophobia is a powerful societal as well as discursive structure of (self-)perception that degrades non-heteronormative relationships and practices and puts multiple strains on individuals. It stimulates hatred and aggression, legitimates abuse and violence, and frequently demands performances of shame, unhappiness, and isolation of queer individuals. (5)

This justifies Joss Moody's disguise in men's clothes as a means to fulfil his ambitions. Joss' fear of being ostracised and rejected both by the heteronormative black or white

community is transformed into a reality when the doctor and the funeral undertaker declare Joss' body as biologically female. Koeger too states that "Joss might not be suffering from the specifics of a queer diaspora" but is threatened by a "transphobic backlash", which explains his fear of visiting doctors (10). For Joss, doctors symbolise the hegemonic structure of institutions that deems anything beyond the norm as unnatural. Conditioned by such perspectives, Colman reacts to the discovery of his father's queer identity in the form of extreme rejection. Along with re-visiting details of his father's routine life, as he had seen since childhood, Colman questions his masculinity being brought up by queer father. In a fit of anger at being duped by his father, Colman agrees to partner with Sophie Stones, who will publish a biography of Joss Moody. Besides, Colman critiques the jazz world where, as his father stated, "anything goes" (57). Colman queries his father's closeted sexual identity because the period of the 1960s was fairly inclusive. The reason for the ambiguity as Koegler points out is because "queerness is still in the process of acquiring a proper 'house and 'home' in black British scholarship" (3). Koegler's statement aligns with what Pratibha Paramar, Shaila, and Gail Low expressed in the black lesbian roundtable conference titled "Many Voices, One Chant" held in 2014. Thus, through the queer, black figure of Joss Moody, Jackie Kay creates two kinds of 'home' in the process of de-centring whiteness and heterogeneity.

In context to this, Koegler argues that *Trumpet* "performs a distinct homing of conjoint black and queer positionalities in its readers' perceptions of what is valid and liveable lives, and valid forms of home-making, in 1990s Britain" (9). She mentions the privacy of Joss' bedroom as one kind of 'home' that allows him to dismantle ideas of normative family structures that dwell on heterogeneity. While agreeing with Koegler's arguments, the chapter adds that the secured sense of home that Joss and Millicent construct in the outskirts of Scotland i.e., Torr, functions as a liminal space where they dismantle specific boundaries of racial and sexual identities. Millicent recounts that the house had everything that mattered to them: "Joss' holiday clothes are all here. Colman's model aeroplanes, fishing rods, old green bottles dug up from the sea. Colman's little antique collection. His coins. Joss's records. A box of his mild cigars" (Kay 5). It is through the alternative performance of gender, domesticity, and homemaking, with the assistance of his Millicent that Joss achieves the freedom to continue with the perceived public image of a famous trumpet player. Their "untraditional house" and

"unconventional" family, who were often on tours for Joss' musical performance, are in contrast to the stability and permanence of Torr (47). The place is a part of Millicent's past that now is a part of Joss and Colman's lives too. Millicent reflects on the unchanging nature of the place since she was a small girl: "The chippie is the same chippie. The photography shop here that was established in 1886 is still standing – F. Futcher and Son. The Family Butcher, B Savage, has been here since I was a girl" (23). Colman also remembers the café from his childhood and states that "Torr was sacred. Couldn't be touched" (211). For his father, Colman recollects, it was the "windy roads, the wind on the top of the cliffs, the wild walk down to the harbour" and particularly, boats that mattered (211). The imagery of the sea, fog, and boats present in Torr, resonates with John Moore's experience during his first arrival in Greenock near Port Glasgow. This association is deliberate on the part of the author because Joss Moody, and later even Colman decides to trace their genealogy from the time of John Moore's advent to Scotland. At the time of Joss' death too, he imagines being lulled to sleep with the voice of his father, John Moore, singing the Scottish folk song, "*Heil Ya Ho boy*…" (277). Thus, it is eventually the ordinary space of Torr in Scotland, instead of London or Africa, that allows Joss and Millicent Moody the practice of an intersectional family or domesticity. Amma's "countercultural experiment" in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, where she creates a family of two gay godfathers and seven lesbian godmothers for her daughter Yazz, can also be cited as an instance of an intersectional family (39).

The second kind of 'home' that is constructed in the novel is the stage that Joss shares with his fellow members of the jazz band. The cultural forms like reggae and jazz in Britain that are known to originate from the Caribbean have already encountered "mediation" through its complex "dialogue with Africa" and Europe (Hall, "Cultural" 231-33). In this way, the performance of a hybridised form of jazz on stage allows him to disrupt all essentialized notions that deem him as 'different' for the public eye. Moreover, as quoted in Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, Ralph Ellison states that "because jazz finds its very life in improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazz man must lose his identity even as he finds it" (79). In the novel, Joss too articulates that while playing the trumpet, "when he gets down… he loses his sex, his race, his memory. He strips himself bare, tales everything off, till he's barely human. Then he brings himself back" (Kay 131). He also connects to his historical, cultural, and gendered ties and disconnects from

it all at once, as he recalls "Scotland. Africa. Slavery. Freedom. He is a girl. A man. Everything, nothing…. Nothing weighs him down. Not the past nor the future" (136). The metaphor of masculinity expressed through "bandages, braces, cufflinks, watches, hair grease, suits, buttons, ties" which is part of his heteronormative disguise, is dismantled during his performance (135). This shows that Joss is not only dissolving boundaries between these essentialised categories but also simultaneously seeking a complex interaction between them. His musical instrument symbolically indicates the driving tool for liberation and integration of differences simultaneously that is enmeshed with multiple subjectivities – black, Scottish, queer, including African and British to a larger extent. Joss's self-identification with these subjectivities through his performance acts as an evocation of his ancestors whose resistance and similar struggles were silenced. As Paul Gilroy comments, "the place prepared for black cultural expression in the hierarchy of creativity generated by the pernicious metaphysical dualism", "identifies blacks with the body and whites with the mind" (*Black Atlantic* 97). Thus, Joss, in Thomas Riccio's terms, promotes a "community of place", that involves his instinctual attachment to Torr and jazz, over a "community of ideas" (17). Thomas Riccio states that performance is an integral part of Africa's indigeneity, where sensual reality and connection of human beings with spirits, natural objects, ancestors, etc. is thought of as superior to ideas and constructions. The body and its spontaneous attachment to the topography (the livelihood, gods, traditional religious and cultural practices attached to it) evoke the idea of 'community of place'. This, according to Riccio, has been in a continuous conflict with the 'community of ideas' since the advent or influence of the Western world, which privileges sight/vision over other senses and situates the West's perception of reality as universal. The fact that a black queer/transvestite plays the trumpet counters supposed constructions that divide human beings and communities from each other. Thus, Joss undergoes a process of un-gendering by emphasizing the experience of a sensual reality, as opposed to ideas and constructs of the body. In this context, Joss Moody's performance can also be seen as an act of 're-memory' where the collective memory of violence, annihilation, and displacement embodied in his identity, are commemorated. This enables Joss to grapple with the acceptance of his diasporic sensibilities in Britain, considering his origins both in Africa and Scotland. The fact that Joss undergoes a negotiation with his 'self' in the context of his gender, race, and nationality during his musical performances, indicates the significance of an intersectional approach.

Like Joss, black characters in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* too transform in terms of gender and sexual orientation. In portraying this, Evaristo seeks to deconstruct essentialism in every possible form, keeping in mind the fact that even marginalised bodies with multiple positionalities have the potential to build hegemonic discourses. Here, we can refer to Nira Yuval-Davis and Avtar Brah's observations discussed in Chapter Two of our study. There are lesbian, gay, transgender, and queer characters in the novel, some of whom are closeted and some who have revealed their identity. For instance, Bummi, a first-generation black immigrant from Nigeria, is a conventional woman married to Augustine, who she met as a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Ibadan. After they migrate to England, Bummi maintains a strong connection to her homeland and the beliefs she imbibed from there. This is even reflected in her response to her daughter, Carole's sudden disassociation with black food and her marriage to Freddy, a white man. However, after Augustine's death, Bummi starts a cleaning service company, of which she is the chief executive. Sister Omofe is one of the staff working in her company and they both share similar views on an African way of parenting and the presence of a male head to discipline their children. Like Bummi, Sister Omofe too was married traditionally but her husband left her alone to marry another woman. Overcome by the absence of a loved one, Bummi and Sister Omofe find comfort in each other and even share an intimate bond "together as man and wife" (Evaristo 178). They eventually separate due to Bummi's inhibitions regarding homosexual relationships, as she imagines how her daughter will react to this "unmentionable thing" (180). Later Bummi gets engaged to a Ghanaian man named Kofi, despite having desires to bond with Sister Omofe again, thus remaining in a closeted sexual identity. There are minor references to other such closeted identities, but the novel largely revolves around revealing and discovering them.

Amma and Dominique are portrayed as instances of the latter, as mentioned in the preceding section. Besides, the example of Amma and Dominique whose expression of identity is part of their radical politics, the character of Megan/Morgan is equally important in understanding the process of realising one's identity. Born in the Northumbrian countryside, Megan is brought up under normative gender roles, but her mother notices that something is "not quite right" about her (Evaristo 308). The claustrophobic space of the living room where her mother gossiped with her aunts and the figure of the Barbie doll, symbolised restriction for Megan. At a very early age,

Megan was aware of the discrimination deeply engrained in conventional parenting practices. As she grows up, she begins to hate her body and thus attempts to change her appearance by wearing men's clothing. She explores her inclination in the company of both boys and girls and thus, from a heterosexual, she declares herself a bi-sexual and then a lesbian. Megan leaves the countryside for London and finds a "sanctuary" in the internet "chat rooms with other young outsiders as pissed-off as she was" (318). Here, she meets the transgender Bibi, with whom Megan later settles in Hebden Bridge. Like the inclusive setup of the chat rooms, Hebden Bridge was a town in England inhabited by "old-fashioned hippies and new-fashioned non-conformists" (326). It is in this space that Megan changes her name to Morgan as she begins to uphold a "gender-free" identity which means that she identifies neither as male or female, but as pansexual, indicating that she is "attracted to individuals on the male-female-trans spectrum" (328, 336). For Morgan, the North of England, particularly spaces like the Hebden Bridge acted as an 'extra dimension', like Torr in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, where marginal characters identifying with multiple subject positions are offered an alternative to re-imagine the idea of 'home'. The picture of Morgan and Bibi walking to the rustic setting of the Calder Valley and holding hands "in the middle of nowhere" while reflecting on possible "gender-neutral alternatives", shows Evaristo's endeavour to create a utopian possibility for a post-feminist approach (328).

Such performances of blackness and queerness can be seen in terms of Carol Boyce Davies' interpretation of 'carnivalized black bodies' creating spaces of resistance in a hostile British setup. Though there is no direct reference to the Notting Hill Carnival in Kay's *Trumpet*, the fact that the most crucial years of Joss Moody and his family are explained through the period of the 1960s denotes its specific association with the Carnival. Since the essence of the Carnival lies in an expression of oneself, it can be assumed that Joss took influence from it to improvise his jazz music and "represent a definition of his identity" (Gilroy 79). In Zadie Smith's *NW*, there is a recurring reference to the Carnival, but none of the characters are seen attending it. The Carnival is referred to as an upcoming event being performed in the background. The side-lined observation of the Carnival perhaps aligns with the underlying theme of the homosexual relationship between the two major characters in the novel, Keisha and Leah. Though they assume a sense of the Carnival, one part of the novel is also referred to in association with the chaos and crowd of Oxford Street. The novel's elusive treatment of

the Carnival, which defines itself as a celebration of the black community, black roots, and recently its hybrid character, is juxtaposed with the complications faced by the central characters' self-identification with communities based on ethnicity, race, gender, or class. The characters seek a form of community where they will be accepted, which is not necessarily bound by common racial or ethnic associations. In this regard, spaces such as the "little country church, a medieval church" founded in the year 1315 in Willesden function as a liminal space for Keisha and Leah to address both their racial differences and their homosexual relationship (Smith 69). Leah gives an elaborate description of the surroundings of the church as dilapidated and dirty, but the monument of John Francklyn, a member of the House of Commons in the mid-17th Century, captivates her. In contrast to the white history of the church, its "sombre spell", a congregation of different races (Polish, Indian, African), and the statue of "The Black Madonna carrying "*The Christ Child*", draws both Keisha and Leah's attention (72). They decide to visit the church again as it becomes a place of reassurance and comfort for both of them. Through the existence of the church with its mosaic-like characteristics, the novel re-imagines the multicultural or global position of Britain. Therefore, by portraying black characters as performers, lawyers, bankers, and politically conscious individuals, the novel not only interrogates the issues of race and racism but also seeks to establish the fact that there exist alternate spaces where mixed-race childhood friends do away with their differences and reconcile with each other.

In contrast to Zadie Smith marginally alluding to the Carnival in *NW*, Diana Evans portrays the rise and fall of the 'Midnight Ballet' parallel to the development of the Carnival. It is through the re-visitation of Lucas and Denise's history that the novel explores the multicultural and hybrid spirit of Notting Hill, which is primarily dominated by black and ethnic minority communities. As a celebration of black culture, both the dance troupe and the Carnival espoused the idea of inclusivity and multiplicity of cultural influences. There are references to sounds heard from the Carnival while the troupe prepares for their on-stage performances. A pictorial description of the street procession mentions a "Bulgarian dance troupe", children in costumes, and music by "Calypsonians inside street-corner speakers, or beaten out loud from the silver bellies of Trinidadian steel pans" (Evans 97). The third-person narrator then traces the route of the procession or the "scruffy little bus-dodging ragtag parade", moving to the Ladbroke Grove "all the way to Holland Park Avenue, along Notting Hill Gate, left into Pembridge

Road, back down Chepstow" as it "release[d] slum frustrations and let the world know there was more to this district than drugs, colour clashes, concrete mixers and scrap heaps" (97). Similarly, the 'Midnight Ballet' too was a medium through which the black dancers, most of whom were dislocated and searching for an identity, attempted a reconciliation with their roots and their pasts. The troupe also acts as a space where notions of purity and absolutism are debated. During a routine practice, when Antoney and Milly perform a fusion of contemporary dance moves with Apepe, a Nigerian dance, the old drummer Benjamin gets offended and suggests they stick to the original elements of Apepe because it is a traditional dance. Antoney, on the other hand, considered the performance as lacking. So, when a white boy named Bluey, who was wandering in the Carnival, enters their dance room, Antoney readily takes him in to play the cowbell. This inclusion, according to Antoney, rounded off the choreography of the act. Taking transnational references from dancers abroad, "who had challenged the boundaries of performance by bringing the work off stage and into the audience", the troupe took their performance forward at the beginning to the local audience of Ladbroke Grove (Evans 47). In this manner, the troupe takes part in the "semiotic of 'taking space'" (Davies, "Black Bodies" 56). Though Carol Boyce Davies discusses this in association with black, female bodies as a rejection of their exoticization in Western culture, in Evans' novel the idea can be used for even black, male bodies who demystify essentialised notions of masculinity. In Oscar's definitions, a good dancer is "soft-limbed and slender" with "delicate hands" (45). Moreover, 'taking space' essentially means having agency, which both the troupe and Joss Moody had on stage as well, because their performance reached the audience and made them part of it, instead of passive viewers where voyeurism comes into play. In doing so, the black, male/female/queer characters reclaim their bodies for the purpose of performance.

Here, our study also perceives the location where the creolised dance pieces are imagined and created as allowing for mutability in essentialised forms of identity. Oscar Day, a black bisexual and a dancer, lived in the basement of St Bernard's Church on Portobello Road after losing his home in 1954 during the Acton tornado. Oscar starts a small dancing club in the basement and in this way, the abandoned building, still retaining its ancient architectural glamour, functions as a space for dancers to experience a momentary liberation from daily problems and develop their creative abilities without obstructions. Moreover, the church has a history as a communal space for worship, but it

also "served as a venue for local sales, youth clubs, women's meetings and tea dances" (Evans 98). Sheltering first and second-generation black dancers belonging to different classes and ethnic ties, yet similar racialised experiences, the basement serves as an 'extra dimension', where they explore their art. Particularly for Antoney, the place had a special significance because "this was the first place where he'd felt he belonged since moving to England" (66). Towards the end of the novel, when Antoney slowly drifts to a state of insanity, he seeks shelter in the basement of the derelict church building. As the dance troupe splits and loses its magnificence, the memory of its presence starts to fade. This is portrayed in the novel in association with the massive gentrification in Notting Hill, which sought to erase or manipulate the existence of black expressive cultures vis-a-vis the dance troupe and the Carnival. Nevertheless, the presence of the dance troupe and its popularity in Europe marks the celebration and development of black art and culture, which takes the metaphor of Africa beyond the limits of the geographical place. Characters like Antoney shape and imagine their Afro-Caribbean identity to transform into a global or European identity through his performance. He achieves his moment of self-identification with his past, his roots, and his present when he delivers the best performances on stage. In the same way, the representation of Torr in *Trumpet*, the country church of Willesden in *NW*, and the church basement of Notting Hill in *The Wonder*, are 'extra dimensions' that provide alternate possibilities of understanding hybridity and incorporating discourse of race and racism in Britain. By imagining these spaces, black British writers state their resistance to imperialistic and patriarchal tendencies that need to recognise black women's issues in terms of intersectionality.

In conclusion, the chapter seeks to assert that black British women writers experimenting with different forms and structures have critiqued multiculturalism, including its multiple complexities, without clearly stating their approval or disapproval. Their nuanced stances present the fact that there can be no particular fixed idea of what multiculturalism and hybridity stand for when it concerns the problems afflicting displaced migrants of the African diaspora. Both concepts are bound to be misconstrued under the politics of essentialism and over-simplification. Therefore, the option of transnational and 'translocal' approaches enable these writers to re-engage with the concepts of identity, belonging, and memory of the homeland, that is caused by migration and displacement.

Nevertheless, what is most important for these writers, in the process of finding ways to re-think discourses on race and racism, is the manner in which the perceived image of Africa is constantly being constructed through performance. By critiquing the traditional debates on the black Atlantic, these writers seek to initiate new discussions by focusing on intersectionality. Their inclusion of a wide range of experiences based on race, class, age and sexuality, points to the aspect of continuity and transformation. Rather than harking back on "frozen crystallised memories", they re-imagine 'extra dimensions' in the host land itself which makes it possible for black diasporic individuals to re-connect with their homeland (Pitts 1). By imagining these spaces of belonging, these black British women writers are not only changing the dynamics of nation-building but also evoking a mosaic sort of image used by Johny Pitts to explore his Afropean identity. In other words, the "scattered fragments" of memories of homeland, created a "bricolage of blackness" that black British writers projected through the use of metaphors and liminal spaces (1). In that regard, food, 'body markings', stories from 'Back Home', the cross-cultural influence of dance and music, altogether develop an experience of Africa that is "not monolithic…not entirely amorphous either" but is rather "both *in* and *of* Europe" (Pitts 1). To add to it, as Carol B. Davies notes, "If…the category of woman is one of performance of gender, then the category Black woman, or woman of color (sic), exists as multiple performances of gender and race and sexuality based on the particular cultural, historical, geopolitical, class communities in which Black women exist" ("Black Women" 6). Significantly, black British women writers seek to state that to redefine their identities, black migrants must consciously acknowledge the inedible imprint of Africa in their lives and experiences, which will in turn enhance Africa's essence as an inexplicable part of a global identity.

Endnotes:

[1] *Help Send Us Back to Africa* is a campaign that raises funds in order to trace black people's genetic origins and provide means to repatriate back to their homeland; https://startsomegood.com/helpsendusbacktoafrica. *Black and Abroad* initially was an agency that helped black people return to Africa. Presently, the initiative is more culturally oriented; https://www.blackandabroad.com.

[2] Merengue is a type of music and dance style that represents the national spirit of the Dominican Republic, but has both African and Spanish influences; Skank is a dance step usually performed to reggae music.

[3] Shango Storm is a dance piece choreographed by Antoney taking inspiration from Katherine Dunham's piece. Shango is the thunder god from the Yoruba tradition who is worshipped by many people from Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil.

[4] Afro-Jamaican religion; A Jamaican dance form performed by people of Kumina religion during the ninth night of a funeral; Also termed Bruckins, is a creolised dance form of traditional African and European influences performed during the Emancipation Day.

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