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**A BIRD'S VIEW OF THE CARIBBEAN AND BLACK-BRITISH WRITING DEPICTING THE IDENTITY
CRISIS OF THE EMIGRANTS CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF ROOTLESSNESS, IN-BETWEEN SPACES,
HOMELESSNESS, ACCULTURALIZATION AND DISLOCATION**

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ABSTRACT

Caribbean writing by and large depends on the birth and development of the literature that grew out of the post-war emigrations from the Caribbean to Britain, and as such adds to the growing body of texts that focus on Black British writing. David Ellis was greatly responsible for the establishment of the black British writing as a coherent literary tradition. He achieved this through recourse to biographical and contextual information and thus his writings represent a literary and social history of the emergence of black Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. The British African Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean people are residents of UK who are of West-Indian background and whose ancestors were primarily indigenous to Africa. As immigration from Africa increased in the 1990s, the term has sometimes been used to include UK residents solely of African origin or as a term to define all Black British residents through the phrase "African and Caribbean" and has more often been used to cover such a broader grouping. The most common and traditional use of the term, African-Caribbean community is in reference to the groups of residents continuing aspects of Caribbean culture, customs and traditions in the UK. A majority of the African- Caribbean population in the UK is of Jamaican origin. A significant proportion of writers and artists were there among the post-war Caribbean settlers in Britain. The renowned among them are George Lamming, Wilson Harris, Sam Selvon and V.S.Naipaul. The economic motives, emotional and meta-physical factors are actually responsible for the Caribbean writers' urge to migrate to London. In addition to these motives, the colonial education influenced the Caribbean people to look up to Britain as the real and happening world. But the expectations of the Caribbean immigrant were soon shattered as the reality turned out to be very different from the myth. This disillusioned and wounded psyche of the Caribbeans has been portrayed successfully by many Caribbean writers in their literary works.

Keywords: rootlessness, immigration, loss of identity, dislocation, exile

KY PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

"Immigration is not a onetime movement; it is a complex shifting of physical, mental and emotional states, which begins much before and extends far beyond the actual event. As children of immigrants we are denied these realities by Western society, yet constantly reminded of them."¹

"For many British people, the idea that Britain has a history that has, over the years, been characterized by much ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity would be to undermine their basic understanding of what it means to be British."²

Caribbean writing by and large depends on the birth and development of the literature that grew out of the post-war emigrations from the Caribbean to Britain, and as such adds to the growing body of texts that focus on black British writing. David Ellis was greatly responsible for the establishment of the black British writing as a coherent literary tradition. He achieved this through recourse to biographical and contextual information and thus his writings represent a literary and social history of the emergence of black Britain in the second half of the twentieth century.

WORKS ON EXILE

Caribbean and "Black British" novels of exile tend to follow the general trend in Caribbean fiction. Even if things are currently changing, the majority of the novels published so far have been written by men and relatively few among them depict convincing and complex women characters. It would, of course, be unfair to assume that all Caribbean male novelists write men-centred novels in which female figures are confined to caricature or stereotyped roles. Many of Wilson Harris's and some of George Lamming's novels, for instance, provide cogent examples to the contrary.³ and these writers write basically from the islands. There is also a mention of this in a recent novel, Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985), which centres on a young Caribbean woman's move to Britain. These exceptions, however, do not prove the rule. And, by and large, one can say that novels of exile written by men only give women characters functional or symbolical roles without exploring their individual

personality from the inside. Not surprisingly, then, it is chiefly in novels written by women that the female displaced person's experience is rendered with greater depth and sensitivity.

Exile is a term that is generally defined as a forced removal from one's native country. It means expulsion from home, or "banishment". A voluntary separation or absence from one's home or country is another connotation suggested by this term. Yet, whether one is evicted from one's country by a legal authority or whether one leaves willingly because one feels driven away from one's home by conditions prevailing there, both interpretations of the concept have essentially the same meaning: the absence of the exile from one's native country is a forced one. It is also very important to stress the point that the concept of exile means at least two things. One is running away from one place and going to another and the other is getting away from something as to get to something else.

THE (NOT SO) PLEASURES OF EXILE

Right from the time of great discoveries and globalization, identities have started shifting; changing places and forms, moving around numerous locations and they are to a larger extent are prone to undergo huge transformation. The colonial situation complicated the racial, socio-political and cultural relations and it has constituted an indisputable turning point in the development of the countries involved. The research hypothesis pertaining to the Caribbean scenario is that—*The Pleasures of Exile* is a post-colonialist, post-realist and post-nationalist counter-discourse as it gives us George Lamming's idea about the complex issues of identity contained within the Caribbean island-states that were largely shaped by the European colonial discourses and practice from the late fifteenth century until the late twentieth century. Lamming possesses the acute social consciousness that is vitally concerned with politics and society. His major concerns are race, class, gender, colonialism and exile. Lamming explores colonialism and exile through his works of fiction, and sets out to communicate the ways in which colonialism and exile have shaped the Caribbean writers of his generation. Lamming's major and recurring theme in his works is exile.

Lamming's keen interest in the phenomenon of exile affecting the Caribbean area is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he speaks of this issue in many voices. Lamming was at once particularly "embittered, resigned, militant, critical, and angry," when addressing the issue of exile in his book of essays, *The Pleasures of Exile* (Nair, 1996: 125). His preoccupation with this issue caused him to put the following question:

How has it come about that (...) a group of men, different in years and temperament and social origins, should leave the respective islands they know best, even exchange life there for circumstances which are almost wholly foreign to them? (Lamming, 1992:23)

In another reputed work of his, *The Emigrants*, Lamming talks about the anxiety that the Emigrants have in leaving the West Indian coast as soon as possible without delay in anticipation of a better break in life. Lamming is the first person to voice the problems of exile face by the islanders.

ANGLO-CARIBBEAN NOVELISTS

The Anglo-Caribbean novelists came of age in England in the 80s. The boat, 'Empire Windrush' has brought over 492 Jamaican passengers to the UK. This historical arrival is actually regarded as the beginning of the twentieth century Caribbean migration to Britain. This has marked Britain as the third largest Caribbean island after Jamaica and Trinidad.

Mostly British African Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean people who are residents of UK are of West-Indian background and their ancestors were primarily indigenous to Africa. As immigration from Africa increased in the 1990s, the term has sometimes been used to include UK residents solely of African origin as Black British residents or "African and Caribbean." The most common and traditional use of the term, African-Caribbean community is in reference to the groups of residents who continue with aspects of Caribbean culture, customs and traditions in the UK. A majority of the African-Caribbean population in the UK is of Jamaican origin. The terms "Caribbean" and "West Indian" are used interchangeably by many people in discussing the literature of this particular portion of the earth.

However, "Caribbean" embraces the literature in all the languages of the area - English, French, Spanish and Dutch - but by "West Indian", it is meant only the writings of those Island and Mainland territories where English is the official language and the chief medium of literary composition. In this study, therefore, by "Caribbean" it is meant the literature of the English-speaking Caribbean, otherwise known as West Indian literature.

MIGRATION

Migration plays a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing the thoughts of Black women writers pertaining to the juxtaposition of their views and conflicts. A close study of their experiences dispel the over worked notions about women's complex realities in the city. The portrayal of characters by the recent Black women writers helps one to analyse and examine the pressures of capitalism and post-colonialism. This analysis further results to question the very definitions of home, belonging, nation and identity. The feminist and post-colonial analysis throws light on the interstitial space, which further caters to the expulsion of the contemporary women's urban fiction in the construction of terms of difference and privilege.²

The literature of migration to the cities from the islands represents particular geographical places, which further depict the engagement of the protagonists with such places and specifically with the social spaces of housing, work and leisure. This is where the realism is projected through sensitive characterization. The modern Black women writers focus on the global city and also on the different way in which people and places are represented in the context of inequality and power.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON BLACK-BRITISH LITERATURE

Globalization in itself is a greater movement which influences the people by and large, resulting in changes that unnerve the roots of people in every possible way. According to John Eade, post-colonial migration "has created a metropolis where struggles around racial and ethnic differences engage with a colonial heritage of beliefs and practises concerning insiders and outsiders."³ Further it has to be noted and understood that half of the world's migrants are women and their

engagement is often underrated and criticized. The contemporary writing by women about migration to London, not only illustrates the socio-economic and political pressures that lead to the characterization of the women's experience of London, but also it reflects the ways in which migration places the discourse of home. Therefore, in-order to study the contemporary urban migrant literature, one has to examine the representations of public space, with particular reference in relation to access power and the re-creation of identity.

Migration to London is presented and re-presented in different ways by the women writers. They project the urban space in terms of gender, racism, sexism and classism. The topography of London itself becomes a space of exploration for the women writers to project or voice their experiences with a revised sense of identity and community.

GENERATIONS OF CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

According to David Ellis, who is an established writer and principal lecturer in English, at the Wolverhampton, UK, Caribbean literature can be divided into three sections based on three generations of writers and their writings. *The First Generation* is mostly concerned with what is defined as the literature of exile. Ellis focuses on the writing of Sam Selvon, George Lamming and E.R. Braithwaite, as these writers share a commonality in their writings. The writings of these writers are predominantly targeted towards a white British audience. Ellis analyses how, growing up in the British West Indies, and colonial education taught these writers to regard Britain as the "Mother Country". He observes that when Blacks arrived in Britain as immigrants anticipating better prospects, they were tremendously influenced and also were imposed by colonialism to accept British codes and practices. However, the host population never considered them as British. Ellis further observes that the fiction of Selvon, Lamming, and Braithwaite present the experience of Exile and along-with Britain's predominant racist response to black immigrants. Their writings highlight the realities of immigrant life in Britain that challenges the colonial myths. The central theme of these writers is the notion of identity. Ellis argues that acceptance of colonial rule resulted in 'rootlessness' and this

rejection of Mother Country left the Caribbean immigrant with no sense of national identity.

The Second Generation covers a period characterized by its continued construction of racial ideologies. Ellis observes that even television failed to represent the black presence in Britain as normal. In response to the racist culture which represented black characters as 'Other' Ellis suggests that their response is shaped by their political and literary radicalism. In spite of twenty years of immigration, the blacks are always considered to be people of foreign identity.

The Third or the Present Generation is concerned about the seeming process of assimilation that has occurred, with TV and sports personalities providing a constant and identifiable black British presence. Hence the classification of the work of British born writers Joan Riley, Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen as twentieth-century British fiction rather than 'Anglophone Literature'. Ellis attributes this assimilation in art and culture specifically to the growth of a solid and independent black press and also to black women writers' contribution. However, Caribbean migrants and their offspring are shown to suffer discrimination, police harassment and social poverty. The third generation expression is consequently shown to illustrate the concerns of an emergent black British community.

JOAN RILEY AND HER CONTEMPORARIES

Joan Riley with her novel *The Unbelonging* (1985), became the first African-Caribbean woman to focus on the lives of Blacks in England. Three further novels appeared in quick succession, *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), *Romance* (1988), and *A Kindness to the Children* (1992). Like Riley's debut novel, they chronicle the lives of black Caribbean immigrant women in Britain. Riley's fiction is written with a black audience in mind. Ellis effectively demonstrates how her work addresses Caribbean patriarchy in Britain and the Caribbean in order to illustrate the embattlement inherent within that community. As a result the Caribbean is shown to be a voice in dialogue with the community in Britain. Regardless of the continued presence of British racism, the notion of return is shown to be a

romance due to the underlying consciousness of an emergent black British identity.

Riley and Caryl Phillips have been criticized for not focusing much on the situation of the black British, and for the negativity surrounding their portrayal of the black male suggests that the black British audience is addressed by both writers in the manner of critical awareness. Whereas Dabydeen's work comprises both creative writing and criticism, hence he 'uses his work to turn that critical tradition onto British society; to re-sense the issues of colonialism, and promote the marginalized figures of the colonial relationship'. Dabydeen's work demonstrates his difference in relation to the other writers in that whilst writing for a white audience, Dabydeen's purpose revolves around 'educating white society about itself'. In his attempt to educate white Britain about the mythology of colonialism and its legacy, Ellis shows Dabydeen as promoting a creolized British society as the way forward. Unlike Dabydeen, Riley's purpose is not to educate the white society but she writes for the Blacks and about the Blacks and the conflicts they face for the world audience. Her writings have a larger appeal.

Women from the Caribbean who arrive in America, England and Canada as domestic workers seek the promise of a better life. This powerfully presents the case of women caught in the web of multiple and clashing realities. Silvera, an established writer reflects her interaction with a woman by name, Primrose from Jamaica, who tells about her regrets concerning her decision to move to Canada. She remarks:

"I sit and think, and I say this is the worst life I ever came across. The worst sometimes I ask myself how I really leave my job back home and come here."⁴

The same lines of thought expressing total disappointment to migrate to the UK have been reflected by many black women in their writings. This forms a common link among the black writers. The post-colonial immigrant women exist in literature to depict their miffed voices, as they are mainly the supporters to their men or families. They come to North America or England as wives who should maintain comfortable homes or provide financial support to their student husbands, or as

children who join their families. Whatever may be the reason for their migration, they find themselves caught in a web of rootlessness, thus leading their lives to become ambiguous.

Barbara Christian, in her recently published Black Feminist criticism, which is an excellent analysis of feminist theory, does not consider the clashes inherent in the movement from one country to another and from what is essentially one culture to another as ambivalent. Further other scholars and commentators such as Rhonda Cobham in her essay, "Revisioning our Kumbas", examines with validity, the inner search of the women of the Caribbean and African origin and the experiences of their characters in thinly veiled autobiography mode. The Caribbean woman writer's complex identity places her at the crossroads of various discourses of otherness. Race, gender and geographic location mark her as peripheral, distant, marginal other. Their discourses of otherness are characterized by oppression, silence and dehumanization, mostly due to the fact of being misspoken for and wrongly defined by the dominant culture. In order to define herself, the Caribbean woman must break through conventionally imposed yet accepted notions about her identity. Usually the female voice is often suppressed in favour of the male-centred declaration of identity. Most of the women writers use autobiographical element in their works to make their presentation and representation of their characters more natural and realistic. But they have to use this more efficiently else their writings seem loosely connected.

In this connection the works of Gilroy are now enjoying a renaissance as the line of immigrant women of African descent are being absorbed not only as part of culture of feminist but also as sociological-political renderings of a silent force. Boyce Davies' text, 'Black Women Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject', is often referred by reviewers as a major contribution to many related fields like Black feminism, feminist studies, African literary and cultural studies.

Joan Riley's novels, dealing primarily with the experiences of women who have moved from the West Indies to Britain, are notable for their scrupulous realism and sensitive characterization.

Her first, *The Unbelonging* (1985), is about an 11-year-old girl, Hyacinth, who finds herself abruptly cut off from her exuberant life in the back streets of Kingston when her father summons her to Britain. The novel chronicles her struggle to adjust to 'the gloom of inner-city life'. *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987) focuses on another immigrant, Adela, formerly a talented seamstress but latterly a mother and a grandmother crippled by a stroke, which looks back and assesses her hard life. *Romance* (1988), set in Croydon, is about two sisters, of whom one is a romantically escapist, and the other realistically down-to-earth, and tellingly contrasts the imagined world of a 'Mills and Boon' romance with a real romance. In *A Kindness to the Children* (1992), Riley's most accomplished and complex novel, three women—a second-generation British Caribbean, a first-generation migrant, and a local Jamaican housewife—represent different facets of Caribbean reality. The tragic end of one of the characters is contrasted with the others' relative success to offer a kaleidoscopic view of post-colonial politics.

Joan Riley, who migrated to Britain, gained a Master's Degree and became one of the first female writers to claim a right for women's studies and women's writings. She has indeed become the potential voice willing to voice the long ignored "other side" and also the disaccording voices, those who are left aside, on the margins of society and whose voices have consequently been denied. Whisker stresses on the point:

When we use colonial discourse analysis and post-colonial criticism we consider how through other writing, discussion and behaviour, the Other - different peoples - were disintegrated, stereotyped, disempowered, silenced, rendered invisible, etc., and in so doing we open up new understandings of the subject position of the Other.⁵

Joan Riley and her contemporaries are often categorized as the Black British writers. The expression, 'Black-British' is very unsatisfactory and misleading which not only assumes that, Blackness and Britishness are homogenous wholes but also restricts their creativity to racial experiences. In

addition to these general objections, she also found "Black British" unsuitable to describe the new generation of Caribbean writers in Britain as an umbrella term, as it covers too large a literary territory to be of any critical use. Instead it is better to propose to use, 'The New Diaspora for short'⁶. This new generation of writers project the novel post-migratory sensibilities in a changing British society.

One of the most established contemporaries of Joan Riley is Beryl Gilroy, whose work was mostly published in the nineties and often deals with the preoccupations dear to the new Diaspora. Her significant work entitled, *Boy Sandwich* (1989), features a youth, Tyrone, through the imaginative journeys in the history of African Diaspora. The novel is surrounded with the imagery of in-betweenness, which is the inevitable outcome of migrant experience, especially for the second or third generation. At the beginning, the image of sandwich is used as a symbol for secure and loving space for Tyrone in the racist England; however, this sandwich becomes unbearable for Tyrone who is in the age of developing his own identity. He fears just to be a part of his family's identity and he leaves his family to find his own identity no matter what kind of problems he would face in the future as a young and ambitious black man.. Caryl Phillips's other book; *Higher Ground* (1989) is about a man who comes to term with his Britishness after a return to his parents' Jamaica. Gilroy belongs to a generation imbued with the myth of Britain as a dreamland, is one who came to England with different expectations from those individuals who arrived as children. Another major figure of the diasporic Caribbean literature is Jamaica Kincaid who is based in the USA. Like the other writers of her generation living in the UK, Kincaid's origins affect her writing. The only difference is that her writings spring from a different social and literary context to that of her fellow writers living in the UK.

NEW DIASPORIC WRITERS

The new Diasporic writers who are quite flexible to be categorized under this category due to their changing literary interventions Fred D'Aguiar (a British Guyanese poet, novelist and playwright, who is currently Professor of English at Virginia

Tech.) and Caryl Phillips, (a Kittitian-British novelist, playwright and essayist). Phillips is often described as a Black Atlantic writer, since much of his fictional output is defined by its interest in, and searching exploration of, the experiences of peoples of the African diaspora in England, Canada and the United States. The ambivalent approach to Britain of Anglo-Caribbean writers, at once assertive but also appreciative of their own partly European cultural heritage which is bound to lead, to distinctive modes of writing. This ambiguity affects Caribbean writers in the USA to a lesser extent, for their integration into the multicultural American canvas, facilitated by a well-established African-American tradition, allowed the artists to find their own voice more easily, even though it also tends to ghettoize them. The same could be said of Dionne Brand, Shani Mootoo and Neil Bissoondath writing from Canada. So, while it is essential to raise questions about who the new Caribbean voices are, if it is even more important, in view of their diasporic fluidity to examine what they have to say and how they do it.

Joan Riley's, *The Unbelonging* (1988) is significantly one of the first novels of the New Diaspora. The title of the book is rightly justified by the author as it dramatizes the actual dilemma of a generation which feels at home neither in England nor in its native Caribbean. Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* (1993) is a novel with visionary accents that address the cross-culturality through the imaginative journeys in the history of African Diaspora. Caryl Phillips' other work, *Higher Ground* (1989), depicts the writer's affiliation to and also his displacement from the West Indian African American and European literary traditions. Another established writer from Guyana, David Dabydeen also reflects the same dilemma of ambivalence with the black presence in Britain that has been subject to an historical process of erosion in his works.

The outstanding theme in most novels of the New Diaspora is focused on the family as a site of disruption. This theme is significantly dealt by David Dabydeen in his first novel, *The Intended* (1991) which serves as a good example of this. It centers on a nameless teenager who, away from his native Guyana and in the care of the English social services, grapples with the excitement and

temptations but also the roughness of multiracial London. As several commentators have pointed out, it is a variation on the traditional apprenticeship novel, a favorite genre with the Caribbean writers of the 1950s and 1960s in which the child's coming of age paralleled the coming of age of nations on the eve of independence, the major difference being that it is the social services, thus an institution, that here play the role of surrogate parent providing for the material, not the affective needs, of the child. This shift symbolically focuses attention on the inhospitality of England. It is as if the new generation of Caribbean immigrants had rejected the idea of ever finding a mother (land) or even stepmother (land) in England. This sense of coldness of the Londoners is well projected by Riley in all her novels, where the treatment provided to the Blacks is inhuman and cold.

A comparison between Dabydeen's treatment of London and that of Joan Riley's is a notable aspect. The arrival in England of Dabydeen's protagonist and of Riley's too, conveys more than coldness and indifference and it points towards a re-enactment of colonization and enslavement. The colonial trauma has not vanished with exile; it only seems to have been displaced at the level of the family, which, in the words of the Czech-born writer, Milan Kundera reminds one that it functions with the same psychological mechanisms in society at large. The abusive behavior of Hyacinth's father in Riley's *The Unbelonging*, has clear colonial overtones and is but one instance of the New Diaspora's frequent conflation of sexual and colonial victimization. Like the immigrants of the previous generation, Hyacinth is sent for to meet her father's needs. His violence, both physical and mental, and his gruff emotionless voice, and lukewarm reaction can be compared to the Boys' Home in Dabydeen's novel, *The Intended*. In both these novels the protagonists are abandoned by their fathers and are imprisoned in an indifferent fixation and are prone to severe trauma. These novels project that the newcomers have to undergo a period of seasoning just as the slaves of old had to on arrival in the Caribbean.

Riley's *The Unbelonging* is not artistically successful, mostly because of a form of crippling realism. *The Unbelonging* contains in embryo some of the concerns that inform the ethos of Riley's fellow novelists. Chief among these are the disrupted family as a metaphor for the post-migratory condition, and as part of a quest for a post-migratory identity. These new generation diasporic writings are further based on the inter-textuality and obsession with memory through which the writers write basing their writings on the other writers' writings and also rely on flashback techniques set in the native land or Africa. Most of the younger Caribbean writers address the contemporary England. The writing concerns of these young writers vary from their conservative set of thinking of their predecessors. The response of these young writers pertaining to certain set of issues is quite urban and modern. For the majority of the young Caribbean writers, migration seems to have lost the mimetic appeal that underlay most novels of the previous generation. The exilic experience has acquired a symbolical, even mythical quality that is best explored in a foreign setting away from the potentially explosive scene of today's Britain⁷. Another notable aspect of the second generation Caribbean writers is the depiction of journey back in time which is often considered as escapism or nostalgia. But if closely observed through a positive perspective it seems to originate in the writer's urge to examine present post-colonial or the neo-colonial situation from a meaningful vantage point. The works of the second generation Caribbean writers must be definitely read with this positive perception in mind.

This Apart from its emblematic and distinct value for a whole generation, *The Unbelonging* is worth mentioning because it is a pioneering work. One of the first novels published by a Caribbean woman writer in Britain since Jean Rhys in the 1930s, it prefigures the emergence of a tradition of women's writing still in the making, since, with the exception of Pauline Melville, partly British, partly Guyanese, the author of the novel entitled *The Ventriloquist's Tale* (1997), post-war Anglo-Caribbean writing did not at first produce major female novelists. Things have changed recently with

the publication of *White Teeth* (2000) by half Jamaican, half British, Zadie Smith and of *Small Island* (2004), by Andrea Levy, also of Jamaican descent. Also worth mentioning is Leone Ross, of Jamaican and British heritage too, whose novel *Orange Laughter* (1999) marks her out as a talented novelist. Yet, it seems that these writers belong to a newer generation who feel British in the first place, and cannot therefore be easily described as partaking of Caribbean literature.

Part of the search for a new Caribbean exile sensibility caught between the old and the new, past and present, home and host country, the exploration of the past informs many novels whose ambition is to uncover the long-hidden complexities of history, not only of plantation societies, but also of Britain⁸.

Further the new diasporic writers distinctly identify themselves with the oppressed and suppressed groups in many parts of the world. 'The colonial system might be officially over, but there remains a larger oppressive order, either economic or patriarchal, to which these writers are very sensitive because of their origins⁹.' A growing concern is vividly portrayed in both female and male writers, for woman as other and outsider, as well as the focus on more domestic issues such as man-woman relationships or the generation gap. This change in sensibility aims to integrate the voiceless.

While still writing for an overwhelmingly Western audience, The New Diaspora is driven by a more confident sense of identity, however multifaceted or fluctuating. Freed from the colonial complex, that plagued some writers of the previous generation, the younger writers now address the Westernized foreigner. Their writing has become more of an assertion of their right to belong to British society and a repossession of a history too often silenced or partially represented. This shift perceptible in the writing of The New Diaspora towards a more open and universal perspective is sustained by an interaction between the personal and the collective, a conceptual pair in fact constitutive of the exilic condition and productive of a tension that keeps the creative momentum alive. Exile has led first to fragmentation, which results in a confrontation with oneself, followed by an

attempt to heal this disintegration by resorting to a larger political and historical frame of reference that often goes beyond the Caribbean condition, to include the diasporic world at large. This process of transformation and recovery was already at work in the writing of the previous generation, most notably in that of Wilson Harris, but generally theirs remained a more subdued affirmation of cosmopolitanism.

Like-wise an element of subjectivity is prominently visible in the writings of the Caribbean writers. Yet to counterbalance this focus on subjectivity, and the psychological explorations of suffering it entails, the writing of The New Diaspora has simultaneously turned to a universal and not just colonial historical memory, with the view of explicating, but also interrogating and revising the past. With the exception of Joan Riley, who significantly affirms 'as a writer, I am responsible only to myself and my conscience'¹⁰ the other writers surveyed here have a sense of collective responsibility not only to their 'tribe' but also to the human race at large results in a complex network of connections that goes well beyond the Caribbean and Britain.

If a native of a free country, stolen from the embrace of parental fondness; conveyed through dangers, and over -seas, to be made the victim of rapacious commerce and ungoverned cruelty, because God has chosen to habit him in a different colour-if he can dream of sensibility, and not feel for his fellow countrymen hourly bending under ignominious bondage, he must deserve a far worse lot than has fallen to him¹¹.

BLACK BRITISH WRITING

The emergence of Black British Writing will have an equivalent, if not exactly ironic, sort of impact on the future sense of British literary history. The Black British writing lead to Re-inventing Britain itself. It may be that the motives for this ferment are fundamentally political and economic, a normal response to a changing culture – the closure of mines, Britain's difficulty in competing in the world's markets. No one completely affirms that Britons in great numbers actually believe in the need for cultural re-invention and are going about the process willingly and happily, except perhaps for

Britain's newest citizens. All the same, whatever their ethnic origins, most Britons are concerned about the survival of their distinctive cultures and traditions and are looking for lifestyles they fear will die otherwise. Simultaneously new writing by an extremely eclectic avant-garde of egalitarian young black Britons is sweeping the British Isles. This neo-millennial movement has taken the arts and political establishments by storm. Backed by the British Council, the London Arts Council, and other English, Welsh, and Scottish civic and cultural organizations, members of this avant-garde are performing their poetry, producing their plays, and reading their fiction across the United Kingdom and through-out the world. The Re-inventing Britain campaign constitutes a nationwide public response to the compelling nature of the millennial theme sounded by the black British writers and their supporters, and the latest generation of the successful black British cultural activists. One prominent trait of this generation is that the members undeniably consider themselves as a vanguard, use the term cultural activists as much as writers or artists to define themselves and their perceptions. These set of black British writers are clear about wishing to distinguish their voices from those of the preceding (postcolonial) generation and are explicit about differentiating their neo-millennial aspirations from the old (colonialist and imperialist) ethos of Great Britain. An established litterateur Maria Helena Lime, who is a professor of English and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Genesco, looks at the contradiction between social marginalization and cultural centeredness of young blacks in Britain, and focussing on their creative writing, foresees a spanking new English way of life where "the 'brown man's burden' will be to make everyone comfortably black and British. In the fiction of Buchi Emecheta we find paradigms that figure forth multi-cultural Britain's "irresistible rise" as a "contentious" process that in many cases is emotionally destructive particularly to black women, but on that for all the madness of it, is indeed inevitable. The three key ways in which the newest black British writers distinguish their own worldview from those of their immediate antecedents and of non-British - born fellow black writers about their

treatments of identity, language and imagery. The neo-millennial writers are far different in their thinking from their parents and grandparents. Being born in England or Scotland or Wales and often to racially mixed families, they do not write about Britain as an alien land as they are not the one who migrated but they affirm Britain as their country. They are now re-writing Britain's literary history as well drafting its future. This new generation of thinking is mostly in contrast to the earlier black British writers. But one thing is common in the writings of both these writers and that is the portrayal of strong characters that go to any extent to change the situation as per their requirement and fight a 'never give up battle'. The diverse and dire conditions helped all these writers to create people of strong mental strength and determination.

CONCLUSION

This kind of cultural shift and acculturation is prominent in the Black British women's writings and is vividly responsible in shaping the thought process in the writings of Joan Riley and her contemporaries like Buchi Emecheta, Andrea Levy, Jean Rhys, and others. The terms 'Black,' 'British' and 'Women' are in no way indicative of the literary value of these authors' works, and the label 'Black British Women Writers' brings together authors who are all too infrequently dealt with as a category. Despite growing critical interest in British Women's writing and Black British Writing, the body of writing that lies at the intersection of both these fields rarely has been considered as a field in its own right, even if some of the authors have achieved canonical status in Britain. The Black British Women Writings seek to stimulate the discussion of the literary art of women writers of African and African-Caribbean descent living in Britain. It introduces and discusses the exploration of Black British Women's writing as a field.

The most common theme in the writings of these writers is Homelessness and the interpretation of Home in different contexts defining the attainment of new home and the identity crisis brought by home and homelessness. For black women, there is a hidden and inherent contradiction in the very word 'Home.' They often question the existence of home and are sceptical about calling a

country which has systematically colonized their countries of origin, and the one which refuses through a thorough racism in its institutions, media and culture to even recognize their existence and their rights to that existence. They prefer calling Britain as "home" without having their tongue inside their cheek. This scepticism in the writings of the black women is depicted in the strong characterization, treatment of powerful themes and presentation of intensified emotions. This scepticism in a way brings all the black British women voice together with a feeling of oneness. The realization that they are different from other cultures forced them to compensate the missing with the imaginary. The imaginary becomes so strong they start visualizing and believing in two worlds- the imaginary, and the realistic where imaginary is notional and the realistic the immediate reality. So escape and distancing from reality is a temporary sojourn whose void is never fulfilled. Hence the disappointment becomes a second nature which results in perpetual quest of truth. This psychological trauma is evinced in the writings of all the exile writers.

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