Summer 2024

Contemporary Caribbean-American Literature: Identity Struggle for Caribbean Diasporic Subjects in American Racial and Cultural Contexts

Samirah Munahi Almutairi
Old Dominion University, salmu001@odu.edu

CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE: IDENTITY STRUGGLE FOR CARIBBEAN DIASPORIC SUBJECTS IN AMERICAN RACIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

by

Samirah Munahi Almutairi
B.A. February 2006, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia
M.A. May 2012, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ENGLISH

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2024

Approved by:

Delores Phillips (Co-Director)

Manuela Mourao (Co-Director)

Angelica Huizar (Member)

ABSTRACT

CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE: IDENTITY STRUGGLE FOR CARIBBEAN DIASPORIC SUBJECTS IN AMERICAN RACIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Samirah Munahi Almutairi
Old Dominion University, 2024
Co-Directors: Dr. Delores Phillips
Dr. Manuela Mourao

This study includes six contemporary literary texts (novels and short stories) that offer exemplary representations of identification process of the Caribbean diaspora situated within American context. The texts included in this study are: *Disposable People* by Ezekel Alan (2012), Now *Lila Knows* by Elizabeth Nunez (2022), *Brother, I'M Dying* by Edwidge Danticat (2007), "Cheap, Fast, Filling" in *Ayiti* by Roxane Gay (2011), *Dominicana* by Angie Cruz (2019), and "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands" in *How to Love a Jamaican* by Alexia Arthurs (2018). By studying representations of identity formation throughout the Caribbean-American literature, a postcolonial analysis integrated with cultural studies such as critical race theory, decolonial approach, and diaspora studies leads to a discovery of differences in identity processes for Caribbean subjects in America based on personal and temporal experiences.

Identity formation for Caribbean subjects show a level of struggle that is informed by alienation, critical emotions such as hate, fear, melancholic self, confusion over racial identity, liminality, lack of empowerment, hybridization, race-consciousness, and double subordination. Through contemporary narratives – many considered realist in style– the authors offer representations of individuals taking on the process of identity negotiation while inscribing the characters of the expatriates, migrants, and immigrants as confused, weak, alienated, and passive. Through the act of literary production, Caribbean diasporic identity illustrates the potential

values of literary studies in developing critical awareness for the United States and hemispheric racial politics. Literature that deals with the identity struggle in America about diaspora is an important component to cultural studies, research about immigration, and race theory.

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I thank God for the strength and patience I had during the preparation of this dissertation. I pray to God to bestow more plentiful graces upon me throughout my life.

My appreciation goes to Professor Delores Phillips who helped me throughout my PhD journey including this dissertation. I am also deeply indebted to Prof. Manuela Mourao whose help and deep consideration brought this dissertation to its completion. I am also thankful to Prof. Angelica J. Huizar who dedicated her time in being part of this dissertation.

My special gratitude goes to my mother whose care and support accompany me throughout my journey in America.

No words of thanks could ever express the gratitude I feel for my husband and children who helped me throughout my PhD journey. Their patience, support, and kindness are beyond description. I appreciate all their sacrifices and standing by my side.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Page

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

People relocate and stay in America either temporarily or permanently and then become part of the American society's continuous dialogues about, among other things, race, and immigration. Situating themselves within the conversations of the American cultural discourse is part of negotiating their cultural and racial identity as diasporic individuals in America. Defining "identity", Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue that "it is understood both as a contingent product of social and political action and a ground and basis for further action" (8). Identity is not something that is too "soft" and "hard" (Brubaker and Cooper 10). Identification happens from different identifiers. "One may be called upon to identify oneself- to characterize oneself, to locate oneself vis-à-vis known others, to situate oneself in a narrative, to place oneself in a category- in any number of different contexts" (Brubaker and Cooper 14). Moreover, people are sometimes identified by other agents such as "social settings" and "the state" (Brubaker and Cooper 16). Identification sometimes does not require a specific agent. Brubaker and Cooper believe that "identification can be carried more or less anonymously by discourses or public narratives (16). Identity remains unstable and fragmented because "self- and other- identification are fundamentally situational and contextual" (Brubaker and Cooper 14). Identity is a very determining factor for diasporic individuals' everyday interactions in host counties' cultural discourse.

Becoming a diasporic individual refers to acts of immigration, relocation, or displacement. In "The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface," Khachig Tölölyan shows that diasporic individuals do not only refer to a group of people who are dispersed, but they also include

migrants and immigrants. He says: “We use "diaspora" provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest- worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan 7). He emphasizes that “migrations” are one of the main reasons that formed diasporic communities all over the world (Tölölyan, 4). Diasporic individuals in the American context modify their identities for the sake of better communication, safety, and future. Sometimes, their identities change pervasively to better fit with the racial categories and the cultural configuration of people. Moreover, women’s identity is influenced by their race and gender. These transformations are struggles in themselves for diasporic individuals living in America, leading them to constantly question their positions in social settings and reform their relationships with people.

This dissertation focuses on the Caribbean diaspora in America. The relationship between the Caribbean and America is established on military, financial, and cultural levels. Contemporary history shows waves of migrations from different Caribbean Islands which experienced American interventions. Jocelyn Stitt, in her article “The Caribbean and the United States,” states that the twentieth century shows “migration patterns” from the Caribbean Islands to America propelled by “neoliberal financial policies and US military and intelligence operations in the region” (284). American troops intervened in almost every Caribbean Islands such as “Cuba (1898–1903, 1906–9, 1912, 1917–22), the Dominican Republic (1916–24), Grenada (1983) and Haiti (1915–34)” and the political unrest in “Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic also increased immigration to the US from those nations” (284). Stitt adds that the changing

policies of immigration in England in the late 1960s[1] make Caribbeans' migration shifted to America creating a Caribbean population of four million (284). Moreover, political, social, and economic conditions after the withdrawal of American military troops created chaos in the Caribbean Islands. American intervention and occupation of Caribbean Islands "exacerbated the destabilization of their political systems and paved the way for dictators such as Castro, Trujillo and the Duvaliers" (Stitt 284). Caribbeans form an important part of the diasporic society in America.

Caribbean writers document the stories of their parents and acquaintances who came to America as immigrants and migrants. They are also influenced by stories of Caribbean immigrants in America and write about them in a realist style. Caribbean-American literature written by Caribbean writers in America shows tendencies in literary representations of the identity struggle for Caribbean diasporic subjects in the American context. While the authors of Caribbean-American literature come from various regional backgrounds, their literary productions share a unique theme of identity negotiation as an important part of the literary experience of Caribbean immigrants and expatriates. These experiences are manifested in different literary ways that relate to the cultural, social, and political setting of each story and the personal experience of each Caribbean subject in the texts in question.

This dissertation sheds light on the complexities Caribbean people go through outside their country and the struggle that marks their identity by examining six contemporary Caribbean-

[1] The changing policies that happened in Britain in the 1960s are explained by Akala, in his article titled "The Great British Contradiction." He shows that the Windrush generation in Britain was subjected to multiple forms of racialized acts. Before that, The British Nationality Act in 1948 gave the right to any citizens of the entire British Commonwealth to come to Britain. "The Empire Windrush [a huge ship], [which] brought 492 British-Caribbean to the UK in 1948. It is from this boat that the Windrush Generation takes its name" (Akala 19). Hundreds of Caribbean immigrants living and working in the UK were wrongly targeted by immigration enforcement because of the government's hostile policies. They were not offered jobs, governmental services, and housing. Therefore, Caribbeans shifted their migration from the UK to the US.

American literary texts. The texts included in this study are: *Now Lila Knows* by Elizabeth Nunez (2022), *Disposable People* by Ezekel Alan (2012), *Brother, I'M Dying* by Edwidge Danticat (2007), *Ayiti* by Roxane Gay (2011), *Dominicana* by Angie Cruz (2019), and *How to Love a Jamaican* by Alexia Arthurs (2018). The analysis shows that the experiences of the Caribbean subjects as expatriates, immigrants, and migrants in these texts are contingent on their personal stories and the cultural context in America. Their journeys as Caribbean diasporic individuals taking on the process of identity negotiation present them as confused, marginalized, weak, less secure, alienated, and passive bodies.

Studying the literary depictions of Caribbean bodies living in the United States of America does not only help understand the problematics of diasporic Caribbean identity, but also sheds light on the racial configuration and immigrants' situation in America. By focusing on the actions, attitudes, and emotions of the Caribbean subjects through a close reading of the above-mentioned texts, I also propose to illuminate that Caribbean diasporic individuals struggle with identification based on race and cultural background, suffer from lack of successful communications, and face different forms of discrimination and othering. To explain, I argue that Créolité has found no recognition in the United States of America, and that Caribbean immigrants find themselves struggling to identify themselves and are dragged into a racial specificity that neglects their mixed heritage. Within the racial categories of America, Caribbean bodies find it difficult to group with the Black community, feel uncomfortable assimilating to White American citizens, and sometimes are racialized and othered because of their race and language imperfections. Caribbean immigrant women, for example, show a special case of the overlap of their race, gender, and immigration status. Their cultural difference, linguistic imperfection, and immigration laws are barriers to their self-improvement and empowerment,

making them alienated, more vulnerable, and domestically abused by their spouses. From another perspective, Caribbean subjects in America fight among themselves over colorblindness as an identity project for all Americans including Caribbean immigrants. Immigrants who do not subscribe to a colorblind thought that means genuinely whiteness do not have good opportunities and form better communications with Americans from different ethnicities.

I also argue that neocoloniality forms the experiences of the Caribbean subjects' life as immigrants, and migrants. They relocate to the United States of America considering it as a much better place for them and believing that it will give them a promising and thrilling life like the one they see in Hollywood. My analysis will include the relationship between mimicry and hegemony and how they enhance the identity struggle for Caribbean subjects in America. By examining how the subjects see America as a cultural mythology before immigration compared to their situations as immigrants and migrants, immigration is studied as an act that mostly disempowers Caribbean subjects yet at the same time allows Caribbean-American writers to reflect on immigration and its ties to race, gender, and laws in the global scene.

Literature Review

Caribbean literature has been an object of study for many literary critics. Because the Caribbean Islands are former colonies, Caribbean writings trigger questions about the impact of colonialism on resources and human beings. They also address topics such as race, ethnicity, culture, historical past, and the journey of finding truth or oneself; ideas to which people are naturally drawn. As colonialism comes to an end, immigration to Europe and America takes place and gains great attention from Caribbean writers. A body of contemporary Caribbean literature written in America tackles the identity struggle for Caribbean immigrants responding to the racial, social, and cultural dialogue. This dissertation finds theoretical writings in diaspora

studies, postcolonial theory, Caribbean studies, decolonial approach, cultural studies, and critical race theory that are paramount to the discussion of the identity struggle for Caribbean immigrants living in America. Caribbean-American literature is an important part in the fields of literary criticism and cultural studies in the American academy.

Diaspora studies give some perspectives about Caribbean subjects in host countries by defining diasporic individuals, their struggle, and their roles after their dispersion. Studies about diaspora demonstrate that diasporic individuals' presence in a host land carries with it tension and consequences to themselves and the space in which they settle. In "The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface," Khachig Tölölyan emphasizes that "migrations" are one of the main reasons that formed diasporic communities all over the world (Tölölyan, 4). When people migrate to different countries, these migrants and immigrants create a rupture for the host nation, and they embark on processes of self-understanding and self-identification based on the culture of the host nation.

Tölölyan shows that diasporic communities work to defy the "triumphant" project of "nation-state" that claims "special political and emotional legitimacy, representing a homogeneous people, speaking one language, in a united territory, under the rule of one law, and, until recently, constituting one market" (4). Therefore, diasporic individuals function as "the Others of the nation-state" since they stand for "transnationalism" and question "borders" (Tölölyan 6). Diasporic individuals struggle with accommodating their cultural differences in a territory that "functions as the site of homogeneity, equilibrium, integration; this is the domestic tranquility that hegemony seeking national elites always desire and sometimes achieve" (Tölölyan 6). A Hegemonic nation resists diasporic individuals by impeding their cultural differences within its territories and these "differences are assimilated, destroyed, or assigned to ghettoes, to enclaves

demarcated by boundaries so sharp that they enable the nation to acknowledge the apparently singular and clearly fenced-off differences within itself, (Tölölyan 6). With the increase of diasporic communities and the varieties of resources such as technological advancement, economic forces, and political change, the nation-state is replaced with "a space that is defined as a heterogeneous and disequilibrated site of production, appropriation, and consumption, of negotiated identity and affect" (Tölölyan 6). Diasporic identities are in a continuous negotiation of their place in host countries, their history, displacement, and situation after immigration and settlement.

Another compelling theoretical text that aligns with Tölölyan's discussion of diasporic individuals' identity is "Diasporas" by James Clifford. He shows that diasporic individuals will always question their identity and fight against full assimilation into the national narrative of the host country (Clifford 307). He believes that tension and lack of peace will always accompany diasporic people because of their connection to their home countries through histories, cultures, and origins. Clifford argues that "whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere" (Clifford 312). He adds that the histories of "displacements" and "violent loss" are barriers for diasporic identity to thrive in new national societies (Clifford 307). Clifford shows that race remains an important factor in identity negotiating for diasporic individuals to be either accepted or alienated in host countries such as North America (311).

The focus on studying Caribbean-American identity reveals blind spots that lie beyond the scope of diaspora studies. The examination of Caribbean-American literature requires consideration of postcolonial theory because there are many elements in the texts that are

strongly explained in postcolonial identity theories. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha, W.E.B Du Bois, and Frantz Fanon provide important insights in the discussion about identity transformations and struggles for immigrants who come from postcolonial countries such as the Caribbean Islands. Bhabha's *Location of Culture* explains how immigrants feel unhomed in a new racial context and how lack of identification might lead to "identity loss" (220). He also explains to what degree immigrants are dragged to mimic people from dominant groups in host countries because they feel the need to transform their identities to "fulfill the desire to be authentic" (88). His theories of hybrid and liminal identity provide a perspective on immigrants who live at the borders and those who move between two worlds. Liminal bodies lack identification and inhabit a space characterized by "antagonistic authorities" (Bhabha 148). On the contrary, a hybrid individual "represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into" a hybrid body that questions laws and calls for justice. (Bhabha 113). From a different perspective, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* explains the doubleness of postcolonial identities that resemble Caribbean subjects living in America and are identified as creolized people. Their Creole identity, composed of multiple ethnicities, makes them "possess[es] two dimensions, one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites" (Fanon 1). In a similar vein, W.E.B Du Bois's theory of "double consciousness," in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, describes the situation of Black individuals in America and how they are torn between seeing themselves as Black Americans and being seen and judged through the lens of White Americans, and provides insights into the struggle Caribbean diasporic individuals go through when they try to identify themselves in American racial discourse as Creole individuals (8).

Caribbean studies are part of postcolonial theories, and they serve to contextualize the cultural experience of Caribbean immigrants and migrants. Stuart Hall's investigation of Caribbean

identity contributes to the discussion of Caribbean subjects living in America. In his article, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," he proposes that Caribbean identity is a process of inventing itself over time based on the surrounding cultural and social circumstances. In another article, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall elaborates on the difficulties of describing Caribbean identity as one fixed entity because of the plurality of their cultural experiences that unify them yet render them different. In his article "Créolité and the Process of Creolization," he shows that Caribbean identity is fluid to a certain degree, but the process of creolization is what uniquely identifies Caribbean people. Creolization is the process of "racial, cultural, social and linguistic mixing" (Hall, "Créolité," 15). In a similar vein, in "In Praise of Creoleness," Bernabé et al. argue that Creoleness claims voice, identity, and literary expression for Caribbean people. They explain that "Creoleness is the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (891). Caribbean studies discuss the essence of Caribbean identity. However, they don't address the struggle Caribbean individuals go through when they are positioned in the American racial context.

Critical race theory adds perspective to the identity struggle for Caribbean subjects in America. While it increases the awareness of the racial injustice in America historically, socially, and legally, Caribbean subjects, positioned in the racial categories in America, are introduced to American racial discourse that increases the struggle in their self-identification. For example, Caribbean women specifically go through a particular experience in relation to their gender and race. Kimberle` Crenshaw's foundational essay "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" presents the theory of intersectionality and provides insights into the struggle of minority women living in America on every level. She

details the difficulties immigrant women go through in terms of their immigration status, language imperfection, vulnerability to domestic violence, and their double subordination because of their race and gender. She states that "immigrant women … [are] women who are socially or economically the most marginalized [and], … most likely to be women of color" (360). Explaining intersectional identity, Crenshaw argues that "intersectional subordination … is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden interacting with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" (356). From a different perspective, Caribbean subjects in America clash among themselves over race whether it should be an important factor in their identities or whether it doesn't matter. They are confused if their Caribbean heritage should be honored, acknowledged, or forgotten. George Lipsitz, in his article, "The Sounds of Silence: How Race Neutrality Preserves White Supremacy," shows how colorblindness works to legitimate whiteness in American racial discourse. Caribbean immigrants from different racial backgrounds struggle to subscribe to colorblind thoughts and neglect their Caribbean roots. To resist colorblindness, some Caribbean immigrants in America develop a strong connection to their Caribbean heritage and Black race. In this regard, Gary Peller, in his article "Race-Consciousness," argues that American racial discourse fails to embrace the identity project for Black individuals such as African Americans and Caribbean immigrants by pushing them to "the repudiation of race-consciousness" because it is equivalent to "White Supremacy" (Peller 127). Black individuals in America are continuously confused over their racial identity.

In addition to the scholarship of critical race theory, cultural studies help explain the main idea of this dissertation. In discussing the identity struggle for Caribbean subjects in America, the decolonial approach will add more perspectives to analyzing Caribbean-American literature

because it directly explains the forces of modernity and neocoloniality and hence helps to illuminate Caribbean subjects' desire to relocate, change, and modify their identity. Walter Mignolo's book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* provides a basic understanding of Western coloniality. He argues that "the logic of coloniality … presented positively in the rhetoric of modernity: specifically in the terms salvation, progress, development, modernization, and democracy" modifies postcolonial identities (Mignolo 12). In a similar point of view, Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, adds that colonialism divides the world into center and periphery because of which postcolonial subjects find a pressing need to drag themselves to be in the center through relocation and immigration.

Additionally, Sarah Ahmed in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* explains the relationship between emotion, attitudes, and languages as they constitute individual and collective identities. Her discussion helps explain how immigrants and migrants shape their self-image in relation to others either in terms of shame, hate, pain, fear, disgust, care, or love. Caribbean subjects in America are influenced by how they feel towards themselves and other individuals in America and their emotions such as hate, and shame deepened their identity struggle. Her book, *The Promise of Happiness*, specifically chapter four "melancholic migrants," demonstrates the struggle migrants go through to situate themselves within a specific national context, a struggle that leads them to grieve permanently the loss of their cultural heritage and traditions (Ahmed 139).

Moreover, addressing the topic of identity struggle for immigrants, migrants, and expatriates, articles such as John W. Berry's "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaption" and Sunil Bhatia's and Anjali Ram's "Rethinking 'Acculturation' in Relation to Diasporic Cultures and Postcolonial Identities," show how identity formations such as separation, assimilation, integration, and

marginalization are contingent with individuals' personal experience, postcolonial identities, and the sociopolitical divide.

The critiques that are written about identity struggle in contemporary Caribbean-American literature are limited to some extent. A few of those writings have addressed the diasporic experience of Caribbean subjects in America. The Caribbean identity in America is neither fully examined nor completed. It is addressed within a larger discussion of Caribbeans' identity struggle in a general sense. This dissertation will specifically examine diasporic Caribbean subjects in American cultural, social, and racial contexts.

Methodology

This dissertation will take an integrated theoretical approach that includes postcolonial theory, Caribbean studies, decolonial approach, cultural studies, critical race theory, and diaspora studies to examine how identity struggle takes different forms and processes for Caribbean subjects in America and show how immigration and race impact diasporic individuals in American cultural discourse.

Postcolonial theory provides a great deal to understanding Caribbean subjects in Caribbean-American literature. Examining their identity formations in a USA-based diaspora context requires a consideration of their postcolonial experience. Postcolonial theory such as Homi Bhabha's ideas of mimicry and hybridity will clarify how Caribbean subjects mimic colonial power and how their identities are formed between home and host countries. Research by Frantz Fanon will be employed to further understanding of the concept of race in a postcolonial global order. Additionally, W.E.B Du Bois's theory of double consciousness in American racial discourse will enrich the discussion of this dissertation through investigating the identity struggle for subjects impacted by colonialization.

This dissertation will also rely on Caribbean studies as a subfield of postcolonial theory to critique the literary works included in the analysis. Jean Bernabe, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphael Confiant's theory of Créolité will be employed to explain the struggle Caribbean individuals go through in understanding their racial identity in the American racial context. Research by Stuart Hall about creolization and cultural identity will be applied to analyze processes used by Caribbean immigrants, migrants, and expatriates to better understand themselves and the problematics of Caribbean diaspora in a worldwide racial context.

This dissertation will be influenced by cultural studies which facilitate an understanding of how Caribbean diasporic individuals negotiate their emotions and form their opinions of people around them when they relocate to the United States. Sarah Ahmed's research on the politics of emotions and the theory of happiness quest will help in evaluating identity struggle in terms of communications and relationships for the Caribbean diaspora represented in the texts. The analysis in this study will be informed by diaspora theorists such as Khachig Tölölyan and James Clifford's argument about assimilation as an important process in the examination of identity struggle for Caribbean first and second-generation immigrants in America.

The decolonial approach will be a part of analyzing Caribbean-American literature because it directly challenges the forces of neocoloniality and hence helps to show the great hegemonic push that propels Caribbean people to relocate, change and modify their identity. The dissertation's analysis is informed by Walter Mignolo's argument about coloniality and decoloniality. Paulo Freire's theory of the pedagogy of the oppressed will assist the examination of Caribbean subjects as they try to identify themselves in America.

Much of the texts analyzed in this dissertation transpire in the United States of America, and their writers identify themselves as Caribbean-American writers. As such, critical race theory

will help clarify the concept of racial identity that describes the relations of race, rights, and power that are at play in the identity struggle for Caribbean women relocated to America. Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality will structure my analysis of Caribbean women as marginalized minority women in America. Theories such as race-consciousness, colorblindness, and whiteness will help explain how Caribbean women struggle to understand themselves and connect with other Caribbean women in America.

This dissertation maintains that Caribbean-American novels and short stories illustrate the potential values of literary studies in developing critical awareness for hemispheric racial politics and immigration. Literature that deals comparatively with the identity struggle of immigrants in America is an important component to literary and cultural studies.

Chapters Division

This dissertation is divided into four major chapters. Chapter two, three, and four are the body of this dissertation. Each chapter of the body starts with an introduction that presents the theories used in the chapter and a brief explanation of the texts included in the analysis. The analysis, which follows the introduction, is divided into two major parts that are related to each other in terms of the type of diaspora used and the overall theme of the chapter. Each part considers one text in which Caribbean diasporic individuals have most of the explanation through close reading of the text. The last chapter is a conclusion to the dissertation. It summarizes the main points and shows the future development of my research.

In chapter two, “Being a Caribbean Expatriate: Resistance and Temporal Bridging Identity,” the analysis focuses on two contemporary novels; Ezekel Alan’s *Disposable People* (2012) and Elizabeth Nunez’s *Now Lila Knows* (2022) by examining the identity formations of two Caribbean expatriates in America. These two texts describe the struggle of foreign bodies in

America by showing that identity is influenced by personal experiences and the discourse about race in America. *Disposable People* highlights that Kenneth as an international student in the USA academy finds himself in a situation with no promising future because of his irreconcilable past. His childhood trauma creates perpetual feelings of personal insecurities and self-shame that are projected as rejection and hate to people around him and failed communications with women. His identity project in America is structured with resistance and a lack of positive communication. *Now Lila Knows* shows the difficulties when Caribbean subjects situate themselves within conversations about racial identity in America. The novel examines the transformations of a Caribbean professor who comes to teach postcolonial theory in a White-dominated community and looks at herself as a Creole woman. Later, she realizes that because of her African heritage, she is identified as a woman of color who must bridge the gap she has in her identity and build more affiliation with the Black community in the city. An important similarity between the two narratives is that both expatriates decide to leave. While Kenneth's resistance seems to be a negative influence on his personality, the positivity Lila feels during her final days in America does not motivate her to extend her professional experience.

Chapter three, "Understanding Immigration: Separation, Liminality, Hybridity, and Mimicry," focuses on immigration by examining the identity struggle for immigrants and migrants in *Brother, I'm Dying* (2004) by Edwidge Danticat and "Cheap, Fast, Filling" (2011) from *Ayiti* story collection by Roxane Gay. This chapter explores how immigration affects diasporic individuals' well-being, social conditions, and safety. Danticat's memoir, *Brother, I'm Dying*, tackles three immigrants' identity formations in the context of Haitian-American immigration. Two brothers' struggle to find safety in their home country. After immigrating to America, Danticat's father's identity is informed by separating himself from the host country's national

context. While Danticat's uncle represents the liminal body that is denied entry and has no identification or empowerment, Danticat's hybrid identity allows her to move positively between two worlds and reflect adequately on the political chaos in Haiti and immigration laws in America. "Cheap, Fast, Filling" demonstrates the influence of Hollywood on the protagonist's life path causing him to leave his family and become an illegal migrant in Miami. Lucien is in denial of the failure of his identity project, a condition that leads him to be a melancholic migrant that transforms at some point to become an alienated body that threatens people's security and is infused with negative emotions.

Chapter four, "Caribbean Women's Identities: Cultural, Social, and Racial Struggle," investigates the identity struggle for Caribbean women first and second-generation immigrants in *Dominicana* (2019) by Angie Cruz and "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands" in Alexia Arthurs' collection *How to Love a Jamaican* (2018). In *Dominicana*, Ana's relationship with her mother influences her growth and confidence negatively, a personality she takes with her after immigrating to New York with her husband. The overlap of her gender and race makes her a victim of abuse by her husband and neglect by women in her social circle. "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands" highlights the dissonance between Caribbean immigrant women who either come to America as children or are born to immigrants in America. When Kimberly who is highly conscious of her race as a Black diasporic woman from the Caribbean meets Cecilia who considers herself an American citizen that doesn't see race, and neglects her Caribbean heritage, they clash and end their friendship with a confrontation about the reality of their racial identity in America.

CHAPTER TWO

BEING A CARIBBEAN EXPATRIATE: RESISTANCE AND A TEMPORAL BRIDGING IDENTITY

Contemporary Caribbean literature written in the United States of America captures the distinctiveness of Caribbean narratives that uniquely address themes of exile, trauma, colonial violence, slavery, colonization, uprooting, voyaging, and most importantly Caribbean identity. To study how Caribbean identity is situated in American context is to examine how Caribbean authors write about Caribbean characters' experiences in America, emphasizing what these experiences convey about the ways Caribbeans negotiate and form their identities and how such a process influences their actions, attitudes, feelings, and the events in Caribbean American literature.

Caribbean identity has been a topic for many cultural and literary critics and theorists. Stuart Hall, in his article "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," proposes that Caribbean identity is a process of inventing itself over time based on the surrounding circumstances. He considers moving forward to be the key to a positive negotiating of identity because "identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed" ("Negotiating" 14). Moreover, he shows that the surrounding circumstances of the Caribbean selves play an important role in constructing their identities. He emphasizes that the experiences people have with others, and how they see each other, shape their identities. He shows that "identities actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition" (Hall, "Negotiating" 8). Identity is not always an inside entity.

Hall argues that Caribbean identity is malleable to a certain degree, but the process of creolization is what uniquely identifies Caribbean people. In his essay, "Créolité and the Process of Creolization," he provides an explanation of the two terms and the ways in which they describe Caribbean identity. Both terms are derived from Creole which is "the vernacular form of language which has developed in the colonies and become the 'native tongue' of the majority of its inhabitants, through the combining of elements of European (mainly French) and African languages" ("Créolité" 13). Its dimension expands to include the description for the "local conditions" of Caribbeans and their "identifiable friction of their colonial society" (Créolité 14). Hall adds that because Caribbean Islands had different colonial experiences, the terminology of Creole is more prominent in islands that are influenced by the French language such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Haiti, Guyana, and Trinidad ("Créolité" 14). Primarily, Creoles include "white Europeans born in the colonies, or those Europeans who had lived so long in the colonial setting that they acquired many 'native' characteristics …and slaves born in, and thus 'native to', the island or territory" ("Créolité" 14). In a more contemporary sense, Creole refers to "racial, cultural, social and linguistic mixing" ("Créolité" 15). Thus, creolization is the process of this mixing. Hall argues:

> that the process of creolization in this sense is what defines the distinctiveness of Caribbean cultures: their 'mixed' character, their creative vibrancy, their complex, troubled unfinished relation to history, the prevalence in their narratives of the themes of voyaging, exile, and the unrequited trauma of violent expropriation and separation. These are all, also, in different ways, what I would call translated societies – subject to the 'logic' of cultural translation. ("Créolité" 16)

The literary project that articulates Caribbeans' specific experience is called *Créolité*. Hall believes that "*Créolité* references the construction of a literary or artistic project out of the creolizing process … it is the cultural process of creolization which provides the necessary conditions of existence for the *Créolité* programme" (20). Creolization provides Caribbeans a new "basis" for producing great works that speak to "the reality" of Caribbean people (19).

In the article, "In Praise of Creoleness," Bernabé et al. coined the French term, *Créolité*, Creoleness in English, to claim voice, identity, and literary expression for Caribbean people. They established that Césaire's concept of Negritude[2] that "gave Creole society its African dimension," opens to Caribbean people "the path for actuality of a Caribbeanness which from then on could be postulated" (276). Caribbeanness is not defined only by Europeanness (the values of the colonizers) and Africanness (the heritage of the colonized). It is defined by the process of creolization that is the core of Créolité. Bernabé et. al believe that "Creoleness is the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (891). The Creole identity of Caribbean people is in a continuous forging of their humanity that is grounded on unfinished mix of linguistic and cultural elements.

The Creole aspect of Caribbean people shows that they are open to specific cultural bridging because they already come from mixed races and are founded on different cultures. However, this is not always the case for every Caribbean subject who lives outside of the Caribbean

[2] Negritude is a literary theory founded by Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal and Léon Damas from Guiana during the 1930s. It calls for the affirmation of the Blacks' personality, heritage, and values in the civilization of the world. It emerges as a protest to European colonial and imperial powers that targeted the Blacks in Africa and used them as slaves overseas and trade them for money. Negritude was celebrated among postcolonial critics across Africa and its diaspora because it authenticates for the Blacks, whose ancestors were subjected to the slavery, an integral part in history and cultures, and gives them a sense of belonging, hope, and pride.

Islands. By focusing on the actions, attitudes, emotions, and memories of Caribbean characters in Caribbean-American literature, I propose to illuminate that Creole identity finds no recognition in the United States of America, and that Caribbean people in America find themselves struggling to relate to Americans and are sometimes dragged into a racial specificity that makes them less confident of where they come from and who they are. Caribbean people struggle to negotiate their cultural admixture in countries founded on diversity such as America.

Benítez-Rojo in his book *The Repeating Island* argues that Caribbean identity is based on a "fluidity" in which "one can sense the features of an island that 'repeat' itself" (3). Thus, Caribbeans continue to repeat the same cycle of trying to find ways of forming their identities again and again and that different readings of Caribbean identity positioning itself in any cultural discourse is required.

> The complexity that the multiplication of the Plantation- each case different one- brought to the Caribbean was such that the Caribbean peoples themselves, in referring to the ethnological processes that derived from the extraordinary collision of races and cultures thus produced, speak of syncretism, acculturation, transculturation, assimilation, deculturation, indigenization, creolization, cultural mestizaje, cultural cimarronaje, cultural miscegenation, cultural resistance, etc. Which illustrates not just that these processes occurred again and again, but also, and above all, that there are different positions or readings from which they may be examined. (37)

The dynamics of Caribbean identity differ from one individual to another, and the above-mentioned mechanisms foreground the necessity of a more nuanced understanding of Caribbean identity.

For Caribbeans, placing themselves in an American model of identity is challenging. Some Caribbean individuals find it possible to group with an already existing ethnic group such as Black Americans because they share with them their history and background, but not identity. The characters in Caribbean-American literature show the struggle they go through when they embark on constructing their identities in the United States of America. Some forms of the struggles are described as finding difficulties in relating to Americans, feeling forced to assimilate to the cultural experience of Black Americans, being unable to find communities, having continuous self-doubt, focusing on painful memories, and experiencing loss and failure in marriages and relationships. Although these characters are fictional, their experiences provide insights into reality and serve as a step to help Caribbeans understand themselves better, become aware of their historical, cultural, and postcolonial experiences, and focus on the necessity of a more nuanced exploration of their identity formation.

Contemporary Caribbean American literature includes many examples of Caribbean subjects trying to understand themselves in an American racial and social context. In this chapter, I start by analyzing the problematics of Caribbeans living in America by focusing on two novels about two Caribbean characters who went to America and experienced a series of events and problems. Ezekel Alan's *Disposable People* (2012) and Elizabeth Nunez's *Now Lila Knows* (2022) highlight the difficulties of understanding and dealing with the Caribbean's identity outside the Caribbean Islands. The two novels, with distinct types of conflicts, exhibit the protagonists, Kenneth and Lila, as sad, nervous, fragmented, and often trapped in trying to understand who they are, who can be their friends, whom they should marry, and what caused their pain. Their identity struggle leads them to think of how they position themselves among Americans or people around them. Kenneth is focused on his childhood past, a problem that enhances his

shame and causes him to resist others. On the other hand, Lila is positioned by people around her in America as a Black American, a fact that makes her think of her race and how to bridge her Caribbean identity with Black American identity. In this regard, the two novels show a tendency to study the identity of Caribbeans and centralize the personal experience of the characters. I argue that Caribbean characters in America show that their identities are dynamic, and a fuller examination of their experiences and personalities is the core of their identity negotiations.

Ezekel Alan's *Disposable People*

Disposable People is a contemporary novel written by the Jamaican novelist Ezekel Alan. The novel tackles the story of a Jamaican man, Kenneth Lovelace. It demonstrates his painful childhood, unbalanced adulthood, estrangement in America, and final death in his home country. The novel is a combination of prose, poetry, letters, and journals. Although there is no mention that Kenneth's story is Alan's story, he hints that the narrative is inspired by true events in Jamaica and America in an interview. Alan says:

> I've been haunted by these memories for a long time. I guess I just decided it was time to let it out, all of it. There comes a time in your life when you say to yourself that if you continue to act normal and don't go mad then your entire life has been a waste. I felt I had reached that moment, when I was tired of keeping it in, tired of the ordinariness, the routine, the boredom, and seeing the same ugly people every day. I went mad and wrote. A part of me wanted it to be a tribute to my family; the other part knew it was an expression of who I truly am. (Chisholm)

The stylistic feature of the novel as a real-life experience is recurring in Caribbean American literature. Jamaica Kincaid's writings share the same style. For example, her novel *Lucy* describes the experience of Kincaid when she comes from Jamaica to New York and how she

tries to cope with her past. In a similar vein, Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon* describes a family of six generations' struggle with slavery over the globe. In *Disposable People*, Alan also tries to heal himself from the past that continues to trouble him, shows the consequences of childhood violence, and refers to the importance of the surrounding environment that influences his identity formation.

The character that is most easily linked to the author's experiences as described above by the author is Kenneth Lovelace. He is the central character and the narrator. Kenneth was born in a village he called Depression, a very poor village that lacks all types of fun and joy. It is also full of physical violence, fear, and shame. His family suffers from poverty and hunger. Kenneth and his father's relationship is not strong although they both live in the same house. His parents both die because of health issues that are neglected by the village's healthcare team. Kenneth suffers from failed marriages. He studies in the United States of America and lives in Kingston, New York. He earns a degree and becomes an international consultant. However, he dislikes Americans. After thirty years, he goes back to his home village where he encounters more fear and violence. Tragically, he dies there.

Kenneth's identity struggle exists in seeing himself as a disposable person. The idea Kenneth has about himself results from his problematic past, and feelings of shame. Kenneth's childhood memories deepen his struggle to find peace wherever he goes. They reinforce his self-shame and personal insecurities. Being haunted by these memories, he resists others and disapproves of almost every person he encounters. Kenneth's attitudes towards Americans are full of hate and discontent. The ways he talks about them and the idea he has about Americans signals his resistance to living in America and accepting Americans.

The Problematic Past

A major part of the novel is the memories that the protagonist recounts and the way their painfulness and ugliness impact his identity. The memories of the tyrannical Jamaican government, the harsh economic situation of the period, the poverty of his family, and multiple tragic deaths in his family overburden him. Kenneth states that "it is never easy for someone to distance him or herself from their past" (Alan 174). While Hall says: "identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed," Alan does the opposite ("Negotiating" 14). His fixation on his past informs the way he talks about his past, himself, and others. Kenneth, as the narrator of his past, describes how it colors his childhood with depression and sadness.

One of the many aftereffects of colonization is a chaotic political leadership that is led by dictators. The novel tackles the years between the 1970s and 1980s of Jamaican history. Jamaica was then a post-independent country under the administration of Michael Manley, a socialist regime that is characterized by violence, atrocity, corruption, and economic decline. Carl Stone, a political sociologist, studies Jamaica's economic and political history. In his article "Jamaica in Crisis: from Socialist to Capitalist Management," he argues that Michael Manley's government is responsible for Jamaica's economic and political decline. He shows also that the government's foreign policy centers around decolonizing attitudes towards America and Europe and considering them as the enemies of Jamaica. He adds that "between 1972 and 1980 the PNP [People's National Party] administration of Michael Manley attempted to chart a course based on a non-aligned, pro-Third World foreign policy and democratic socialism in domestic economic and social policies" (286). That being said, the country entered an economic crisis and caused people to suffer. The Jamaicans became poor and frustrated. Stone describes Jamaica's situation as follows:

> As the economic crisis deepened in the 1970s because of imported inflation and escalating oil prices, the state's role became more interventionist and its regulatory powers were expanded … the government established import controls on basic foods and drugs, and the major sources of foreign exchange in the economy were brought under either state ownership or state control. (289)

Alan reflects on the above-mentioned frustrating outcome of Manley's administration in the novel. He sheds light on the deterioration of Jamaica back then. Jamaicans lack ownership of their property. There is a class division. Healthcare is not affordable for everyone. There are no fun and recreational activities for families. Alan chooses a symbolic name for Kenneth Lovelace's village, which is Depression. The name indicates its gloominess. At a very early age, Kenneth is shocked to learn that his family's house is not theirs. He says: "I learnt that our property wasn't private … we- every last one of us- were all squatters on someone else's land. It was a rich man's land" (Alan 12). Moreover, it is not a perfect house for any family; all four members of Kenneth's family share one bedroom and bathroom. He wishes to have a special room that collects his school private things. He longs for a "house, with rooms for each of us and a fridge well-stocked with food and a bunch of grapes that I could eat every day after school" (Alan 12). His family members do not have enough food, and their poverty is something beyond their control. Kenneth states that "somehow, by the end of the 1970s, I had growing suspicion that my family was joining the ranks of 'the poor'. Borrowing more from the neighbors and eating fewer meals" (Alan 26). The kids in the village miss fun and joyful activities. Even worse, they are required at an early age to work and help their families. When Kenneth turns ten, he walks for miles and carries "buckets to fetch water in the mornings in order for [his] family to

bathe, cook and clean," which he believes shameful and humiliating to be seen by people (Alan 26).

The death of his mother is a significant incident in Kenneth's past. According to Kenneth, his mother dies because his family is poor and neglected, and the Jamaica government didn't care about its people (Alan 182). Healthcare is not for every Jamaican. Reflecting on her death, he says: "I felt that in most developed countries she would have had a curable disease, and would have lived a longer life …people who had insufficient disposable income had become disposable people" (Alan 182). His father also dies after a health issue that is not taken care of by the medical team. Although Kenneth is not moved by the death of his father due to his complicated relationship with him, he finds that his father could have lived longer if he had received good care. Kenneth explains that his father died after a simple surgery to remove gallstones, but he fell and got more injured (Alan 148). He needs only a few stitches, but no one takes care of him. "Then, a day or two later, death. And that was that, just like that" (Alan 148). Kenneth is disturbed to discover that his parents were treated as disposable people.

One of the painful memories that troubles Kenneth is the death of his cousin and childhood friend, Brian. Seeing him killed as a punishment for attempting to steal a goat is very devastating for Kenneth to the point that the scene haunts him for the rest of his life. Kenneth explains that it is Brian's family's bad economic situation that makes him try to steal to feed himself. "Everyone was in agreement that Brian's parents were married, catholic-style, to poverty" (Alan 45). When the goat's owners see Brian, they chase him and hold him to a wall. Kenneth recounts that they beat Brian and then use machetes to chop his body (Alan 49). Brian dies instantly. Kenneth says, "I cannot get this image out of my head: a large group of men swarming my cousin like flies, killing him, and continuing to chop as though they were also trying to get down to his soul"

(Alan 51). He understands from Brian's death scene that children in his home village are less worthy than a goat.

His other childhood friend, Tommy, also dies because of a tragic accident. Kenneth reflects on Tommy's death and explains that it is the cruelty of the ice factory truck driver that kills Tommy in cold blood. Kenneth demonstrates that because people did not have refrigerators back then, an ice factory truck came to the neighborhood to sell ice occasionally (Alan 103). The village's children: Kenneth, his brother, Tommy, Brian, and others run behind the truck and laugh with the workers who sit behind it as the truck moves from place to place. These children find these acts amusing and entertaining. Kenneth shows that these workers were so kind. They are paid little and less educated. He believes that they are "the lowest caste. They were like us, and they laughed with us. They slapped us. They gave us money. Perhaps they too could remember days gone by when they were the ones who ran behind the trucks" (Alan 103). However, some drivers have different attitudes toward the children and consider these acts annoying. Kenneth believes that these drivers looked down at them and "embarrassed by the sight of us *riff raff* hanging on to their self-image" (Alan 103). They insult and threaten the children. One day, Kenneth's brother, Tommy, and Tommy's brother chase the truck and the driver reverses back. Tommy is hit by the car from behind and dies immediately. People do not spend time and effort to investigate what made the driver drive backward, not being mindful of the children. Kenneth says: "the simple truth is that … he [the driver] chose to go backward. And that was that, *just like that*" (Alan 104). There were no further investigations done and justice is not served for Tommy's death. Kenneth feels deeply sad that his childhood friend dies tragically and believes that poverty plays a role in his death. Tommy comes from a family who has less food, and his father treats him badly because he demands more food than what his father can

afford him (Alan 105). Kenneth is saddened that Tommy's death is not taken seriously, and it leaves a shocking impression among the children of the village. It is a village of disposable people.

Another incident that causes Kenneth a lot of pain is the death of his uncle, Thomas. He is Brian's father, and he dies tragically eight months after the killing of Brian. His death is tragic for Kenneth because people find him dead inside a public bathroom in the village (Alan 69). The tragedy of his death was unbearable for Kenneth. He writes in his diary a poem he calls "The Funeral" about his uncle's sad death:

> there he lay
> like a dog in the streets.
> kicked.
> rolled over.
> confirmed dead.
> no microscopes.
> no stethoscopes.
> unexamined.
> as though it never lived,
> loved,
> felt.
> Amen. (Alan 69-70)

Kenneth is saddened by the lack of dignity in the treatment of Thomas's body after his death. Seeing people and children in the village die regrettably causes him a lot of pain.

As a child, Kenneth observes a woman in the village get burned by fire and she dies accordingly. This memory makes him have nightmares and haunts him for a long period of time. Kenneth says:

> It was one of the cruelest, most painful things I have ever seen …she was old and insane. And she was black, like me. Black, poor and insane-like my family … the old woman had squealed like a pig being poled, which is why every time I awake from my nightmares, I see that charred body running like a pig, squealing like a pig, and dying like a pig. (Alan 94)

People offer no help to the woman, and she dies. Kenneth is overwhelmed by the cruelty of the scene.

The arrest of Georgie, Kenneth's cousin, is another of the events that trouble Kenneth when he is young. Georgie is an unlucky child with minimal intellectual and physical skills. His mother has mental health problems, and his father is an abusive man. After the death of his mother, Georgie tries his best to take some of the responsibility of the house, and his father "inflicted some of the cruelest beating on him" (Alan 201). Georgie is arrested because he tries to help Grace, a Jamaican girl, who is repeatedly raped by the pastor of the church. Kenneth argues that "on the last day I saw him, he himself was smiling as they took him away to juvenile penitentiary. And that was that, and no more than that" (Alan 204). Kenneth believes that even the pastors in the village do not have sympathy and offer damage more than help and hope to people and children.

Kenneth admits that his childhood memories continue to influence him and his self-image. He says: "You can put your childhood memories behind you, but like your shadow, they always follow. Your childhood fears and shame do not need to take a cab to come and visit. Where you

are, open your closet, choose your shirt for the day, and say hello" (Alan 34). Finding himself, his parents, his childhood friends, and almost everyone in his home village disposable makes his view of himself full of humiliation and shame.

Shame

Caribbean people are constantly questioning and relating their problems to their identities. According to Hall, Caribbean identity is marked with ongoing moments of investigation and negotiation. He shows in his article, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," that "the Caribbean people of all kinds, of all classes and positions, experience the question of positioning themselves in a cultural identity as enigma as a problem, as an open question" (8). From this Caribbean critical perspective, we can argue that throughout the novel Kenneth is trying to figure out his problem with his identity. He expresses his dissatisfaction with how he looks and considers his past disgraceful. His main struggle is with identity and the way he looks at himself physically and psychologically.

Kenneth's relationship with his being is full of shame. The concept of shame as described by Sarah Ahmed in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* gives perspectives of what Kenneth experiences in the novel. The book focuses on the relationship between emotion, attitudes, and languages as they constitute individual and collective identities. She describes shame as a feeling that resides in one's recognition of himself or herself and the perception of his or her appearance to others. She writes:

> As Jean-Paul Sartre has argued: 'I am ashamed of what I am. Shame therefore realises an intimate relation of myself to myself' (Sartre 1996: 221). But, at the same time, Sartre suggests that: 'I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other' (1996: 222).

> Shame becomes felt as a matter of being – of the relation of self to itself – insofar as shame is about appearance, about how the subject appears before and to others. (105)

Kenneth's perception of himself is full of negative thoughts. Growing up in a "hateful" village called "Depression" in Jamaica, he finds himself an ugly black boy. He describes himself as a "poor … negro in deep, rural Jamaica [who] must have plenty to be ashamed of" (Alan 23). He is not satisfied with his physical appearance and hates his flat nose that "caused [him] endless pain" (Alan 410). He is ashamed of what he is. He said, "I am: lonely, crazy, hungry, sad, pedestrian, losing my mind, an employee … sick, afraid … I don't exist … my soul is dead; He is dead" (Alan 97). He feels desperate and miserable.

Kenneth is continuously thinking about the reasons for his pain and shame. On one occasion, he attributes this feeling to a curse that started operating in his life since his birth. He recounts that his birth was complicated (Alan 40). Old Timer tells him that the hand of the devil was involved in his birth because his mother was bleeding which showed that the baby was in danger, but "something happened and [his] body, mysteriously, turned" (Alan 40). He describes through a drawing that his hand has many lines which according to him are the sign of a curse (Alan 41). Kenneth hates everything about his life.

Kenneth hates his life with his family. He is not satisfied with the one-room house of his family and criticizes his parents for locking him outside the house more than once a day. His life as a child lacks the normal activities of kids. He describes his family as a dark and sad family saying that "darkness described not only [their] pigmentation, but also [their] living mental conditions" (Alan 42). His relationship with his father is complex: he is afraid of him and lists him as one of the top ten things that scares him a lot. He recounts:

> Seeing my papa coming home angry, even under the best of circumstances, the sternness in my papa's eyes was harder to face than a life sentence. On the days when he was angry the sun would take cover behind the clouds, leaving them to darken the day and the personality of everyone in and around our house. (Alan 25)

However, he knows that his father's poverty is beyond his control and "the harshness in his eyes was the reflection of the hardships he experienced on his journey" (Alan 127). Kenneth argues that he "doesn't know him, not as a father, never as a friend, scarcely as a person" (Alan 129).

Moreover, Kenneth's relationship with women reinforces his shame. He suffers from failed marriages. His most successful relationship is with an imaginary character he calls Semicolon. The fact that he finds love and intimacy with an imaginary figure reflects greatly the deep trauma resulting from his shame. Kenneth's earlier view of women was limited to physical pleasure. Since an early stage of his life, he had sexual relationships with women, an act he regrets deeply. He has multiple sexual relationships not only with his neighbor Cookie, but also with his schoolteachers Carmen, Monica, and Ms. Evans. Mary Hanna, reviewing *Disposable People*, argues that the obsession with sexuality begins at an early age in the children of poverty (1). Kenneth recounts that "the temporal consequences of this lack of intimacy with love were grave" (Alan 253). These relationships worsen his self-shame.

During college, his relationship with his classmate, Terri-Ann, does not last for long. Her father has a very negative opinion of him, which increases Kenneth's self-shame. Kenneth recounts that when Terri-An's father comes into the living room and looks at him, he leaves, which creates pain in Kenneth's soul (Alan 235). He continues to describe it as pain that "went much deeper than just [his] skin. And [he] felt crooked, not in [his] flesh and bones, but somewhere deep inside [him]. And the little man inside [him] also said he felt the same" (Alan

235). This scene makes Kenneth's shame intensified and as Ahmed argues that shame reinforces itself in someone's relationship of himself or herself to be a basic trait in the character. Ahmed adds that "shame involves the intensification not only of the bodily surface, but also of the subject's relation to itself, or its sense of itself as self" (104). Possessed by his self-shame, Kenneth does not spend any effort to strengthen his relationship with Terri-Ann. He loses contact with her and then learns later that her father sends her away from the city to avoid Kenneth (Alan 236).

Kenneth's marriages failed to be long-life relationships. He does not speak about his first wife in his memoir and the "page is intentionally left blank to reflect [his] understanding of how exactly [he] managed to screw up [his] first marriage" (Alan 254). His second wife is called Rebecca. She is a Black Jamaican girl. He admits that she is nice and lovable to him, and a good housewife (Alan 258). However, he does not love her the way she loves him. On their second anniversary in Cuba, he explains that their conversations lack love, and they seem like an unhappy couple. He says: "I lived so much of my life believing that without air and the warmth of a woman … I could not survive seven days. Now I realize that what I long for is the taste of an occasional conversation" (Alan 272). After divorcing Rebecca, he has a relationship with a girl called Debbie (Alan 275). But it does not last for long because they both have different personalities.

His last love relationship is with Semicolon. He writes his journals and memories to her as the novel unfolds. He shares with her everything about his past and loves her deeply. Although she seems to be a real woman, she is not. This is obvious because while he is writing the journals to her, he is speaking with her at the same time. He says to her:

> I did seen her again, Semicolon. I saw her after her parents sent her away to the US … My love, she then looked at me puzzled, and her smile temporarily disappeared… I have not seen her since, my love, but I would like to, for one final time, to tell her thanks for the dreams and the memories. (Alan 344-6-7)

They both enjoy sharing the same phone code, texting each other, speaking about memories, and having coffee together (Alan 344). She convinces him to go back to his old village. She helps him reconcile with his past, which he finds a necessary step for overcoming his self-shame. Speaking to Semicolon, Kenneth says emotionally:

> You changed my mind about that place, Semicolon. You asked me to go back. Back to that place where I was born and spent the worst years of my life. Because only you could. Because only you knew that I could never go forward without going back … I went without saying a word, back in time, past the old familiar faces and places- to understand where I was coming from and make peace with my past. (Alan 350)

He does not go alone; he also takes her with him. Once they reach the village, she disappears suddenly. It is a clear indication that she is not a human being, and Kenneth makes her up to fill the vacancy he feels after losing communication with people around him, his family, and all the women in his life.

In Depression, he sees his parents, grandparents, friends from childhood, Old Man Tom, and The Incredible Hope. He sees Cookie, too. He meets Garnet's son who "had been following [him] from [his] childhood, slinking into the bushes to conceal himself, quickening pace to keep up and not lose sight of [him]" (Alan 357). Garnet's son symbolizes Kenneth's past, which has tantalized him and caused him self-shame. When Garnet asks Kenneth for two thousand dollars, Kenneth refuses to give him money. Kenneth looks back and sees Garnet’s son and then dies

(Alan 364). Metaphorically, when he faces his childhood violence, he dies. Kenneth is destroyed by his problematic past in his home village. In this regard, Benítez-Rojo, in his book *The Repeating Island,* argues that it is the fate of Caribbeans to be estranged in this world, and the return to their original place is a step that might fulfill the vacancy they feel, but it could take them to death. Benítez-Rojo explains:

> Every Caribbean person, after an attempt has been made to reach his culture's origins, will find himself on a deserted beach, naked and alone, coming out of the waters as though shivering and shipwrecked … without any identification papers other than the uncertain and turbulent memorandum inscribed in his scars, tattoos, and skin color. Finally, every person of the Caribbean is in exile from his own myth and his history, and also from his own culture and his own Being, now and always, in the world. (217)

Cultural Resistance

Kenneth's interaction with Americans presents him as an isolated man who is not willing to understand them and connect with them. With a limited budget and few friends, he manages to continue his education at a college in Kingston, New York. Although he becomes a consultant, his history in the "hateful village" still looms on the horizon of his new world. He looks at himself as a "black man and a Jamaican . . . [who] grew up in a hateful … place where people lived short, nasty lives" (Alan 223). Kenneth is occupied with his past more than reaching out to people around him. He is depressed most of the time and questions the true meaning of life.

> I know throughout those years we were all looking for meaning in those wretched, cockroachy lives. While no one said it, it was something that you could see, right there: in the time people spent in the rum bars; in the amount of money they spent on horse racing, cock fighting, dog fighting and hermit crab racing … in the number of kids

> women would have so that they always had someone to live them (the love of a child lasted only so long in those environments, hence the need to constantly reproduce fresh love) and so on and so forth. (Alan 223-4)

Being isolated, Kenneth does not detail his life in the United States of America. He is more of a judgmental observer, and his opinion of Americans is structured with hate.

Being locked on his self-shame, Kenneth's hatred for Americans is a result of extinguishing his creoleness. He looks at himself as only a poor Black Jamaican man. Hall argues that Creole identity is less embraced in Jamaica, explaining, "it is worth noting that, in the Anglophone Caribbean islands, the term is much more common in St Lucia and Dominica, where the French influences remain strong, than in, say, Jamaica, where it is rarely used, except in an academic – and often pejorative – sense" ("Créolité" 14). Kenneth is less open for cultural translation and partnership. His identity is fixated on his Jamaicanness, which is his national identity, more than his Creoleness. He focuses more on his memories and self-shame. For him Americans are "the motley crew" who combined "whites, blacks, latinos" and he does not belong to that "crew" (Alan 213). He avoids them and has a bad opinion of them. Creolization is not a background for him to relate to himself in America.

Kenneth's attitude towards his Caribbean culture is characterized by the survival of his Jamaican identity. Hall's examination of Caribbean identity in his article, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," argues that Caribbeans are subject to complex processes to negotiate their identity. He mentions that Caribbean identity can be formed either through "survival, assimilation, or cultural revolution" (Hall "Negotiating" 7). In "survival", Caribbeans "maintain some kind of subterranean link with what was often called 'the other Caribbean' the Caribbean that was not recognized, that could not speak" (Hall "Negotiating" 7). Kenneth decides to retain

his memories, his view of himself and his childhood village. He chooses not to open himself to integrate with Americans and isolate himself from others.

It is worth mentioning that Kenneth is raised in a time when the Jamaican political view looks at America as the devil of the world. Although he benefits from education in America and becomes an international consultant, he does not open himself to examine the gap that hinders him from communicating with people around him. Stone mentions above that the foreign policy of the Jamaican political regime during Kenneth's upbringing describes America as an imperialist power and shows its hostility to America back then. The regime "attempt[ed] to chart a regional and international foreign policy that was defiantly independent of the United States and indeed tended to portray the United States as an imperialist country and a major stumbling bloc to Third World development" (Stone 287). Kenneth still sees Americans as invaders of other people's culture who think their lifestyle should be universalized. One example occurs when he is in an airport observing a mother and her child. He expresses his reservations about the Western world in general and believes that Eurocentrism influences everything including childrearing. He laughs at the idea that mother-child interactions should follow the standards of the West as if these standards are for all humankind.

> I saw the Western European-looking woman. She was white and hold a Chinese-looking child. She must have adopted him before the new too fat, too single, too old, too poor Chinese adoption policy, that came into effect a few years ago. I spent a little time watching mother and child interact, which was very much in line with Standard Western Operating Procedures: the child laughed, then ran, and the mother smiled, encouraged and tickled, and so on. (Alan 34)

His hatred of Americans is clear and intense every time he mentions them in his journals. Hate is among the emotions Ahmed tackles in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. She argues that "hate is an intense emotion; it involves a feeling of 'againstness' … hate is always hatred of something and somebody … it is possible, of course, to hate an individual person because of what they have done or what they are like" (58). On a train trip from Dover, New Jersey to Penn Station, Kenneth's descriptions of people sitting around him register his hatred and resistance to accepting them. Investing in hating them makes him alienated and awakens his self-shame. While he is observing people carrying on with their trip, he mentions that he is the only "Negro" on the train (Alan 212). Seeing a mother with her two young daughters makes him prejudge the absent father for either being a cheater or an irresponsible dad. He overhears a conversation between the two young girls and criticizes their mother's parenting skills. He comments, "their mother continued sorting things in her pocketbook, oblivious to the conversation. I thought it was most unusual for a six-year-old to say those things. But she did" (Alan 212). He also criticizes a White man who was holding the NJ Star Ledger and not buying the NY Times, which "showed [the White man] lacked ambition and that he was where [New Jersey] he belonged" (Alan 213). He denounces a sleeping girl for leaving her mouth open and concludes that she has "respiratory problems or was otherwise congested" (Alan 213). Kenneth's struggle with accepting himself and communicating positively with others is obvious in the way he views himself and people on the train.

On a different train trip from Westchester to Penn Station, Kenneth imagines what people are thinking and believes they look at him as an inferior person, a feeling that reinforces his self-shame. He is annoyed to see a White man because his stereotypical idea of White people in America is that their lives are full of joy and happiness and their past lives do not have the same

misery as his (Alan 213). When Kenneth sees the old White man looking at him, he feels degraded, ashamed, and belittled.

> Looking at me, his eyes transmitted: you are nothing more than a Darwinian anomaly Nigga. No matter how well-dressed and educated you are, you are still black and you don't belong here. It was clear that he regarded the image of a skinny pot-bellied negro with intelligence as visually discordant … All I saw was Resentment, pure-bred, well-fed and immaculately dressed. When he went to bed at nights, Hatred climbed in with him, pulled up the covers and snuggled comfortably beside him. (Alan 213)

Kenneth's inner thoughts demonstrate his resistance to see Americans as benevolent to him and sheds light on how much hate he has for them. On the same trip, he sees another man who "looked the Wall Street type" (Alan 213). According to Kenneth, the man seems like a negligent father and a racist criminal. A facial expression of sadness on the man attracts Kenneth's attention. He then moves to criticize the girl accompanying the man. From Kenneth's point of view, she is not beautiful. He believes that beauty in America is linked to race and hints at the racial discrimination of beauty contests in the "US Midwest", which value only the beauty of White women (Alan 214). He shows that her beauty comes as a second position to Brazilian and Lebanese beauty. He judges that "rich Wall Street type" man who brings her from Europe just because she is a beautiful woman (Alan 214). He criticizes their luxurious lifestyle saying they are:

> The kind that would eat an Arugula and Goat Cheese Salad because it's fine to eat what goes into and comes out of a goat, but they would never touch the goat itself. These were folks whose meals were served in the centre of their plates, never occupying more

> than a quarter of the available space and would be found equally enjoyable by rabbits. (Alan 214).

Observing the man's pain closely, Kenneth expresses his joy upon seeing him go through psychological pain, a feeling that shows Kenneth's dwelling in his hatred of Americans. He concludes his thoughts that Americans are "objects of hate", who do not deserve any sympathy, love, and reconciliation (Alan 219). He also views them as being obsessed with technology, busy people who are always working on their smart devices and occupied with useless activities (Alan 216).

At Starbucks, Kenneth has another chance to express his hatred to Americans and their lifestyle. He describes them as "loathsome", obese, sick, ugly, psychopathic, burger-lovers, and occupied with "infidelities" and superficial communication (Alan 216). He sees an old woman entering the coffee shop and assumes that she looks like a shallow person who has nothing to do to improve the world. He criticizes her body as perfect only because of plastic surgery (Alan 216).

Kenneth's disdain for American women continues, and he comments on another woman entering the coffee shop. Her attractiveness made her an object for "men who spoke in foreign currencies or on public platforms" (Alan 217). He describes her as a foolish girl caring only for outer appearance, jewelry, drinks, spa with girls, shoes, handbags, and nails. He presumes that her diamond ring is a gift from her rich ex-husband whose life is lavish and that he chose to marry her only because he appreciated good-looking girls and enjoyed gifting her luxurious presents to compensate for his overoccupancy with work and his neglect of her (Alan 218). She is the type of person who can be seen if she wants to eat with "a fine bottle of Chateau Mouton Rothschild accompanying some form of cuisine that would have been recommended by her

personal trainer" (Alan 218). For Kenneth, she seems the type of woman who has many friends whom she uses to feel good about her life. He continues to judge her lifestyle as someone who cared only for fashion trends for shoes (Alan 218).

Kenneth shifts his concentration to speak about the Latino guy at the counter, Jorge. Kenneth finds that he can relate to Jorge. Kenneth argues that Jorge seems to not be from America since "his father had brought him and a cousin over the Mexican border when he was fourteen… his family had never been anything but poor" (Alan 219). However, according to Kenneth, Jorge is in good condition. He has friends, a new car, and a lover. Jorge is aware of his race and identity in America and hangs out only with people who he belongs with such as "mulattos" (Alan 220). Jorge knows that "mainstream upper class American white girls were not necessarily into" people from his race (Alan 220). Although Kenneth finds Jorge at peace with himself, he knows that someone like "Jorge understood … his life, his background, his ethnicity, [and that] his class" will make him "completely invisible" in America (Alan 221). Through Jorge, Kenneth delivers a message that race, ethnicity, and background define people in America and people of color look content but are always overlooked.

Kenneth is unable to accept Americans. His hate is part of his identity. He reflects that his hate for them started at an early age in his life.

> I was surrounded by them. And their faces were all the same. And I hated them … I really truly and deeply hated … lot of them that Thursday. At thirty-nine years old. I carried such hate within me. And a part of me knew why. I had a lot to do with my sense of pride and identity. The hatred had begun a long time before. I don't know precisely when it started but I can clearly recall one precise moment in the past when I had felt it, and knew it was there, pulsating beneath my skin. (Alan 221)

Kenneth's construction of his identity in America is based on hate. He distances himself from them and lets the writer of fiction inside of him reveal his negative opinion of Americans. He is in conflict with White men and women whom he cannot understand and accept. Such hatred shows how his identity in America is structured with cultural resistance as a result of surviving his Jamaican history and memories. If Kenneth in America is not a Creole Caribbean, the novel is creolist in style. It depicts the life of a Jamaican man from his early days to his death, a life that is full of hardship, neglect, disposability, and self-questioning.

Elizabeth Nunez's *Now Lila Knows*

A more recent novel shows another way for Caribbeans to negotiate their identity. *Now Lila Knows* is a contemporary novel written by the Trinidadian American novelist Elizabeth Nunez. The title of the novel underlines its postcolonial dimension by referring to the identity struggle through which the protagonist has gone, and the knowledge she has gained by the end of the novel. Identifying as a Caribbean woman in America makes her struggle with her self-identification. What does it mean to be a Caribbean woman in America? How is she a woman of color? Why is she a Black woman? Lila experiences forced assimilation, alienation, and double consciousness till she realizes that her partnership with Black Americans bridges the gap she experiences as a Caribbean woman in America. Identity struggle is a widely discussed topic in Caribbean American literature. For example, the Barbadian American writer Paule Marshall's debut novel, *Brown Girls, Brownstones*, tackles the struggle the characters go through as "racialized immigrants" in having access to education and improving their finances in America, something the "white immigrants" do not experience (Stitt 287). As well, Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* describes Clare's struggle in American school and society over belonging and racial classification. Lila's story is a challenge of American racial justice.

Now Lila Knows depicts the story of a female professor, Lila Bonnard, who comes to Mayfield College in Vermont, in the United States of America, to teach Caribbean literature. On her first day in the city, when she comes from the airport, she witnesses a murder of a Black man by the police. The Black man turns out to be a professor in the same college and department in which she is assigned to teach. The murdered Black professor is trying to help a White woman, who is lying unconscious on the floor, by giving her CPR because of an overdose of opioids (Nunez 12-21). She feels she should testify in court and describe what happened because she witnessed the murder. Lila is hesitant to testify in court. The Black faculty and workers in the department push her to believe that she is also a target being a minority woman and a foreigner (Nunez 47). Her fiancé, Robert, exerts pressure on Lila to remain silent and neutral and asks her to avoid confrontations with the law and people in America (Nunez 97). Finally, she decides to serve as a witness in the case after she reads the novel *A Different Drummer* by William Melvin Kelley. Despite the collaboration of the faculty and people of the city in the case, the police officer is acquitted and moved to a different place (Nunez 140-45). Lila is offered a time extension by the college to continue teaching in the States. However, she decides to leave and go back to her university in the Caribbean. She believes that a Black American female professor from the States would be a better fit for the position and that Black American women deserve a chance to build the knowledge in America's higher educational systems (Nunez 248). By the end of the novel, Lila has come to realize many things, and grown up to be more aware of herself and the world.

Forced Assimilation and Alienation

The main idea of Nunez's novel is that it highlights how Caribbeans struggle with defining themselves in America. The novel shows this struggle in Lila's inner thoughts, conversations,

attitudes, and interactions with people and events. *Now Lila Knows* complicates the very notion of self-identification in America and describes a clash with the race categories that America uses to identify its citizens. Lila exemplifies this struggle which involves moments of alienation and hesitant self-characterization. While she looks at herself as a Caribbean woman from St. Marie, Grenada, her colleagues, and everybody else in the city treat her as a woman of color who comes from a former colony. Being a biracial foreigner makes her a minority and a woman of color. Because Mayfield is a city in which the Whites are the majority, and the Blacks are the minority, she is looked at as a minority. The Caribbean Lila is no longer a Caribbean person. A very important conversation between her and her fiancé, Robert, describes the passivity of individuals who come to America and seek to be defined as they perceive themselves. When she tells her fiancé that "in America you are Black if there is African blood in your ancestry", he replies that "So *they* will define me. Is that it, Lila? I must abdicate my right to define myself"? (Nunez 97). In this novel, Nunez explicates through Lila the struggle Caribbean expatriates go through to identify themselves and how they are forced to assimilate to a specific group in America, or else be alienated.

To start with, it is essential to know who Lila is. Lila is a biracial woman whose roots are in Europe and Africa. Her father's family is called Bonnard. The Bonnards are "the progeny of French planters, slave owners in the Caribbean … The Bonnards were Roman Catholics, and not just Catholics but Poto L'Eglise, the Pillars of Catholic Church" (Nunez 62-63). Lila argues that her father is not a purely French man. She describes him as a biracial man, like most people in the Caribbean. He is mixed with many races, including African. Her mother does not come from the Bonnard family. She is a biracial woman, too. However, she is more African than any other race, describing her mother as:

> not a Bonnard by blood, African blood dominated any other blood that might have flowed through her mother's veins. Her mother's skin was dark, the deep brown of a tamarind shell. She had dark eyes, full lips, and a nose that fits perfectly on her oval face and was broad, flattened at the bridge below her eyes. (Nunez 57)

Therefore, Lila identifies herself as a biracial Caribbean woman. She has African blood and other blood from European ancestors. As far as outer appearance, Lila "was fair skinned; her complexion not so light that she would be mistaken for white, but they wouldn't say she was Black either… Café au lait would be an apt description" (Nunez 14). Lila's conceptualization of herself is that she is a mixed-race person.

While I see Nunez's identification of Lila as a biracial person focuses only on her parents and ancestors, I find her description to be missing a very important aspect of Caribbean identity. The reason that Nunez uses the concept of biracial identity to describe Caribbean cultural identity instead of using creolized identity is that creolization has found no recognition in American racial context, and that the racial configuration in America asserts Blackness for biracial identity having African blood. That being said, Caribbean people in America find themselves struggling to know to which communities they should relate, sometimes resisting against being dragged into a racial specificity that makes them unsatisfied, and feeling uncomfortable assimilating to Black Americans since both groups have African blood. In an important conversation between Lila and Robert, Lila establishes the difficulty of her struggle with identity which Robert calls a "problem" (Nunez 58). They have the following exchange:

> "You are colored."
>
> "No one says colored anymore, Robert."

> "Well, you are not Black. You just can't deny all your other bloods, all your family," he said.
>
> "In America, you have to choose."
>
> "There you again, Lila. America has a problem; we don't." (Nunez 58)

The Creole identity for Caribbean people provides them meaning and explanation after many years of negotiation and exploration.

Hall's examination of Caribbean identity in his article, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," presents processes of cultural identifications that provide Caribbean people with further insight into how to negotiate their identity. He mentions that Caribbean identity can be formed through "three key processes …survival, assimilation, or cultural revolution" (7). In this part of my analysis, I will focus on assimilation. Hall believes that "the profound process of assimilation, of dragging the whole society into some imitative relationship with this other culture which one could never quite reach," provides Caribbean people a way to form their identity (8). Hall's definition of assimilation describes the mechanism by which the colonized subjects assimilate to the colonizers. His phrase "this other culture" refers to the Eurocentric colonizers. The reason that assimilation is the focal point of the analysis is because Lila does not find a way to express her creolized identity in America and her experience in Mayfield involves assimilation. She is faced with a more nuanced assimilation. She is forced to assimilate to the Black community in the city because she has African blood in her family.

Lila's Black American colleagues push her to assimilate to them. She feels it right from the beginning when she meets them for the first time. In the restaurant, they treat her as if she is one of them. Professor Terence Carter says to Lila: "I expect you were in the majority on your island. Here, we are in the minority. In this country, in this college. There are differences" (Nunez 47).

Lila is referred to as one member of the minority group in the city and not even given a chance to define herself freely.

Furthermore, Lila is expected to engage in the activities, such as Black Lives Matter protest, following the death of Prof. Brown, who is killed by the police. She feels that her opinion about the incident should be tied to social and racial justice in America. She feels that she is under pressure to testify as a witness regardless of her position in the case. Prof. Elaine Mclean replies to Lila, "Well, I'm glad you were there… I'm glad you saw" when she clearly states that "I [she] was there…I [she] was still on the sidewalk" (Nunez 43). Elaine gives Lila no liberty to explain herself and pass her judgment of Prof. Brown's death.

It is sad that the same group, who forces Lila to group with them, collaborate to alienate her. "Terrence, Elaine, Gail, all gone [to Prof. Brown's funeral] without her" (Nunez 16). Lila is shocked to see them ignore her. "They had embraced her, welcomed her to Mayfield, had declared she was one of their own, and now they separated themselves from her" (Nunez 16). She feels singled out by the same people who treat her as if she is one of them. Although she is reluctant to believe what Robert told her that they are one "tribe" and she is not one of the tribe members, she recognizes that she is forced to be in the "tribe" just because they need her to serve their cause (Nunez 131). Terence, Gail, and Elaine ignore Lila so they can gain and maintain power over her. They exclude her from the funeral to make her insecure and lonely as a way to push her to join their group.

Another significant example of Lila being forced to follow her Black coworkers occurs when she tries to engage in a conversation about details of the murder scene and add some perspectives to the case. She shows sympathy for Adriana, the White woman whom Prof. Brown tries to help, and kindness that she survived the gunshot. However, her feelings do not please Terence, Gail,

and Elaine. Lila is faced with looks that "could kill [her]- the expression was made real for Lila in that moment. She wanted to say something, but her tongue was glued to the roof of her mouth" (Nunez 100). Lila feels that her emotions and reactions are limited and lack freedom of expression. She is forced to copy the Black faculty's attitudes, emotions, and opinions regarding Prof. Brown's murder, which is only sympathizing with Prof. Brown's murder and showing no emotions for Adriana.

To force Lila to assimilate to the Black community in the city, her Caribbean identity would have to be erased. This occurs when she visits Terence's office. The meeting is full of moments of tension and control. Surprisingly, from the beginning of their conversation, he called her "West Indian girl" and uses "us" and "we" to treat Lila as a member of the Black community (Nunez 146-7). He uses the same phrase coined by the European colonizers to name the inhabitants of the West Indies, the Caribbean Islands. Lila considers it offensive and is shocked that an intellectual professor like Terence addresses her that way (Nunez 146). As a response, she finds herself in a position where she should not show loyalty to the Black community and allow them to exercise power over her decision. She is resistant to Terence's influence and power. When she tells him that she is not fully committed to Prof. Brown's case and states that "I [she] saw *when* it happened. I [she] cannot be sure that I [she] saw *what* happened", he becomes very angry and dismisses her from his office (Nunez 146). Terence's attempt to erase Lila's Caribbean self is a feature of assimilation in which dragging her unique colonial experience to his social experience as a Black man in America is obvious.

The pressure goes beyond conversations and feelings and became on the level of actions and order. One of the most stunning incidents that surprised Lila is when she finds in her office an anonymous letter that reads "PUPPET OF THE COLONIZER, READ FANON" (Nunez 150).

The letter did not only threaten her, but it also accused her directly of lacking knowledge of historical and postcolonial background and professional skills. The letter is written by Gail as an attempt to pressure Lila that the Black community is the only home for her in America. She warns her not to copy the Western colonizer and reads about Fanon's theories of the danger of mimicking a culture that occupied and enslaved her ancestors.

Moreover, Lila feels the pressure of assimilation from the students, the very group that is supposed to learn from her. They push her to get involved in the activities following the death of Prof. Brown. They gather to protest the killing of Prof. Brown at the entrance of the college's cafeteria with a large banner that says Black Lives Matter. When Lila passes by them, they salute her eagerly. Nunez shows that "she was part of us [the Black people]. The students in front of the Black Lives Matter banner had recognized her. They had drawn her into their protest, she and she alone, not the white faculty who had entered the cafeteria just before she did" (96). Elaine also asks her to join the protestors. The students think because Lila is a woman of color, the case of Prof. Brown's death must be highly important to her. They are excited to share with her some information about the case. When she passes by the protesters, she intends to acknowledge their efforts and wish them a good day. However, one of the students pulls her and tells her that Prof. Brown received four bullets which causes his death (Nunez 115).

Lila is faced with one-sided demand of solidarity to follow the Black community in Mayfield. Prof. Brown's killing is a chance that makes them push her to join them, serve their cause, and copy their opinions. While she considers herself a foreigner with mixed race heritage from the Caribbean islands, she is a Black woman for them because she has African blood, and she must fulfill her role as such in America.

Double Consciousness

The forced assimilation that Lila goes through in Mayfield creates doubleness in her consciousness. After great pressure to assimilate to Black Americans, she feels torn between the social and cultural demands of two identities, her identity as a person of color (Black woman), and her identity as an outsider in America (Caribbean). Lila is a biracial person, her mixedness is a result of her creolized background and culture. In the novel, she looks at herself as an outsider: a Caribbean woman who comes to teach Caribbean literature in the States. She discovers later that her postcolonial background and cultural heritage shape her identity to become a Black woman who should contribute to enhancing social justice in America. This feeling of being caught between two selves reinforces Lila's identity struggle in her classes and her attitude toward Prof. Brown's death.

In the novel, she fluctuates between seeing herself as a Black woman and as a Caribbean woman. This confusion is coined by W. E. B. Du Bois as "double consciousness" in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* which describes the situation of Black people in America and how they are torn between seeing themselves as Black Americans and being seen and judged from the lens of White Americans (8). Du Bois explains that:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, -an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose doggy strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 8)

Du Bois argues that Black Americans are trapped between two selves because "the problem of the twentieth century is the color line, - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in

Asia and Africa, in America and the island of the sea" (Du Bois 14). Skin color problematizes identification for Black Americans, and they often grapple with their duality in America. Du Bois stresses the importance of freedom, desegregation, positive integration, and education for Black people. Black people must be themselves, and not others. (Du Bois 11)

Double consciousness persists in the way Lila tries to figure out her positionality in the killing of Prof. Brown's case. She is torn between her tasks as a postcolonial critic and as an outsider professor. Lila believes she has nothing to do with the way Black people are treated either by the police or White citizens in America. However, her knowledge of postcolonial criticism and her Caribbean background drive her to get involved and claim justice for Prof. Brown's murder. When she arrives at Mayfield, Lila is fulfilling her outsider role. After seeing the murder of Prof. Brown, she feels that she does not need to explain what she has just seen to Mrs. Lowell. When she sees Mrs. Lowell trying to guess, Lila does not intervene and lets her go on with her imagination (Nunez 12). Moreover, she does not sympathize with the pain the Black faculty feel when she meets them for the first time in the restaurant. "She could find the words to let them know how sorry she was for their loss. She was an outsider. She could sympathize, but she could not feel their pain. Not really" (Nunez 46). She constantly reminds herself of her identity as an outsider to which the Black faculty object. When Gail tells her to report what she saw to the police, Lila argues that her obligations to the college as a foreign professor required her to keep a good reputation for the college in the country. Lila says: "I'm not from this country. I'm not a citizen… I'm a guest of the college. I don't want to make trouble for them… I don't want to have the college's name splashed across the newspapers because of me" (Nunez 159). Gail does not find her argument convincing enough.

The concept of double consciousness is utilized in postcolonial theory by Frantz Fanon to shed light on the doubleness of colonized subjects (Black men) who have gone through slavery and colonization. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon argues that White men and Black men are "locked" in their racial identities, a fact that creates "double narcissism" in the psyches of Black men whose painful "destiny" is to try so hard to be "white" (introduction xiv). He shows that the consequences of colonial experiences drive the Black man to behave differently because he "possesses two dimensions, one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites" (Fanon 1). The Black man tends to extinguish his Blackness believing that "the more he rejects his blackness … the whiter he will become" (Fanon 3). Fanon's approach to the dilemma of self-division is a psychological one in which he believes that it is up to the individual to solve and mitigate it.

Lila has a full understanding of her European heritage and African heritage. Her experience in Mayfield sometimes pushes her to erase her Caribbean identity and embrace the identity of a Black person in America. Lila wants only to be herself. She is not a Black person who wants so hard to be White. She does not want to put on the Black American mask. She aspires for everyone to recognize her Caribbean Creole identity.

Lila cannot decide who she is in America. She feels unhomed in her first months in the city. Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture*, studies the ambivalence of identities that went through colonization and slavery. He explains how being unhomed always accompanies formerly colonized subjects. He believes that "cultural identification is then poised on the brink of what Kristiva calls 'loss of identity', or Fanon describes as a profound cultural undecidability" (Bhabha 220). Because Lila is forced to group with Black Americans, she feels that her Caribbean identity is stripped away from her. Moreover, she feels that her alliance with Black

Americans might give her meaning and help her fulfill the African element in her identity. The tension goes back and forth for Lila. Bhabha writes:

> At the edge, in-between the black body and the white body, there is a tension of meaning and being, or some would say demand and desire, which is the psychic counterpart to that muscular tension that inhabits the native body … It is from such tensions-both psychic and political- that a strategy of subversion emerges. (89)

The tension that inhabits Lila's body is between full acknowledgment of her Caribbean heritage and the demand to dwell more on the African side of her identity.

The reason that Lila is hired as a visiting professor by the English department in Mayfield College is her critique of the Western characterization of the White race and the hypocrisy of colonization, topics that the Black faculty find important for the students and the department and could be used to enhance social justice in America. The Black faculty are devoted to establishing equity in college and tell Lila that one of her academic essays is the reason behind their recommendations for her to come and teach in the department. Elaine tells her, "'we all read your essay . . . Terrence was not joking when he said that we have been waiting a long time in this college for someone like you. Years" (Nunez 48). Lila writes an essay about *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare in which she criticizes the Western literary scholars' appropriation enacted on Caliban's words and character and their ultimate admiration of Prospero as an image of goodness and beauty despite his depreciation of Caliban. As a postcolonial critic, Lila contributes to the critiques of *The Tempest* that are written about the play. For example, George Lamming, a Caribbean postcolonialist critic, in *The Pleasure of Exile,* uses *The Tempest* as counter-canonical literature to denounce the stereotypical ideas associated with Caliban such as savageness, deformity, ugliness, and degeneracy and show his merits and virtue. Lamming elaborates that:

> Caliban is excluded, that which is eternally below possibility, and always beyond reach. He is seen as an occasion, a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited for the purposes of another's own development. Caliban is a reminder of lost virtue or the evil vigour of the Beast that is always there: a magnetic temptation, and an eternal warning against the contagion of his daemon ancestry. (107)

The faculty like her essay and believe that her ideas can be deployed to their ends. They see her postcolonial scholarship align with her postcolonial identity, which is forcibly claimed from Lila from the time of her arrival to Mayfield.

However, Lila thinks that her knowledge of postcolonialism and her essay should not influence the way she looks at people in America, especially her students. In her classes, she is mindful that students in America come from different races and cultural backgrounds. Lila is reluctant to talk about colonial history because it could hurt the White students' feelings and shy them away from participating in class. She wants to create balance during class discussions and be aware that colonial history and slavery are sensitive topics for White students. She is not ready to engage in a discussion with American students about slavery and colonial pasts, "words that triggered anxiety, guilt, and, in some automatic reminders of America's original sin. She didn't want to frighten them, push them into their defensive corners" (Nunez 76). However, being a postcolonial professional who comes from a postcolonial background demands that she explain colonial projects that were grounded on the exploitation of Black people from Africa by White Europeans. Lila always reminds herself that she is an outsider, and her job is only to deliver information to students without taking sides and creating divisions among them. She is surprised that her students are excited to learn more about slavery, and they already know a lot about the history of slavery. Interestingly, the students know that a course in Caribbean literature

will provide them with a real vision of the world, so they register for her upcoming class. Everyone "had welcomed her to Mayfield, but Lila knew she was a threat. It was impossible after her, after the course she was teaching, to go back to the way things were … students were already demanding courses that were relevant to the world they live in" (Nunez 170). Because the faculty look at her as a postcolonial subject, her identity as an outsider clashed with her identity as a person of color. This clash intensifies the doubleness of her attitudes and actions.

The intensity of Lila's double consciousness is revealed in her conversations with her fiancé, Robert. In the beginning, she describes the killing of Prof. Brown to him without any emotions or comments. At that time, she is fulfilling her outsider role in the case. After meeting with the Black faculty, she begins to understand the background information and gain more awareness about the relationship between race and criminal justice. When Lila tells Robert, "I am Black," she feels that her task as a woman of color is to establish justice and reject any colonialist thoughts (Nunez 57). She feels that she has a responsibility to Prof. Brown and the Black community in Mayfield. She is sad and furious to hear that Prof. Brown is accused of being Adrian's drug supplier (Nunez 89). At this point, Lila is hesitant. She thinks that it is not her fight and business, but she is surprised to see herself defend Prof. Brown. Nunez wrote: "She had not expected she would become defensive. But Robert was right: it was not her fight" (92). These feelings lead Lila to think deeply about what Terence means when he says, "Black men are an endangered species" (Nunez 91). She starts to do some research and find a website that has the names of dead people who were unarmed when killed by the police. The dead are Black men, women, and children (Nunez 118). She begins to understand the sad feelings and anger of Prof. Brown's friends and coworkers. However, Robert seems to awaken the outsider self in Lila and always reminds her that her role in America is only as a Professor of Literature. He draws her

attention to the serious consequences of her participation in the case. He says, “You’re still an outsider to them, Lila. Don’t forget that. They need you now for their case against that policeman … Don’t go thinking that they won’t exclude you again when it’s expedient” (Nunez 181). Lila retreats because she refuses to be used by anyone in America.

Her fiancé, Robert, continues to enlighten Lila and explains to her that if she is expected to fulfill her role as a Black person, she should gain more knowledge of the situation of social justice in America. He points to the hypocrisy of Black Power and how the Blacks go against their cause. He says, “It’s the hypocrisy I object to … those black footballers and Black basketball players would have kids imitating them with their raised fists shouting, ‘Black Power,’ but what they really want is white power. White women” (Nunez 90). Here, Lila’s identity as an outsider turns against the group that try very hard to instigate her postcolonial self. She agrees with Robert on this point because she listens to many young Black females who complains to her about their low chances of finding partners who can afford them a good life and opportunities and share with them a good level of education and ambition (Nunez 91). She feels hurt when these young women are devalued by Black men with whom they share race and ethnicity by choosing White women over them. However, Lila applies her knowledge and common sense to reconsider the idea of intermarriage between Blacks and Whites and believes that she should not judge Prof. Brown harshly because he chooses a White woman over a Black one. Lila “believed our common humanity binds us. She believed that love depends on the sharing of like minds, on like notions of morality, of good and evil, on our commitment to those ethical values that make us human: compassion, empathy, justice” (Nunez 92). However, she is angry to learn that Prof. Brown refused to make his relationship with Adriana public and did not fulfill his promise to her to avoid being shamed by Black men and women.

Lila feels that she is being used by Black Americans for a political purpose. Terence pressures her to report what she saw and fulfill her duty as a person who comes from an African background because she has African blood. Lila said that "it is personal with some of the women on my island too. They feel rejected by Black men who choose white women. 'And was it political with Terence?' … And now I must do the politically right thing" (Nunez 160). Lila is fully aware that Black Americans are fulfilling their duties to improve their country. She believes in their cause, but she refuses to be part of it.

> Terrence was asking for her loyalty when he pressed her to report what she saw, to tell the police she was there when Ron was gunned down. She had fumbled, wavered, dithered, equivocated, defending herself with the absurd distinction between when and what. Terrence had laughed at her. Even now she could hear the echoes of his scorn. (Nunez 152)

The clash between her identity as an outsider and her identity as a person of color continues to disturb her. She is conscious of the danger of being used by others, and at the same time aware of the injustices practiced on Black people in Mayfield. It is the segregation between Blacks and Whites in Mayfield restaurants that makes Lila decide not to be passive anymore. She sees that her Black colleagues usually sit at a special table to segregate themselves from White customers in the restaurant. Robert reminds her that Martin Luther King Jr. has shown that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, and what she sees at lunch time in the Mayfield restaurant is the same idea. Here, Lila realizes that Robert is right, and she does not know America very well (Nunez 97). She begins to consider reforming her identity, one that will make her more positive and less confused.

Bridging Identity with Black Americans

Lila's journey in Mayfield is a journey of forming a new identity. In her early days, she feels forced to assimilate to Black Americans because people of color are considered Black in America. Then she finds herself torn between two identities that made her more confused about her teaching methods and her attitudes toward Prof. Brown's killing. Lila realizes that her identity in America must be reformed to bridge the gap that tantalized her since her arrival to America. It is not an easy journey for her. Her new bridging identity is more connected to Black Americans than any group in America.

Hall's discussion of the Caribbean identity gives perspective to Lila's positioning of herself in relation to racial identifications in America. In his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall elaborates on the formation of Caribbean identity. He argues that because the Caribbeans' colonial experience involved uprooting and mixedness of different races, their identities are a result of "positioning," not finding "essence" (Hall "Cultural Identity" 226). Moreover, he argues that cultural identity has "one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial, or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 223). He proposes that a shared self always unites people whose background and history are similar, "Africa as the mother of these different civilisations" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 224). However, he doesn't neglect the differences these identities have among themselves. Hall believes "that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" ("Cultural Identity" 225). He emphasizes that identity formation is a nuanced process for Caribbeans. Hall argues that "the paradox is that it was the uprooting of slavery and

transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world that 'unified' these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past" ("Cultural Identity" 227). This complexity acknowledges formerly colonized people's shared history yet adds emphasis on their difference among themselves.

Hall's discussion does not necessarily describe the Caribbean identity as a fluid entity. He highlights three main presences in Caribbean identity: "Présence Africaine, Présence Européenne, Présence Americaine" ("Cultural Identity" 230). Hall defines "Présence Africaine [a]s the site of the repressed" ("Cultural Identity" 230). The presence of Africa unites Caribbean people. Hall says that "Présence Européenne is about exclusion, imposition and expropriation," and the Présence Americaine is what defines Afro-Caribbean peoples of the Caribbean as inherently part of a diasporic peoples ("Cultural Identity" 233). These presences indicate that Caribbean identity is predominantly heterogeneous. Heterogeneous "identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 235). This heterogeneity of Caribbean identity is what allows Caribbean people to bridge the gap they feel when interacting with other races.

The gap Lila feels in Mayfield urges her to bridge her identity in America with Black Americans so that she can characterize her experience as more positive and thriving. Lila does not come to this decision suddenly. Multiple incidents and factors lead her to ally with Black Americans. Lila's first incident of recognizing the seriousness of her situation is when she receives the anonymous letter that says "PUPPET OF THE COLONIZER. READ FANON" (Nunez 150). Although she felt angry and threatened, she experiences a moment of awakening. Her biggest fear is to be seen as a "colonized intellectual" (Nunez 151). Because her expertise is

postcolonial theory and criticism, she can't embody what she criticizes in her teachings and research. Lila defines:

> Colonized intellectuals. It was a term Franz Fanon used for the middle class from former colonized countries like her won. People like her family. People so brainwashed by the colonizers that their highest aspirations were to be like the colonizers, to imitate them in every way, in manners, in values, in language. (Nunez 151)

Lila's loneliness is one of the factors that makes her realize the necessity of bridging the gap she feels in Mayfield. The Black faculty welcome her and admire her writing. She wants their friendship and support. She feels lonely in America, and her life goes between teaching and having her coffee and meals alone. She talks to no one except only occasional and brief conversations with students and the other professors at faculty meetings. Moreover, Lila finds no support from White Americans in the department. They never talk to her or sit with her. "They exchanged pleasantries in the corridors of the college or if they happened to see each other on the pathways" (Nunez 175). One incident made her very uncomfortable with them. She has an annoying interaction in a department meeting with Graham Adams, a White male professor who graduated from Harvard University. When Marie Henley, one of the English faculty, proudly introduced Lila to him as a scholar with a PhD from Oxford, he looks irritated and "he smirked … he said 'no need for titles… whether I have a PhD from Harvard … or Oxford, it is of no concern to them [students]. What matters is what I teach them'" (Nunez 176). Lila felt his comments are aimed precisely at her, and that she will always be under scrutiny because she is a woman of color.

Lila realizes that, if she is to bridge her identity with Black Americans, she has a responsibility to denounce racial injustice in America and demand "reparations" (Nunez 208). It

is “her business, too, her problem too” (Nunez 182). The climactic moment is when Terence gives her the novel *A Different Drummer* by William Melvin Kelley to read. She discovers that over the years Black Americans experience multiple types of discrimination, for which she should not remain silent. She writes to Terence:

> I have to concede that on my island we did not suffer the intensity of the brutal assault on our bodies for as long as your people did … We have not experienced your level of racial inequality that threatens to strip away our confidence in our abilities, our talents, our beauty … The color of our skin does not make us a target for the police … So, what do you want. (Nunez 206)

Terence answers her saying “Well, Lila, now you know” (Nunez 207). Lila knows that her identity in America is closely connected to Black Americans, and she is almost one of them. Lila starts acting as a Black American. She understands the importance of being a supporter of them. She knows that if she does not join their group, she will lose a lot and miss her chance in America.

Accordingly, she decides to join the march protesting the killing of Prof. Brown. Terence tells her that it can be dangerous for her due to the anti-immigration wave in America. There might be spies and violence. Moreover, participating in the march might cause her visa to be revoked, and the First Amendment does not protect foreigners (Nunez 213-14). Despite all the danger, Lila joins the march holding Elaine’s and Gail’s hands behind the students at Mayfield College. Her experience in Mayfield strengthens her personality. She agrees to serve as a witness. She gives her testimony in court and reports what she saw exactly (Nunez 227). Although Robert asks her repeatedly not to get involved in Prof. Brown’s murder, she refuses to listen to him.

People in Mayfield are angry that the police officer who shot Prof. Brown is acquitted, and his action is regarded by the court as self-defense. Students and citizens in Mayfield are angry. They arrange for another massive march (Nunez 215). Lila is excited to see the march because it is a huge gathering. The marchers reach the other side of the street, and then they disperse. Lila is upset and Terence told her that "history is written by the winners … [students] are our hope. We're counting on the young generation" (Nunez 243-4). Lila knows that she has a role in improving social justice, and classrooms are her space to do so if she stays in America. When Terence tells her that "it is our fight," she said, "and mine too" (Nunez 243). Lila decides to fight racial inequality in America.

She refuses an offer of a one-year extension of her position in the department, believing that the college should hire a Black female professor from America. The reason she states is "there are hundreds like me, thousands of Black women. Black women who far surpass me in intelligence and scholarship. The president can find one of those women here, in America, even in your state. He doesn't have to recross the Atlantic" (Nunez 251). She wants to support her sisters from the Black community because she trusts the knowledge and experience of Black Americans, and that Black females should not be ignored from now on.

Lila believes that her job in America is to empower Black Americans, especially women. Now that she has clarified the idea which caused her refusal to accept the college offer, she states that her next step is to go back to her university in the Caribbean when her contract ends in June. However, she refuses to go back over the Christmas holiday because she does not want to spend it with her fiancé, Robert (Nunez 254). She decides to break up with him and takes her engagement ring off, a move that shows her maturity and refusal to be controlled by him. She tells her friend, Clive, that she is no longer engaged and offers him her hand for him to hold

(Nunez 260). The novel ends with the two having dinner and enjoying the Christmas vibes of the city.

Lila's experience in Mayfield shows her gradual growth. She becomes stronger and more aware of herself. She realizes that her Caribbean identity can be bridged with Black Americans in a way that gives her self-satisfaction and makes her experience in America more fruitful. Upon her arrival in Mayfield, she is hesitant about her decisions, views, and judgments, and is seen as a passive person and traitor. She is controlled by her then fiancé, Robert. Her consciousness is torn between her identity as a person of color and her role as an outsider. After reading and gaining more knowledge about the racial history in America, Lila goes through a moment of awakening that leads her to evaluate who she wants to be. Lila knows that she should bridge her identity to connect more with Black Americans and that her alliance with them is the only road she should take in America.

CHAPTER THREE

UNDERSTANDING IMMIGRATION: SEPARATION, LIMINALITY, HYBRIDITY, AND MIMICRY

Members of the Caribbean diaspora carry with them questions about identity formation, immigration, and displacement. These questions are main topics of Caribbean-American literature. The analysis of Caribbean-American literature requires a consideration of the identity formation of diasporic characters and how migration influences the flow of actions and the characters' decisions. Caribbean diasporic bodies in America are sometimes marked with liminality, depression, isolation, and despair. Some of the forms of struggle in Caribbean literary texts written about Caribbean bodies living in America are described as families split apart, entrapment of an idealistic pursuit of prosperity and happiness, and failure of communication. The unattainability of the objectives behind their immigration sometimes traumatizes the characters and distorts their lives.

Caribbeans in America write their stories of the diaspora with mixed feelings of hope and pain, gain and loss, peace and atrocity, and happiness and misery. In "Rethinking 'Acculturation' in Relation to Diasporic Cultures and Postcolonial Identities," Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram discuss the impact of immigration on diasporic identities and how the negotiation of their identities within a preconceived notion about them produces different experiences. They argue that "when new immigrants – whether Caribbean, Chilean, Chinese, Indian, Mexican, or Vietnamese – enter the United States, they are introduced to the stories, legacies and the immigration heritage of their respective ethnic group" (9). The immigration heritage of Caribbean migrants and immigrants carries with it experiences of struggle and racial

discrimination that are embedded in their stories and autobiographies. While it is not always the case for each Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean subjects, specifically from Haiti, face racial prejudice causing them to tend toward separating themselves from any provoking situations. Some stories show how Haitian immigrants are not always welcomed and treated well.

In this chapter, I focus on contemporary Haitian-American literature as a part of Caribbean-American to illuminate the diasporic characteristics of Caribbean characters and the ways in which their identity formation in America is informed by isolation, lack of empowerment, liminality, and melancholic self. Caribbean diasporic bodies are caught up with memories about home, finding security, infatuation with Hollywood lifestyles, and struggling with affording their basic needs such as food and space. The first part focuses on *Brother, I am Dying* (2004) by Edwidge Danticat by highlighting the hardship that Caribbean characters go through to migrate and unite as a family and how the decision to leave their country influences their life differently. The second part of my analysis will tackle the short story "Cheap, Fast, Filling" from *Ayiti* story collection (2011) by Roxane Gay by depicting the racialization of Caribbean immigrants, their melancholic experience, and their frustration with their former falsified expectations. In this regard, my analysis of these literary texts shows a tendency to reflect upon immigration, unveils some of its difficulties on families and individuals, and critiques the pursuit of happiness as a basic subtext of neocoloniality.

Edwidge Danticat's *Brother, I'm Dying*

Brother, I'm Dying is written by the Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat. She writes this autobiographical novel to document her father's and uncle's story of leaving Haiti and immigrating to America. In an interview in 2007 about her book, Edwidge Danticat explained that the immigration experience of her father and uncle motivated her to share its details with the

audience (*Brother, I'm Dying*). The title of the novel is what her uncle says when he calls his brother to help him get medical care because he is diagnosed with laryngeal cancer (Danticat 41). Ironically, Danticat's uncle does not die of cancer, but he dies after being mistreated and abused as an asylum seeker. The stories of both brothers are narrated by Edwidge Danticat in which she juxtaposes both characters to reflect on the struggle Haitians go through inside and outside of their country and highlight the situation of the Haitian diaspora in America. Danticat decides to tell their stories to the world to depict and resist the mistreatment of immigrants and asylum seekers and help improve the system.

The novel chronicles the lives of André Miracin Danticat, Joseph Danticat, and Edwidge Danticat. Danticat's father and uncle are Haitian citizens. Raised in the city of Port-au-Prince, they have different paths in life. Danticat's father works an apprenticeship, and her uncle is interested in politics. Her father immigrates to America to improve his life conditions and find a better job, but her uncle decides to stay and shift his focus from politics to become a preacher. Her father lives isolated in America and works as a taxi driver till he is diagnosed with fibrosis. Danticat's uncle is exposed to violence and a life-threatening situation in Haiti that leads him to escape to America to request asylum. Surprisingly, although he has a valid visa, he is detained upon arrival. Her father dies a short time after her uncle dies in a detention center in America. Danticat writes their stories to honor them.

Most of the academic literature written about the memoir focuses greatly on the narrative form. For example, Roseanna L. Dufault, in her article "Edwidge Danticat's Pursuit of Justice in *Brother, I'm Dying*," examines the theme of "doubling" in Danticat's memoir and shows how the "non-linear narrative" gives the author a space to move between Haiti and America, past and present, personal stories and historical facts, and her story and her ancestors' stories (95).

Danticat "exploits the duality inherent in her narrative by suffusing her memoir with direct knowledge, eyewitness accounts, oral traditions, extensive research, all conveyed equally and convincingly through her uncompromising prose" (95). The doubling of the narrative serves an important theme, which is to serve justice to the Haitian diaspora in America and Haitian citizens in Haiti. In a similar vein, Wendy Kepper, in her article "In/justice and Necro-natality in Edwidge Danticat's *Brother, I'm Dying*" focuses on the merit of the narrative and its ability to give voices to deceased individuals in a theory she calls "necro-natality" (191). She argues that "through a necro-natal discourse that resurrects the voices of the dead", Danticat brings attention to larger topics such as immigration, diaspora, asylum-seeking, and people at the borders (203). She adds that Danticat's narrative resists prejudice, discrimination, and violence in the global order (203). From the same perspective, Alina Kaus argues in her article, "Reclaiming History: in Edwidge Danticat's *The Framing of Bones* and *Brother, I'm Dying*," that Danticat's memoir moves forward and goes backward between histories and countries. Kaus believes that "through the registers of life writing, Danticat's memoir self-consciously interviews national and transitional histories of justice with patterns of resistance" (99). The ebb and flow in Danticat's memoir give her space to comment on important themes such as resistance, immigration, governmental authority, and conflicts across borders.

Little attention is given to the character's identity struggle as the memoir unfolds. Danticat's family's diasporic experience is a mixture of death and survival, frustration and satisfaction, and anger and serenity. If Danticat's father survives living outside of Haiti, his brother dies when he leaves Haiti. If Danticat lives to watch her father and uncle die, she documents their experiences for years to come. The route of my analysis is to examine each character's identity separately. Through the diasporic experience of her father and her uncle, Danticat shows that immigrant

experiences are marked by struggle. Furthermore, she shows the complexity of identity formation of Haitian Americans whose experiences in diaspora combine two kinds of narrations. If her father's experience is marked with survival and separation, her uncle's story is characterized by fear and death (Danticat 268). Her father's identity in America is marked with isolation and alienation because of which he survives and endures all kinds of abuses he receives. Her uncle's identity is explained through the liminality of his position, an identity that is located at the threshold. He inhabits the in-between worlds, Haiti, and America. His liminality agonizes him and leads him to die. Danticat's diasporic identity is a hybrid one. She is the person who sheds light on Haitians' struggle in America and analyzes what it means to be both a Haitian and an American woman.

Reflections on Immigration

Both brothers survive the American intervention in Haiti from 1915 to 1934. Judson Jeffries mentions in his article "The United States and Haiti: An Exercise in Intervention," that President Woodrow Wilson invaded Haiti because of the escalation of violence followed the assassination of President Jean Sam and the subsequent damage that might occur to "American life and investments" (72). Moreover, there was fear that Germany might "seize the island of Hispaniola" with the progress of War World I (Jeffries 72). As a result, all Haitian presidents who served in office were under the rule of the American administration (Jeffries 72). Basically, America ruled the Haitian nation for almost nineteen years, controlled its resources, and had a noticeable presence and memory in each Haitian between 1915 and 1934.

Danticat's father and uncle are familiar with America and Americans. Throughout their lives, they come across American military officers, people whose relatives are in America, and Americans in Haiti such as the son of Danticat's father's boss and the American doctors who

come to work in Haiti and examine Danticat's uncle. Moreover, they have different personalities, interests, careers, and adult life paths. They also have different experiences with immigration to America. Although both brothers leave Haiti to find a safer place, they face different immigration situations. Danticat's father is looking for a better job and a safer life. While living in America, he finds himself an isolated man in a cab for many years hoping to survive his days and afford money for his wife and children (Danticat 120). Danticat's uncle is also looking for security after a life-threatening situation from a dangerous Haitian gang that accuses him of conspiring with United Nation officials to kill one of their members (Danticat 179). Fleeing for his life, he finds himself stuck at the airport, mistreated, and faced with death (Danticat 210). The following analysis will reflect on each of their immigration experiences and discuss how their diasporic identities in America are contingent on their encounters with people around them and immigration policies in America, a discussion that will increase the understanding of the overall Caribbean diaspora in America.

Danticat's Father

Danticat's father faces challenges from an early age. He quits school at nineteen years old (Danticat 49). Then he works an apprenticeship in which he tailors shirts for children with a neighbor for six months (Danticat 49). Danticat writes: "my father was expected to sew dozen little shirts each day" (49). He earns five pennies per shirt which he tries so hard to save and buy a sewing machine so that he can sell directly to the vendors (Danticat 50). Trying to improve his situation, he works as a salesman in a shoe store owned by an Italian émigré. Despite his boss's wealth, Danticat's father's "salary was modest, less than the equivalence of twenty U.S dollars a month, with the possibility of a commission on sales of more than three pairs of shoes" (Danticat 50). It is not surprising that an Italian émigré has a more thriving situation than a Haitian citizen

in Haiti. Italian immigration to Haiti dates back to the nineteenth century when the "revolutionary Americas" attracted a group of Italians called "Italian patriots" whose lack of satisfaction about the orders imposed on Italy by the Congress of Vienna and their aspiration for independence motivated them to find the Caribbean Island their exile destination (Franchina). Italians found job opportunities and gained wealth in a time when Haitians of African descent were denied "the benefits of citizenship" in Haiti over the centuries (Franchina). Italian émigrés have acquired more generational wealth than Haitians. They hired Haitians in their businesses such as Danticat's father.

Lack of security is another challenge for Danticat's father. His hard labor to improve his situation financially is undermined by the danger he faces at work. The shoes store suffers from multiple lootings by violent officers called, Tonton Macoutes, a "countrywide militia of brutal men and women" (Danticat 51). In *The New African Diaspora*, Georges Fouron argues that these groups work for Dr. François Duvalier, the president of Haiti from 1957 to 1971 (78). The "Tonton Macoute" carried Duvalier government's brutal and violent practices (Fouron 78). Their works are described as "non-salaried para-military civilian militia …staffed by informers, spies, bullies, neighborhood bosses, extortionists, the Macoute freely used extreme violence, terror, and intimidation to cow the population out of all illusions of destabilizing the regime" (Fouron 78). They terrorized Haitians leading them to think of leaving Haiti.

Danticat's father is one of the Haitians who are afraid to leave their houses because of the potential danger, violence, terror, and gunshots by the Macoute. The Macoutes pass by his workplace, ask for the most expensive shoes, grab them and leave (Danticat 51). Reflecting on his emotional and physical abuse during his work, Danticat says: "Papa would always get a knot in his stomach when a Macoute asked him if there were other shoes. He would try not to shake as

he replied, 'Non' … In the end, it was this experience of … worrying about being shot that started him thinking about leaving Haiti" (Danticat 52). He starts to think about leaving because he sees there is no hope or promising things in his current situation. Because he is paid less under the administration of a foreign businessman and exposed to violence, domestic terror, and mistreatment by customers, Danticat's father feels his life in Haiti is less secure and his situation is less prosperous. He obtains a tourist visa and emigrates to America with no intention to come back and live in Haiti.

He immigrates to America, leaving his wife and two children under the care of his brother. The only possible means of communication is through writing them letters. Every other month, he "mails a half-page, three-paragraph missive addressed to" his brother (Danticat 21). His family situation is not the best. They need food a lot. Danticat's mother runs out of food and takes her children to Danticat's uncle and drops them in his lap to feed them and leaves them crying, hoping for this situation to stop (Danticat 55). Two years later, his wife follows him after obtaining a one-month tourist visa (Danticat 55). She stays there and they give birth to Kelly and Karl, which makes them eligible to stay in America permanently (Danticat 113). Ten years later, the family reunite and settle in Brooklyn (Danticat 110).

His diasporic identity in America is formed through isolation and separation. The fact that Danticat does not include in the memoir any incidents about her father's friends or positive community engagements in America enforces his isolation. However, his separation earns him his survival and endurance because he wants to eliminate any racial discrimination he faces at work or in public. In this regard, John W. Berry argues in his article "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation" that individuals from "non-dominant groups" respond to stress-inducing context by embarking on the identity formation of "separation" in which they avoid "interactions with"

people from the “dominant group” (9). He adds that prior to “separation” a “fit is not achieved” between individuals in “the new context” and both groups “settle into a pattern of conflict” (Berry 14). An important step in “separation” is “withdrawal” which happens when individuals from the “non-dominant group” face overwhelming “problems that cannot be controlled and surmounted” (Berry 19). Separation as an identity formation applies to immigrants who come to host countries and face struggle, alienation, and problems that drive them to withdraw from seeking communication with people around them or spending effort in social engagements and national works.

In America, Danticat’s father finds a decent job in a handbag store. He can pay his rent and buy his food and clothes. He keeps this job for many years. Unfortunately, he is fired on the same day he unites with his kids. His boss does not sympathize and offers him a few hours of leave to pick up his children from the airport. Danticat recounts that her father asks his boss if he can leave early to pick his children up from the airport and the boss refuses. She says: “My father had left anyway and, on his way, out was told he was fired. During the drive to the airport, he decided he would never work for anybody again” (Danticat 111). It is very sad to lose his job when his family has just united. Moreover, his decision not to seek any work with people indicates his withdrawal from any communication and direct contact with people in national organizations and businesses. He decides to be self-employed and work as a cabdriver. His cab is “unlike a yellow cab, a gypsy has no medallion or affiliations. It belongs entirely to the driver, who roams the streets all day looking for fares” (Danticat 120). He leaves at four or five a.m. to roam for fares (Danticat 120). His job shows how his identity is formed by separating himself as much as he can from the society and people around him.

Despite separating himself from people by spending his days in a cab, racial prejudice is directed at him inside his cab. The way the cab's passengers treat him is a further clue to the discrimination he faces and the problems that lead him to withdraw from communicating with people. Danticat highlights how he goes through physical and verbal abuse, to which he has never reacted. Danticat's father encounters dangerous people who threaten his life and steal his money. One incident shows how people recklessly shoot his cab and everyone in it (Danticat 121). Danticat recounts: "Once, while working very early on a Saturday morning, my father cut in front of some teenagers in a stolen van and they shot three bullets at his car. He had a passenger dozing off in the back and miraculously neither he nor the passenger was hurt" (Danticat 121). Another incident happens when he is physically abused, and his money is forcibly stolen from him (Danticat 122). Danticat reflects that on a Saturday morning, three men get inside the cab, they hold a gun to his head and force him to drive to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When they reach their destination, they ask him to give them all the money he has. When they discover that he only has a few dollars, they hit his face hard with a crowbar and run away. His face becomes "bruised" and "blue and swollen." (Danticat 122). In some cases, he works for free involuntarily. People mislead him and escape paying the trip's fees (Danticat 122). Danticat writes:

> Every now and then a passenger would arrive at his or her destination, open the door and run into a building without paying. Others would say they were going to get money and never come back. My father never went after them. His crowbar and gunshot encounters had taught him that something much worse than getting stiffed might be lying in wait. (122)

He is exposed to racism in forms of disdain and ridicule. Passengers look down on his cognitive skills and language imperfection. One day, an old man called Danticat's father a "stupid idiot" because he mistakes one street for another (Danticat 122). Another example is when a woman rides with him and gives him the address of her destination. When he asks her to repeat the address, she yells loudly at him saying: "No one who drives a cab speaks English anymore!" (Danticat 122). These examples show to what extent he is subjected to multiple levels of racism and abuse during his work and always work to withdraw from any form of communicating with people.

Danticat admires her father's perseverance. She "watch[es] him effortlessly drive the same car he'd been driving for nearly a decade" (Danticat 5). He works for ten hours a day, spending "nearly seventy-five thousand hours driving the streets of Brooklyn" (Danticat 45). He manages to survive and endure the hardship of his work and neglects all the abuse he suffers from for twenty-five years. However, at some point, his body fails to take more work, endurance, discrimination, abuse, and violence. His story ends in tragedy when he is diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis (Danticat 3). His diagnosis shocks him and his family. Danticat blames his job. She questions it, saying: "What causes an illness like this? I wondered Dr. Padman and I waited for my father … Could it be the persistent car fumes from the twenty-five- plus years my father had worked as a cabdriver" (Danticat 11). He does not take long to see his health deteriorate. He becomes unable to eat, breathe, and talk till he dies (Danticat 244).

Danticat's father separates himself from working with people and is not seen participating in national activities. His career is to drive his private business cab to limit the number of problems he faces. Withdrawing from communication with people does not guarantee his peace of mind and safety because he experiences violence, theft, racism, and discrimination from the cab's

passengers. It is ironic that he tries hard to escape problems, as they seem to be inevitable in his case.

Danticat's Uncle

Danticat's uncle shifts from a Haitian man, a political activist, and a well-respected religious figure to an anonymous figure. In Haiti, his identity is established by his political and social roles. He advocates for equality and justice among Haitians. He also serves his religion and helps educate the young Haitians about religious doctrines. Once he leaves Haiti for America, his identity in diaspora becomes liminal, lacking identification, power, and appreciation.

Danticat's uncle, Joseph, starts as a farmer's assistant to his parents. His wife (Denise) and son (Maxo) live in Bel Air. When his Cuban friend's wife dies, he agrees to raise his friend's daughter, Marie Micheline (Danticat 28). Joseph gets a job as a salesman for a Syrian émigré in a fabric shop (Danticat 30). Being influenced by the political leader Daniel Fignolé, he joins his party, the Laborers and Peasants Party. Preparing himself for a political office, he hosts the party's members in his house where he gives political speeches (Danticat 31). When Francois Duvalier becomes the president, the role model of Danticat's uncle, Daniel Fignolé, is forced into exile, which makes him very disappointed and sad (Danticat 32). He then stops being involved in any political activities and joins a Baptist congregation that belongs to one of his friends. He then takes a training course to become a pastor and open his church. With the funds of some American missionaries, he finally opens his church and enjoys his new role as a preacher (Danticat 33).

Danticat's uncle considers the step of leaving Haiti as an unbearable experience for him. Despite his connection to America through his brother, son, and friends who live there, it does not pressure him to emigrate. He believes that immigration is an act of exile. Danticat says:

> I asked my uncle why they, and in turn Marie Micheline, hadn't tried to move to New York like my parents did.
>
> "It is not easy to start over in a new place," he said "Exile is not for everyone. Someone has to stay behind, to receive the letters and greet family members when they come back."
>
> Plus he had more work to do, more souls to save, more children to teach. (Danticat 140).

His cancer diagnosis is a significant incident in the novel. When he notices that his voice starts to sound faint, and his throat aches, he goes to several doctors, dentists, and herbalists, and they all can't figure out his problem (Danticat 35). One year later, he is examined by an American doctor who comes to Haiti for consultation. After a medical examination, he discovers that he has a cancerous tumor on his larynx and the doctor tells him that the clinic in Haiti lacks the necessary equipment to remove the tumor and encourages him to do the operation abroad (Danticat 37-39). He travels to America to meet his brother, Danticat's father, and his son, Maxo. His American missionary friends pay the cost of his operation. His brother and son expect him to stay, but he goes back to Haiti one month after the operation (Danticat 42). Although he receives medical and financial help from his American friends, he still does not consider immigration or even think about it.

It is after the exile of President Aristide and the spread of chaos all over Haiti that Danticat's uncle's life and identity change drastically (Danticat 172). It starts when Haitian officers and UN representatives use his church's rooftop to attack gangs that spread chaos around the city (Danticat 176). When these forces leave, the gangs get angry and burn Danticat's uncle's church (Danticat 186). Moreover, they start to search for Danticat's uncle to kill him and cut his head

off so that no one can recognize him at his funeral (Danticat 178). Danticat's uncle does not conspire with the Haitian officers and the UN representatives to kill Haitian citizens. They enter his church because they have a job to do. Danticat's uncle recounts the incident: "'They're [the gangs] mostly angry at me,' he said. 'They're angry because they think I asked the riot police and the UN to go up on the roof. Everyone who came tonight asked me, "Why did you let them in?" as though I had a choice.'" (Danticat 179). His life is in danger, and his family recommends that he leave Haiti. The gangs steal his house and school and declare that "If he ever comes back" they "will burn him alive" (Danticat 192). His family disguises him till he reaches the airport (Danticat 191).

Danticat's uncle flees to America (Danticat 206). He does not take his wife with him because her visa request is denied by the American consulate. It is a difficult step for him to leave his wife and life in Haiti not knowing what could happen to him. Reflecting on leaving his wife, Danticat says: "Uncle Joseph and Tante Denise hadn't spent much time apart since he'd broken her calabash thirty-two years before. However, time was of the essence, so he had no choice but to travel without her, even though he feared that he might die and never see her again" (Danticat 40-41). Upon reaching Miami, he asks for asylum. Although he has a multiple entry visa, he requests asylum not knowing the consequences of his request (Danticat 210). The chapter that describes Danticat's uncle's escape is titled "Limbo", a phrase that characterizes his identity to be that is shaped by "No Greater Shame", the chapter that follows.

Danticat's uncle is denied entry because of his asylum request. It is at this point that his identity shifts from a Haitian man to a liminal being. He inhabits the threshold, the in-

betweenness. The concept of liminality[3] is described by Victor Turner in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* as the second stage of a ritual and the transitional state in which "liminal personae ("threshold people") ... elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between" (359). In the context of migration, liminal people do not belong to the country that they previously were a part of, and they are not yet received into the host country to which they arrive. Turner shows that the characteristics of liminal subjects are "anonymity, submissiveness, and silence" (364). They are unidentifiable subjects who belong during "the liminal period" to a social body that is "unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority" of a dominant group (Turner 360). They lack power and freedom.

The concept of liminality is significant in postcolonial theory because it specifically illuminates the experience of beings on the borders. Ashcroft et al. provide an explanation of liminality in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* by highlighting its importance for designating the "'in-between' space in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states" (130). Homi Bhabha also discusses liminality in his book *The Location of Culture* as a place that is characterized by ambivalence, indeterminacy, and change. The "liminal … [as a] space that is

[3] The concept of liminality is first mentioned by Arnold Van Gennep in his book *The Rites of Passage* in which he describes religious rituals of birth, puberty, marriage, and death that accompany people to change their place, state, and religious position. Van Gennep argues that there are three stages in the rites. There are separation, margin, or limen, and reaggregation. The second stage, the liminal stage, which is *limen*, the Latin word for the "threshold", renders the subjects as lacking features of the stage that has just finished and the stage that is yet to come. He is positioned in the in-between world.

internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference" (148). Bhabha reveals that to be in the liminal space is an experience that enhances rupture to the definition of a nation being inclusive of everyone. Liminality challenges the definition of nation and national discourse.

> It is in this space of liminality, in the 'unbearable ordeal of the collapse of certainty' that we encounter once again the narcissistic neuroses of the national discourse … The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the 'horizontal' view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, an ethnography of its own claim to being the norm of social contemporaneity. (Bhabha 149)

Bhabha argues that liminal figures claim their authority and agency to negotiate their identity. He shows that a "liminal moment of identification - eluding resemblance - produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative 'unpicking' and incommensurable, insurgent relinking" (184). The survival of the liminal figure is based on the being transitioning peacefully and being culturally translated. Bhabha adds that the "liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life" (224). Liminal beings as migrants face challenges during their transition to fully identifiable beings as it is a condition contingent on how they will be received and treated at the borders.

Unluckily, Danticat's uncle's experience as a liminal being does not guarantee him survival. Instead, it leads him to humiliation, health deterioration, and then death. Throughout his life, the

eighty-one-year-old pastor has had good communications with American missionaries who help fund his project in Haiti. He also receives good health care from American physicians who follow his chronic disease in Haiti and America. He visits America thirty times (Danticat 215). He has many American friends and arranges for one of them to pick him up from the airport (Danticat 205). It is to his surprise that his experience at the airport is his worst interaction with Americans. Although Danticat's uncle has a valid tourist visa, he asks for asylum in the Customs and Border Protection office "not understanding the implication of that choice" (Danticat 215). Asylum is not guaranteed for everyone who enters America, and it is a difficult process. When Danticat calls the airport to question her uncle's situation, she is treated with "disdain" and the airport officers claim that he "came here with no papers and tried to get in" (Danticat 210). Danticat's uncle is trying to tell the truth to the best of his ability because he knows that he will be staying past the thirty days his tourist visa allows him (Danticat 215). He is kept for seventeen hours in the airport between being questioned by Customs and Border Protection officers, interviewed by Immigration officers, and then detained in a detention area. Danticat's uncle's request for asylum is further complicated because the Department of Homeland Security finds files that show a Kings Country Hospitable request for Danticat's uncle to become a U.S. resident on his behalf when he had come to remove cancer from his larynx (Danticat 220). Therefore, he is sent to Krome, a detention center in Southwest Miami. The police officer decides not to "handcuff" him but threatens him that he will be shot if he tries to escape (Danticat 221).

Danticat describes Krome as a group of "gray concrete buildings and trailers" and Krome is an isolated building that is in "the middle of nowhere" (211). She knows what it is like to be in Krome. She meets some refugees from Haiti there when she is an observer at the Florida

Immigrant Advocacy Center. Krome's detainees lack identification, and they are named according to the boat and the month in which they come. The detainees are treated badly. She sees "a group of men in identical dark blue overalls had been escorted into a covered, chain-linked-fenced, concrete patio rimmed by rows of barbed wire … They were Haitian 'boat people' and in addition to their names identified themselves by the vessels on which they'd come" (211). They are denied enough space and exposed to multiple levels of violence (Danticat 212). From her conversation with Krome detainees, Danticat knows that her uncle will have a hard time and fears for his life due to his old age and health condition.

Danticat's uncle is exposed to humiliation and mistreatment in Krome. His health deteriorates leading to his death. First, he complains that the workers take his belongings and medicine. They burn his "paper," and "notepads" (Danticat 229). On his first night, he has high blood pressure causing him to be taken to a "Short Stay Unit" inside Krome (Danticat 227). During his hearing, Danticat recounts that:

> The records indicate that my uncle appeared to be having a seizure. His body stiffened. His legs jerked forward. His chair slipped back, pounding the back of his head into the wall. He began to vomit. Vomit shot out of his mouth, his nose, as well, as the tracheotomy hole in his neck. The vomit was spread all over his face, from his forehead to his chin, down the front of his dark blue Krome-issued overalls. (Danticat 232)

When he becomes unconscious, the medic comes to examine him. The reaction of the medic is shocking. They reply as such: "I think he's faking" (Danticat 233). They even move his head up and down rigidly and insist that he fakes his vomit basing his argument on many experiences of Krome's detainees (Danticat 234). He is taken to the Krome clinical unit where his medical

situation becomes worse. He is then transported to a nearby hospitable with “shackles on his feet” (Danticat 236). He dies there. He is buried in New York.

The link between immigration laws in America and racial discrimination is worth mentioning. Chandra Mohanty, in her article “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,” argues that immigration laws in America are structured with racialization and othering of people of color. She argues that, when we compare the treatment of European immigrants to non-European immigrants coming to America, we conclude that immigration laws for both groups are dependent on racial othering (24). In a similar vein, Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram reiterate Mohanty’s argument.

> [Mohanty’s] discussion highlights the point that U.S. state sponsored immigration, naturalization and citizenship laws were historically based on racist ideologies that played a crucial role in shaping and defining the acculturation experiences of many ‘Third World’ non-European immigrants. Such stereotyping, racializing and othering was directly connected to the economic conditions and the state sponsored immigration laws of the U.S. (9)

In this regard, it is reasonable to conclude that Haitian immigrants are seen as minorities in the racial configuration of the American racial discourse, and they are likely to be mistreated and racialized. Moreover, Danticat explains the reasons her uncle is treated badly by the immigration officers and Krome’s workers. Haitian immigrants are not like other immigrants because it is rooted in “a biased immigration policy dating back from the early 1980s when Haitians began arriving in Florida in large numbers by boats” and denied the same good treatment that Cuban refugees have because of their skin color and race (Danticat 222). Danticat reflects and questions what happens to her uncle saying:

> In Florida, where Cuban refugees are, as long as they're able to step foot on dry land, immediately processed and released to their families, Haitian asylum seekers are disproportionately detained, then deported … Was my uncle going to jail because he was Haitian? This is a question he probably asked himself. This is a question I still ask myself. Was he going to jail because he was black? If he were white, Cuban, anything other than Haitian, would he have been going to Krome? (Danticat 222-23)

Physical abuse is not something new for Danticat's uncle. He has seen it before as a child. Their father tries to protect them from being exposed to violence or physical abuse by living in the mountains and warning his children not to go down. However, there is a scene that Danticat's uncle cannot forget. When he is ten years old, his father is at work and Danticat's uncle goes to the marketplace. He finds American soldiers abusing a dead body's head by playing with it as if it is a soccer ball (Danticat 247).

He is a victim of violence and arbitrary and inequitable immigration policies. Before leaving Haiti, he is a political activist and then a respected pastor. He works hard to build a church and devotes his time to preaching. When facing a life-threatening condition, he immediately flees to America, a place that helps save his life and nurtures his passion for preaching. His immigration experience marks his death.

Danticat's Hybrid Identity

Danticat's role in the memoir is the narrator, writer, and commentator. She comes to America as a child and becomes a naturalized citizen. Her identity is a mixture of Haiti and America. This mixture presents her in the memoir as a hybrid person whose life is built between these worlds. Her hybridity is embedded in her narrative as she moves back and forth between Haiti and America to reflect on the immigration experience of her father and uncle, the history of Haiti,

and the immigration system in America. Danticat as a first-generation immigrant reflects a great deal of the discrimination immigrants go through. Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram argue:

> First generation immigrant narratives and autobiographies emphasize the embeddedness of their selfhood in concrete material histories and political realities of oppression, discrimination, and exploitation. Specifically, one issue that is often interrogated and questioned in the narratives and renderings of their postcolonial migrant histories is whether home cultures and host cultures are two separate distinct entities. (9)

She moves between her home country and America in the narrative flexibly. Although Haiti and America are both separate entities in her memoir, she does not address them in a hierarchical framework.

Hybridity is a concept discussed by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. He argues that a diasporic identity is designated in an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibilities of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (4). It then represents "a hybridity, a difference 'within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality" (13). Such in-betweenness introduces the hybrid identity as an entity that defines hegemonic narratives and practices through the language of criticism. Bhabha says:

> The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is

> new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as if must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (25)

Being a creation of colonial power, a hybrid identity is expected to mimic the authoritative discourse, but it is characterized by its audacious ability to question laws and order. “Hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification - a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (113).

Danticat’s hybridity can be viewed as a liberating power from any restrictions that prevent her from speaking frankly as a witness about the history of Haiti and immigration policies in America. Although she speaks Creole, Danticat makes a courageous step to write the experience of her family in Haiti and America using the English language and publish her writing to catch the attention of the world to the consequences of the political chaos in Haiti and the difficulty of immigration. She takes the role of an activist whose job is to address gaps in the system and improve the world. Danticat writes:

> I write these things now, some as I witnessed them and today remember them, others from official documents, as well as the borrowed recollections of family members. What I learned from my father and uncle, I learned out of sequence and in fragments. This is an attempt at cohesiveness, and at re-creating a few wondrous and terrible months when their lives and mine intersected in startling ways, forcing me to look forward and back at the same time. I am writing this only because they can’t. (25–26)

The lives of her father and uncle in Haiti suffer from a lack of resources and improvement. They both work under foreign managers who live happily and collect wealth in Haiti more than Haitians. She evokes justice for Haitians in their own country. When Danticat’s father asks his

brother about the people for whom they worked in Haiti, the Syrian man becomes “one of the richest men in Haiti” and the Italian businessman improves his career and goes “from selling shoes to somehow making them” (160). Both brothers migrate to escape either harsh living conditions or violence as it is explained previously. “Then, as now, leaving often seemed like the only answer, especially if one was sick like my uncle or poor like my father, or desperate, like both” (Danticat 54). Danticat shows a lot of care for her father once she discovers his diagnosis. Although she is pregnant, she tries to do her best to help her uncle once he is detained at the airport. She calls a lawyer and asks him to help her get her uncle out of Krome. Through the experience of her father and uncle, she questions the situation of immigrants and Krome’s treatment of detainees.

Danticat’s memoir is a reminiscence of her life in Haiti and America. Her writing moves from her life as a caring daughter in America and as a parentless child in Haiti. Writing her story as it intertwines with Haitian history provides her with a contact zone of her past. Danticat learns that writing is a particularly important communicative tool from an early age. When her father sends his children letters from America, she can read between the lines and understand what he goes through. She knows that from the style of the letters, her father is relieved by the act of writing. She argues “that this specific epistolary formula, which he followed unconsciously, had offered him a comforting way of disciplining his emotion … [and] deciphering his letters” (Danticat 22).

Danticat brings to the forefront the consequences of migration on families. When parents leave their children and migrate to America, it causes pain and sorrow for their children. She writes about the experience of her mother’s immigration with sadness. She recounts the scene of the departure of her mother to America with pain. She explains that she “wrapped her arms” around her mother’s legs to spend more time with her (Danticat 56). She and her brother hold

their mother tightly and her uncle interferes and pushes them away to let their mother board the plane (Danticat 56). Danticat spends her childhood without her parents, but she confesses that she becomes more "accustomed to being without them than being with them" (Danticat 96). Once they call, she is careful to tell only positive news and her good school performance and behavior (Danticat 104). Once united with them, she works hard on her skills and education in America.

Danticat's memoir also includes an overview of the history of Haiti. She explains how the French colonists controlled Haiti since 1697 and brought African slaves for sugar plantations. Driven outside by "mulatto abolitionist," Haiti becomes independent in 1804 (Danticat 29). She furthers her overview by providing readers with a documentary of the US occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. She details the invasion ordered by President Woodrow Wilson and how it is fought by the Haitian resistance, called "Cacos" (Danticat 29). Through the chronicles of her uncle's life, she mentions how each president such as Paul Magloire, Fignole, and Francois Duvalier assume power in Haiti (Danticat 32-33). Danticat does not write about Haiti across borders; she visits Haiti as an adult. She goes to Haiti multiple times to "help teach a beachside summer abroad course for American college students" (Danticat 145). She also goes to Haiti for multiple reasons such as vacationing, interviewing Haitian artists, attending conferences, and filmmaking (Danticat 145). Haiti occupies a great space in her narrative and life.

In developing her hybrid identity, Danticat chooses to create her "third space" in which she becomes more innovative, productive, and authentic (Bhabha 217). Although linguistically hybridized, she documents her father's and uncle's lives to honor their life experience as Haitian citizens and immigrants in America. Throughout her writing, she moves back and forth between

Haiti and America to shed light on the aftermath of colonization, question immigration policies, and call for justice for immigrants.

"Cheap, Fast, Filling" in Roxane Gay's *Ayiti*

A more recent collection of short stories shows another side of the Caribbean diaspora in America. The object of my analysis in this part is a short story called "Cheap, Fast, Filling" in Roxane Gay's collection *Ayiti*. It describes the harsh realities of a migrant called Lucien from Haiti in Florida, America. He is highly influenced by the characters of *Miami Vice*[4] and their lifestyle, believing that if he ever comes to Miami, he will have the same thrilling experiences they have in the show. He migrates from Haiti by passing through Canada at a "border crossing" and then rideshare to Miami (Gay 75). He leaves his parents, wife, and four children and promises to send for them as soon as he gets the chance (Gay 75). However, once in Miami, he realizes the impossibility of attaining his goal and finds himself struggling to afford his basic needs. With little food and less space, he realizes that it is hard to change his situation. His identity project is based on mimicking *Miami Vice*'s police officers, a process that leads him to grieve his loss perpetually.

Hegemony, Neocoloniality, and Mimicry

The link between hegemony, mimicry, and immigration is worth exploring. Walter Mignolo's analysis of coloniality, in his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, provides a basic understanding of the hegemonic pressure on postcolonial subjects to migrate looking for self-aspiration and fulfillment. He argues that "after 1500…Western civilization emerged not just as another civilization in the planetary concert, but as the civilization destined to lead and save the

[4] *Miami Vice* (1984-1989) is an American action television series in which Sonny Crockett and Rico Tubbs play the roles of Metro Dade Police Department detectives in Miami. The show is famous for its fashion, sound effects, and tourist attractions.

rest of the world from the Devil, from barbarism and primitivism, from underdevelopment, from despotism, and to turn unhappiness into happiness for all and forever" (28). It is the claim of improvement, human rights, and happiness adopted by imperial powers that drive them to legitimate colonial occupation and military intervention. "The logic of coloniality … presented positively in the rhetoric of modernity: specifically in the terms salvation, progress, development, modernization, and democracy" (Mignolo 12).

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, adds that colonization creates the binary of center and margin because of which formerly colonized subjects find an urgent need to drag themselves to be in the center by immigration. He believes that "this false dichotomy between the so-called First World and Third World … functions as a reproductive mechanism designed to create a center or a core of romanticized Eurocentric values while relegating other cultural expressions to the margins" (Freire 19). Postcolonial subjects find themselves always judged by Eurocentric values which they work very hard to internalize.

Homi Bhabha discusses mimicry in his book *The Location of Culture*. He believes that "mimicry is the desired for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference, that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 85). When neocolonial discourse pushes people to mimic the neo-colonizers' cultural habits, assumptions, manners, physical appearance, and values, the result is never an exact reproduction of these traits, and it could be an impossible condition to meet. If mimicry creates uncertainty in the neocolonial discourse and questions its validity, it renders the mimic individual as someone who is willing to change and modify his identity, believing that it is the best thing for him or her. Moreover, mimicry highlights the desire of mimic individuals to be accepted by hegemonic forces. Bhabha argues that "the desire to emerge as 'authentic'- through the process of writing and repetition- is the final irony of partial

representation … mimicry conceals no presence and identity behind its mask" (88). Hegemonic forces are pervasive because they manipulate the psyches of the mimic individuals to the necessity of change, following hegemonic role models, and thus immigration and relocation.

In a similar vein, Nelson Maldonado-Torres reflects on coloniality as a concept that resurfaces in knowledge, cultural products, people's identification of themselves, and their ambition. He argues that "coloniality is different from colonialism" in the sense that colonialism refers to the act of occupying another nation (243). However, coloniality describes the consequences of colonialism in the ways "culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge" are defined and evaluated (243).

> Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and everyday. (Maldonado-Torres 243)

In the context of America, Hollywood, as a form of neocoloniality, is a cultural venue that projects American hegemony across the world. Non-Americans believe if they migrate to America, they will be part of the hegemony so that they can experience Americanness and what it brings with it. They will experience newness, progress, and prosperity.

Lucien's motivation to come to America is to experience the life he sees in the American TV show, *Miami Vice*. Gay writes:

> Lucien is in the United States because he loves *Miami Vice*. He loves the shiny suits Tubbs and Crockett wear. He loves their swagger. He loves the idea of Miami as a

> perfect place where problems as always solved … He has not seen that Miami but he knows it is there. It has to be. (76)

This deeply ironic passage uncovers how hegemony, neocoloniality, and mimicry operate within Lucien. Viewers of Hollywood are deluded by its attractions, fashion, suspense, and thrillers, believing it mirrors American life. Therefore, Hollywood is a symbol of a neocolonial culture that fascinates people and pushes them to think of reform and change and copy the same lifestyle. Lucien's identity is built on his intention to mimic Hollywood characters, their fashion and behaviors.

It is common sense that no one can copy Hollywood characters because they are fictional. Lucien desires to experience the life of Miami and its vibe, something that is futile to achieve. This is because mimicry is not far from mockery. Whatever Lucien longs to mimic will be seen as a parody. In this regard, Bhabha believes:

> It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is heartened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instance of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or spillage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry. (86)

Lucien lives in Miami, but he does not experience the lifestyle of *Miami Vice* yet. The Miami he longs to see is the one that exists in his imagination. The narrator shows where a mockery lies because migrants' lives will not be what they have always expected, and it will always be something that exists in their imagination. The narrator also hints at the hypocrisy of immigration that promises progress and salvation. These promises are unattainable, like the life lived by Hollywood TV show's characters.

Melancholic Migrants and Alien Affects

Throughout the story, Lucien grieves the failure of his identity project to be like the characters in *Miami Vice*. He seems sad, confused, lost, and helpless. Lucien embodies what Sara Ahmed called a "melancholic migrant" in her book, *The Promise of Happiness* (121). The book offers a cultural critique of happiness as a foundational step in Western feminism and migration in Europe and America. Ahmed describes that "the melancholic may appear *as a figure* insofar as we recognize the melancholic as the one who 'hold onto' an object that has been lost, who does not let get over loss by getting over it" (139). The story in question features Lucien's life as he is stuck as a helpless migrant by ignoring his new self in Miami.

Being melancholic, Lucien does not admit his loss. He counts on the futurity of his life in America and becomes a victim of people using him. To explain, he has less food and less space in Miami. He lives in a small apartment in "Pembroke Pines" and is in denial of his social and financial misfortune (Gay 75). He "sleeps on the floor in an apartment he shares with five other men like him, all of them pretending this life is better than that which came before. There is a small kitchen with an electric stove that has two burners and a microwave that is rarely cleaned" (Gay 75). He has less money and cannot afford to call his family back home. He buys a calling card for twenty dollars. The amount of time he uses to call his family back home is only twenty-eight minutes (Gay 76). Lucien's conversations with his children show how he defers his happiness to them as a family. In this regard, Ahmed believes that, for melancholic migrants, "happiness can involve a gesture of deferral, as deferral that is imagined simultaneously as a sacrifice and gift" (33). When he calls his children, he gives them a false imaginary picture of what their life will be like once he brings them to Miami. He "tells them elaborate fables about his new life-how he's found them a new home with a bedroom for each child, and air condition

so they can breathe cool, dry air. There is a lawn with green grass and a swimming pool in the backyard by which his wife can lie in the sun" (Gay 77). When his wife complains about their life in Haiti, he does not do anything to improve their situation and lies about his real situation in Miami. When she asks about his intention of when he will send for them, he shows his sacrifices to unite with them. He tells her that he is "doing all he can. He says soon" (77). Ahmed adds that "the melancholic subjects expect to be hurt" and function as an "open wound" that "draws investment" (141). Lucien cannot show his wrongdoings to his wife. Not only does he lie about his current situation and his attempts to fix his family situation, but he also becomes unfaithful to her. He knows it is a mistake but allows people to invest more in it by not refusing it, seeing it as a mistake, and repeating it each weekend.

Being trapped in his current situation, Lucien transforms the sadness of his failure into a form of happiness. In this context, Ahmed argues that the melancholic figure goes through a process in which he converts "his bad feelings to good feelings" (142). This moment of conversion alleviates the migrant's pain and misery. Lucien's bad feelings associated with his inability to be one of *Miami Vice*'s characters are converted to good feelings. Lucien grows to accept his situation and starts to find relief and joy in it regardless of how much it hurts him and his family back home. His conversion process involves his investment in objects to which Ahmed refers to as "happy objects" (Ahmed 21). Ahmed shows that "happy objects could be described simply as those objects that affect us in the best way" (22). For Lucien, Hot Pockets are his objects of happiness. He keeps buying Hot Pockets to connect with happiness in America. Hot Pockets are not neutral objects to Lucien. They bring him survival, feed his hunger, save his money, and make him happy and content. He converts Hot Pockets (a symbol of failing to meet his identity project in America) into good feeling (acceptance of his situation).

> It is not just that we can be happy about something, as a feeling in the present, but some things become happy for us, if we imagine they will bring happiness to us. Happiness is often described as "what" we aim for, as an endpoint, or even an end-in-itself […] things become good, or acquire their values as good, insofar as they point toward happiness. Objects become "happiness means." (Ahmed 26)

Hot Pockets are not something Lucien discovers in America. They are shared objects by Haitians for survival and thus happiness. His cousin has already given Lucien an introduction to what his situation will look like so that he reconciles with his disadvantageous life as a migrant. His cousin recommends Hot Pockets as good food supplies because they are "cheap, filling, and taste good" (Gay 75). The adjective "cheap" stands for economy, "filling" refers to minimal fulfillment of basic needs and food security, and "taste good" encourages Lucien to be content with his life in America. Moreover, the title of the story, "Cheap, Fast, Filling," echoes the value of these Hot Pockets. The recommendation of Hot Pockets from Lucien's cousin aligns with Ahmed's idea about the way objects become included in one's identity: "[o]bjects that give us pleasure take up residence within our bodily horizon. We come to have our likes, which might even establish *what we are like*" (Ahmed 24). Indeed, Lucien's understanding of what he has become is caught up with his position as a regular consumer of Hot Pockets, but not a *Miami Vice* officer.

> To experience an object as being affective or sensational is to be directed not only toward an object but to what is around that object, which includes what is behind the object, the condition of its arrival. What is around an object can become happy: if one receives something delightful in a certain place, then the place itself is invested with happiness, as being "what" good feeling is directed toward. (Ahmed 25)

The scene of Lucien interacting with the Hot Pockets explains how much his survival and minimal fulfillment become his happiness. Gay shows that Lucien goes to 7-Eleven and buys two Hot Pockets by the end of the day. “He eats one of the Hot Pockets and the other one, he holds. He enjoys its warmth; thinks he’s holding the whole of the world in his hands” (Gay 78). Hot Pockets concludes his day with delight mixed with helplessness.

Happiness is important to Lucien because he needs to compensate for his foreignness as a migrant. Ahmed believes that migrants are required to fulfill “the happiness duty” (158). She argues that “the happiness duty for migrants means telling a certain story about your arrival as good, or the good of your arrival” (158). The feeling of satisfaction with which Lucien concludes his day is his attempt to fulfill “the happiness duty” needed from him as a migrant (158). On a more general level, migrants and immigrants should express their happiness more than others to feel included within the nation and make up for their foreignness. Ahmed thinks that “contemporary racial politics” is not only a “direct inheritance” of colonial history but also “a social obligation to remember the history of empire *as* a history of happiness” (130). She writes that “[t]his memory of happiness has even become a form of nation building. To be a national subject might involve expressing happiness *about* imperial history” (130). Thus, citizenship becomes contingent upon the explicit expression of happiness. Because happiness is what unites people as a nation, migrants must declare their happiness in the host country because they want to be citizens of the nation. Accordingly, migrants and immigrants must accept minimal food, a lack of space and money, and verbal and physical abuse because their job is only to fulfill “the duty of happiness” and express thankfulness and gratitude to the host country for letting them in (Ahmed 158).

Lucien's career in America describes him as what Ahmed calls an "alien affect" (148). In the context of the melancholic migrant, Ahmed adds that the migrants, who are not able to fulfill their identity projects, move from being melancholic to alienated people who have less integration with people in the host country. The story does not include any details or incidents about Lucien's integration with Americans. However, he meets other immigrants at work. Lucien's interaction with other migrants is based on a shared disadvantage. Gay recounts the type of work he does. He walks four miles and then stands in a place waiting for contractors to take him for easy labor (76). He joins a group of immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaraguans, and China. If he is hired three or four times a week, he is lucky enough. He fixes people's houses because they are afraid immigrants might rob them (Gay 76). Ahmed describes "alien affects" as people who are "out of line with the public mood" and seen by the citizens as a threat because they are foreign bodies. Lucien and his coworkers "stand tall, try to look strong, hope that a long white finger will curl in their direction" (Gay 76). They are "driven to big houses owned by white people locked behind gates to keep their things safe from people like him [them] even though he has [they have] never stolen a thing in his life" (Gay 76). Migrants and immigrants become the feared by the citizens of the country. Lucien and his coworkers are threats to people, and their job is to keep people safe from migrants including themselves.

Lucien interacts with other types of people in Miami. He lives with five Haitians in a small apartment. Moreover, Lucien and his acquaintances from Haiti mix and mingle with other Haitians in Miami in a place called "Little Haiti" each weekend (Gay 77). They hang out tightly in a Haitian lifestyle. Gay describes that Lucien's cousin, Christophe, the person who helps Lucien get to Miami, "picks Lucien up in the truck his [Christophe's] boss lets him take home and they go to house parties in Little Haiti. They listen to konpa … as all Haitians are wont to do.

They philosophize about how to solve their country's problems" (77). Haitians in Miami, as a diaspora, create for themselves a world within America. Tölölyan in his article, "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Translational Moment," calls this world an "ethnic enclave" (23). The establishment of this world or ethnic enclaves is the outcome of immigration. "Immigration can result in … a plethora of ethnic communities within a pluralist society, or in diasporas within a genuinely multicultural, some might even say a multinational polity" (Tölölyan 20-21). Moreover, "Little Haiti" is a place in which Haitians dwell and segregate themselves geographically from the rest of American society. Tölölyan adds that "racial difference guarantees some form of segregation leading to the creation of enclaves" (22). It is not unfamiliar that Lucien and most of the Haitians, when they get together, criticize their home country because it is part of their diasporic identity to maintain a connection with their homeland. In this regard, Tölölyan also shows:

> Diasporas may criticize their homelands but not chastise them, especially when the diasporans live in EuroAmerica and the homeland is underdeveloped … Diasporan communities maintain contact with the homeland when it persists in identifiable form. Lacking that, they exhibit a communal will to loyalty, keeping faith with a mythicized idea of the homeland. (7/14)

Haiti exists in Lucien's food, drink, conversations, and body. Regardless of his goal to migrate, he is still attached to Haiti subconsciously.

Lucien realizes the impossibility of becoming someone like *Miami Vice*'s officers and finds himself struggling to afford his basic needs. With little food and less space, he discovers that it is hard to change his situation in America and improve the situation of his family back in Haiti. He

becomes a melancholic self, a person who cannot get over his loss and grows to become more isolated.

CHAPTER FOUR

CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S IDENTITIES: CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND RACIAL STRUGGLE

Depictions of women in Caribbean-American literature reveal how Caribbean women navigate their identity struggle in the American cultural, social, and racial contexts. The analyses of characters in Caribbean-American literature show how immigration affects and modifies the process of their identification. These women are subjected to multiple levels of abuse, and they experience difficulties in integrating positively with their surroundings. Caribbean women in America are sometimes marked with depression, marginalization, and failure of communication. These struggles are caused by factors such as mother-daughter relationships, domestic violence, American racial structures, and a migrant's imperfect English.

The mother-daughter relationship is an important factor that influences the identity formation of Caribbean women. It is a recurring theme in classic and contemporary Caribbean literature. Jamaica Kincaid's literary oeuvre reveals a great deal of the complexity of this type of relationship. Novels such as *Lucy*, A *Small Place*, *Girl*, *Annie John*, and *The Autobiography of My Mother* complicate the cultural connection of Caribbean girls with their mothers. *The True History of Paradise* by Margaret Cezair-Thompson, *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina Garcia, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent* by Julia Alvarez and *The Ladies' Gallery: A Memoir of Family Secrets* by Irene Vilar offer different examples of this unique relationship in Caribbean families and how it determines identity formation for Caribbean women inside and outside the Caribbean Islands. Caribbean women who immigrate to America experience difficulties understanding their mother's role in their new place which influences their own identities and modifies their progress towards independence. Moreover, the social conditions of

being migrant women of color cause them to look for and depend on mother-like figures and build unhealthy relationships with them.

Debra L. Oswald et al. in "Experiencing Sexism and Young Women's Body Esteem," define discrimination against women as "hostile sexist experiences … [when] women [are] experiencing and/or being forced to deal with overtly sexist behavior from various individuals, including teachers, employers, coworkers, strangers, family members, and boyfriend" (20). These experiences impact "females' body image" and "self-esteem", placing young women in a challenging "mental state" that negatively affects their "wellbeing" (20). When Caribbean women face discrimination in the host land as migrants by their spouses, their discrimination is doubled because their migrant status forces them to stay with their abusive partners and their racial classification increases racism aimed at them from their social surroundings. Kimberlé Crenshaw explains the intertwining of sexism and racism as "intersections of race and gender" (358). Antiracist and feminist discourses exclude women of color "because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized" (358). Crenshaw believes that immigration laws fail to address the specific needs of immigrant women of color such as protection against abusive spouses and opportunities such as education and jobs.

Race as an important factor in Caribbean women's identification in America still creates confusion for Caribbean immigrant women about how to treat their Caribbean heritage. Caribbean-American women struggle with their racial identities and present themselves in American racial discourse as either fully assimilated bodies subscribing to colorblindness or characters preoccupied with their race and Caribbean heritage. In this regard, Tölölyan's vision of the diasporic people is positive, showing that they are ready to thrive in societies characterized

by diversity and inclusion. He argues that "at its best the diaspora is an example, for both the homeland's and host land's nation-states, of the possibility of living, even thriving in the regimes of multiplicity which are increasingly the global condition, and a proper version of which diasporas may help to construct, given half a chance" (7). For diasporic people as immigrants, assimilation is peaceful. He shows that being a member of the diaspora "must have a cost, a demonstration of loyalty that undertook the responsibility of sacrifice" (15). While Tölölyan's examination of diasporic identity seems rather idealistic, Clifford adds more realities to the situation of diasporic people. He shows that diasporic people will remain in a continuous dialogue of finding essence, coalition, and connection and have difficulty assimilating to the national narrative of whatever place they live in. He believes that tension between loss and hope will always structure the lives of diasporic people:

> In assimilationist national ideologies such as those of the United States, immigrants may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place. Such narratives are designed to integrate immigrants … Whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere. (Clifford 312)

Caribbean subjects in America clash over whether race should be an important factor in their identities or whether it does not matter in a colorblind society. They also disagree if their Caribbean heritage should be honored, acknowledged, or forgotten.

The two contemporary texts discussed in this chapter, *Dominicana* (2019) by Angie Cruz and "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands" in Alexia Arthurs's collection *How to Love a Jamaican* (2018), embody literary representations of Caribbean women's intersectionality in

America, shed light on the complex relationship between Caribbean mothers and their daughters, and demonstrate the disagreement between Caribbean individuals who embody American colorblind thoughts or show a preoccupation with race and Caribbean heritage. The analyses aim to highlight the identity struggle for Caribbean women in America and shed light on their vulnerabilities, lack of empowerment, and confusion in domestic and social settings.

Angie Cruz's *Dominicana*

Dominicana is a contemporary novel written by the Dominican Republic American novelist, Angie Cruz. The title of the novel refers to the moneybox saver which the protagonist, Ana Cancion, uses to save her money while living in America. The story of Ana is based on true stories of Dominican immigrants with whom the novelist has interacted and met in America. The main part of the story is related to the experience of the novelist's mother. In the acknowledgment by the end of the novel, Cruz mentions that "this novel was inspired by [her] mother's story as well as all the Dominicans who took the time to answer [her] questions about their lives and who opened their photo albums so [she] could bridge the gaps in all the silences in the telling, often painful" (Cruz 321). It is the adjective "painful" that motivates the novelist to document some of the experiences of Dominican immigrants and best describes the story of Ana as the novel unfolds. Ana's agonizing experience starts before she immigrates to America, but it is reinforced there. As a young girl, her mother's influence highly affects her identity formation and self-esteem. Her mother works to construct her social role, a factor leading Ana to a continuous battle against discrimination. In America, gender and race overlap and create an intersectional identity that enhances Ana's struggle.

The novel describes the story of Ana Cancion in a post-Trujillo era in the Dominican Republic. Her family's financial situation is not the best. She lives with her parents and five

siblings. She will marry Juan Ruiz against her will at fifteen because he lives and works in America (Cruz 3). Her mother hopes that if Ana migrates to America, she will send for her family to come to America (Cruz 11). Ana migrates to the United States after getting married to Juan Ruiz who is seventeen years older than her (Cruz 75). Her life in America does not turn out the way she had expected. She finds herself lonely, scared, abused, hungry, mistreated, and used. In an attempt to escape America, she is found by her brother-in-law who tries to convince her not to leave (Cruz 101). Only then, she discovers that she is pregnant. Upon the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic[5], Juan must go back home to manage his businesses, leaving Ana in America under the care of his younger brother, Cesar (Cruz 166). Ana enjoys a little bit of freedom and starts to take English language classes, go to the movies, and relax at the beach (Cruz 183). Ana and Cesar work together selling Caribbean food to Americans in downtown and in some fun events. They both develop a romantic relationship with each other (Cruz 262). When they decide to leave New York and go to Boston, Juan returns to America. When Cesar comes back to take Ana, she refuses (Cruz 293). Ana's mother and brother come to America and live with her. Ana gives birth to a baby girl and names her Altagracia after Juan's mother (Cruz 306).

Ana's identity struggle centers around her inability to reject her mother's control outside and inside America. Moreover, being a migrant woman of color, her experience in America is structured with lack of empowerment, double subordination, physical discrimination, and emotional neglect. In the novel, Ana is a tool to fulfill her mother's goal of coming to America and submissively providing service to her husband.

---

[5] Cruz mentions that "on April 24, 1965, José Francisco Peña Gómez … took control of the government and Radio Santo Domingo … Peña Gómez announced the overthrow of Donald Reid Cabral's provisional, American-backed government and rallied the people out into the street" (162). President Lyndon B. Johnson took action to prevent what he claims to be communist dictatorship and sent 22,000 U.S troops to the Dominican Republic, a move that received a lot of criticism from Latin American governments and President's Johnson's opponents in the US. The intervention ended with installing a non-military government run by Joaquín Antonio Balaguer Ricardo.

Mother-Daughter Relationship

Ana is one of the Caribbean girls who express conflicting emotions towards their mothers. The complex mother-daughter relationship is a recurring theme in Caribbean female authors' writings such as *Annie John* by Jamaica Kincaid; *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina Garcia; *No Telephone to Heaven* by Michelle Cliff; and *Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall- all of them describe how Caribbean mothers pass their generational trauma to their daughters and show the ways mothers intervene in their daughters' individual identities and shape their roles in the community. In light of Edward Said's theory of "the Other," Shehla Burney argues that the colonizer creates the colonized as "the Other" which is inferior and disempowered (31). She shows that "the Other" is embedded in "colonial discourse" for the purpose of domination and control (23). Moreover, she explains that "colonial discourse … organize[s] social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationships" (36). If Caribbean mothers treat their daughters as "the Other" by creating their daughter's role in the family and the community through the way they talk to them and treat them, they perpetuate the relationship of the colonizer/colonized. Caribbean literature depicts mothers with a tendency to impose their ideas on their daughters.

In a similar view, Homi Bhabha shows, in *The Location of Culture*, that postcolonial individuals try to transform their identity through "mimicry" which is "a sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference, or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance and poses immanent threat to 'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers" (86). Caribbean mothers access their identity by copying the image of the colonizer and such a technique comes in the form of a relationship that is full of tension, mistreatment, and abuse aimed at their daughters. In this regard, Baily Carol analyzing Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl," argues that the text of the story depicts the relationship between the

Caribbean mother and her daughter as analogous to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. She believes that "critics tend to read "Girl" as a critique of child-rearing practices that re-inscribe (mostly) colonially derived models of womanhood" (Carol 108). Therefore, Caribbean mothers are complicit with the colonizer in assigning the role for another subservient beings.

Ana's relationship with her mother is more complex because her mother wants to send for her and her children to emigrate from the Dominican Republic and come to America (Cruz 7). Investigating the mother's plan for Ana is important as it is closely associated with the causes of Dominicans immigrating to America. It is important to mention that Ana's mother survives the Trujillo era in which women were targeted by the Trujillo regime that was characterized by corruption, tyranny, and violence. Women are kidnapped and abused by Trujillo's regime and his men. In *The Dominican Republic Reader*, Roorda et al. mention the cruelty of Trujillo's regime towards Dominican women who go against the regime and refuse to subscribe to its corrupt ways. They recount the experience of the three Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa, who went against the regime and refused to follow any of its corrupt ways. They write:

> They were tortured and raped in jail, and their death at the hands of the regime mobilized many against the brutality of the regime at a time when its violence was entering a new phase of ferocity, as it lashed out at the Catholic clergy and women, targets that had been off limits previously. (Roorda et al. 320)

In the novel, Ana's aunts are "taken by military men, back when Trujillo lived" (Cruz 5). It must be a terrifying experience that shapes the way Ana's mother feels towards the country and makes her constantly think immigration to America is a safe solution for Dominican women. The regime's atrocity towards women is also mentioned in Junto Diaz's novel *The Brief Wondrous*

Life of Oscar Woe in which the story of Beli, Oscar's grandmother, mostly matches the experience of Ana's aunts. Beli is subjected to multiple levels of abuse by Trujillo's men and forced to leave the Dominican Republic at the age of sixteen (Diaz 147). Immigration has become an attractive and safe option for Dominican women.

Moreover, Ana's mother's plan for the family is somehow the plan of each Dominican who lived in the period followed by the assassination of Trujillo in 1961. It was a period characterized by political chaos. Stephen Rabe explains that the assassination of Trujillo did not end his era, showing that his relatives took charge of the country's miliary and economic resources. Stephane demonstrates that Trujillo's two brothers, Hector Bienvenido and Jose Arismendi Trujillo, "terrorized political opponents" using their "controlled private armies" and his son, Ramfis, "came from Europe" and "took charge of the armed forces" (73). Moreover, the "Trujillo family maintained its stranglehold on the Dominican Republic" (Rabe 73). The government was divided between Joaquin Balague who is only a "nominal president" and the Trujillos who controlled most of the country's resources (Rabe 74). After six months, the Trujillos were forced into exile (Rabe 75). In 1962, Juan Bosch was elected as the president for the Dominican Republic. In the context of migration, Garrison Vivian and Carol Weiss show that it is the Trujillo's assassination that sparked "Dominican migration to the United States" with "an estimated cumulative total of 100, 000 by 1970" (264). They add that "between 1961 and 1968, the Dominican Republic sent more documented aliens to the United States than any Western Hemisphere" (Vivian and Weiss 264).

The political unrest, the economic deterioration, and the lack of security motivated families to immigrate to America. Roorda et al. explain that Dominicans' migration to America was the most reasonable step for families.

> The current surge of emigrant activity, the largest by far, is of fairly recent vintage, having begun in the 1960s after the death of Trujillo … unemployment, inflation, electrical blackouts, and crime have combined in the decades since then to make life difficult for millions in the Dominican Republic and to make the move to the United States more attractive. (467)

In the novel, Ana's family's financial situation is part of the overall economic deterioration in the country. Ana reflects on the period and says: "Trujillo didn't go in peace. La Capital is in chaos. A tremendous mess. Now law or order to speak of. Full of crazies. Visitors from the big city tug their lower lids, warning us to remain vigilant. So we're vigilant" (Cruz 3). Part of Ana's family's land is already bought by the Ruiz brothers, which is another factor that makes Ana's mother rush her daughter's marriage to one of them.

The role of Ana's mother in her daughter's life is not that of a provider of care and love. It is a relationship based on how much she can benefit from Ana. Her mother decides that Ana is Juan's future wife because he and his brothers are known to be accomplished businessmen who travel to and from New York, "returning with pockets full of dollars" (Cruz 4). Ana's mother considers Ana's beautiful eyes as "a winning lottery ticket" since Ana's "birth" (Cruz 11). Her mother ignores the age difference and encourages Ana to marry Juan Ruiz, who is seventeen years older than Ana, against her will at the age of fifteen (Cruz 19). Although Ana is the second sister in the family, her mother considers Ana as an opportunity to improve the status of the family because she is the beautiful girl.

> For years, people stare at me, almost against their will. I'm different than other girls. By no means pretty. A curious beauty, people say, as if my green eyes are shinier, more valuable, to be possessed. Because of this, Mama fears if she doesn't plan my future,

> my fate will be worse than Teresa's, who already has her brown eye on El Guardia, who guards the municipal building in the center of town. (Cruz 3)

Ana resents her mother's intervention in her marriage and finds herself given a husband she does not want. She reflects that her mother is joyous when Juan proposes and immediately "grabs Papa arm in solitary, a usual gesture, understood by Ramon [Juan's older brother] because he smiles and shakes my father's hand as if I have already said yes, although nobody cares what I want" (Cruz 20). Her marriage is not designed as she expected. Like any normal bride, Ana wishes to wear a beautiful white gown. Because there is no white fabric in the city's shops, her mother forces Ana to wear pink instead (Cruz 24). Ana's sadness grows day by day. She does not want to get married to Juan and does not know how to communicate her feelings to her mother. Her mother sets Ana how she should fulfill her role as a wife. She says to Ana:

> I promise nothing bad will happen to you. You go to New York and you clean his house and cook him the kind of food that will make him return home every night. Never let him walk out of the house with a wrinkled shirt. Remind him to shave and cut his hair. Clip his nails so women know he's well taken care of. Demand he send us money. Demand he take care of you. Make sure you sneak some money for yourself on the side (Cruz 25).

In an argument between Ana's older sister, Ana, and their mother. Ana's older sister tries to empower Ana and points her attention to the difficult future awaiting her in America, Ana responds that she has "no choice" and then her mother intervenes in the discussion to convince Ana with rhetorical questions such as "Do you want to stay here and end up with a good-for-nothing, pigeon-toed, backward man … who can't' even feed his own child? Or do you want to go to New York with a respectable, hardworking man so you can make something out of yourself

and help your family (Cruz 34)? Ana's mother creates Ana's individual identity that is based on submission, silence, and serving others.

When Ana immigrates to America, she tries to keep her mother's influence on a minimum. However, she still receives letters from her mother demanding money and attempting to intervene in her life once again. Ana's mother wants to see Ana carry out her plan and fulfill the role she created for Ana earlier. She wants Ana to only please her husband and send her money. In her letters, she writes:

> Did you get your papers?
>
> …
>
> Are you keeping Juan happy?
>
> Can you send us money to fix A, to fix B, to fix C …?
>
> …
>
> Send money. Send money. Send money" (Cruz 75).

Her mother calls her occasionally and asks for specific details of her life and believes she should be thanked for planning for Ana her present life (Cruz 87). Ana does not report to her mother the abuse she receives from her husband because Ana's mother is madly in love with the character of Juan and Ana thinks that there is no purpose to seek help from her mother. Being exposed to multiple levels of violence from Juan, Ana cannot leave Juan because her mother will torture her physically and psychologically. She will let Ana choose between "a slipper, belt, wire hanger, a ream of tree, and swatter" as methods for physical violence (Cruz 100). Ana has "the audacity to throw away all her [mother] hard work" (Cruz 100). Ana says "I kill her hope. She will crucify me by making me lift buckets full of water while kneeling on a bed of rice … she wont let me

die. She'll just hit me enough for me to remember what she's capable of" (Cruz 100). Because of Ana's mother, Ana becomes a passive woman.

Things do not go the way Ana's mother wants because Ana does not send money regularly to her family and she also does not send for her family to come to America. However, Ana's pregnancy becomes the other element when her mother finds an opportunity to pressure Ana to send for her. In a letter from her mother, her mother writes to Ana: "This pregnancy is gold in the band … solicit us. You can't have a baby without our help … Tell Juan to send money. Now he's obligated because you are carrying that baby. You better believe he will profit from it" (Cruz 139). Her mother continues to use Ana's body to perform her immigration plan.

Ana's mother is demonstrated as the main role in defining Ana's identity. Although Ana tries to divest the role of her mother from her identity to distance herself from her mother's control and oppression, she is still attached to the mothering figure. Being a lonely young woman, Ana starts to look for the figure of the *other mother* in America. Other mothering is a "term coined by African American scholars to help explain the various mothering strategies that US slave women used to nurture and protect African American families who were intentionally separated, displaced, and exploited by white slaveholders" (Wilson 956). It is a common relationship that happens between migrant families and Black families in America. Hilary S. Crew, in "Feminist Theories and the Voices of Mothers and Daughters in Selected African-American Literature for Young Adults," argues that *other mothers* serve to "substitute for a lack and absence that is missing to the daughter from her maternal mother and are additional to the maternal mother's emotional and physical nurturance of a teenage daughter" (92). Ana enjoys being away from her mother. However, the *other mother* is an important figure for Ana to fill the vacancy she feels and find a model to follow in her new place.

The *other mother* figure that shows up in the story is Marisela. Ana finds Marisela to be someone who can really occupy the space of a caring mother. Marisela's job is to clean houses and offices in New York (Cruz 115). She is introduced to Ana through Ana's husband, Juan. Marisela owes Juan seventy-five dollars and drops five dollars as payments in his apartment each month (Cruz 115). She gives Juan her wedding ring to commit to the debt (Cruz 115). Marisela, as a middle-aged Dominican American woman, shares with Ana a racial background, a factor that makes Ana become more drawn to Marisela. Ana immediately likes Marisela and admires her look, words, and character. Marisela socializes with Ana, provides her support, and admires her cooking (Cruz 123). Ana entrusts Marisela with her pregnancy before Juan (Cruz 125). Ana speaking about Marisela says:

> She is doing more than anyone else has ever done for me, even when my house is plain, even when to her I must look like some naïve child. She's here, eating with me. Being with me. Helping me make money. It's impossible for me not to love her … For the first time, in a long time, I've found a true friend (Cruz 138).

The relationship between Ana and Marisela is a relationship based on friendship, care, and support, elements that are important in a mother-daughter relationship. Marisela brings Ana work to occupy Ana's time and vacancy with a profitable business. She asks her to decorate two hundred ceramic dolls for a wedding in three hours. For each piece, she will earn five cents (Cruz 136). Ana continues to host Marisela in her house and cook her lunch. Ana finds the figure of the *other mother* is more compassionate than the figure of the real mother. She admires Marisela's encouraging words saying: "Not even my mother ever says such kind things" (Cruz 138). However, the story of the caring Marisela ends tragically. Marisela comes one day and asks for her ring because her husband comes back from the Dominican Republic and does not see

Marisela wearing it and suspects her of cheating on him (Cruz 146). Although Marisela still has one last round of payment, Ana trusts Marisela, cares so much about her, and gives her back her ring (Cruz 148). Marisela promises to come next week, but she disappears (Cruz 155).

Marisela's disappearance leads Ana to look for someone who can occupy the figure of the *other mother* again. She seeks communication with her neighbor, an old woman called Rose. Ana starts to court her by offering her Caribbean food. When Rose lets Ana inside of her apartment, she does not talk and the only thing she provides for Ana is a cup of tea (Cruz 156). Rose places the plate Ana brings in the refrigerator without "even looking at what's inside" (Cruz 156). Ana is looking for compassion, caring, and emotional support, but Rose is silent and not responsive. She is not interested in Ana. When Ana finishes the cup of tea, her neighbor leads her to the door, "as she's relieved our visit's over" (Cruz 156). Her neighbor is not the *other mother* figure Ana is searching for.

Ana still thinks of Marisela. She misses her and is worried about the last payment. One day, she finds Marisela walking and she chases her hoping to reclaim the figure of the *other mother* again in her life (Cruz 191). She rings her door, and a woman understood to be Marisela's sister opens the door, Ana is surprised that the apartment is dirty and untidy. Marisela heads to the door and is shocked to see Ana (Cruz 192). When her sister asks who this woman is, Marisela replies "no one, no one at all" (Cruz 192). Ana is hurt by Marisela's response. She trusts her and admires her. She discovers she is not worthy of her trust and love. She discovers the hypocrisy of Marisela's life. She shows up to Ana as a stylish and powerful woman, which is opposite to her reality. Ana reflects on the incident and says: "in this city nothing is what it appears to be. No one is to be trusted… What a fool I've been to think Marisela's fancy clothes were honest. What a liar. A thief" (Cruz 193). Marisela teaches Ana about self-care when she herself does not apply

it (Cruz 192). Ana laments Marisela's loss and her influence on her life in America. She says: "Marisela knew my price. When I needed a true friend, she called me her sister. When I needed a role model, she flashed her clothing and her smile, told me I should do this and that. Always full of advice" (Cruz 199). Ana is now back to the status of the lonely migrant. Although Marisela comes back to Ana's apartment with her husband to buy suits from Juan and gives her back the remaining dollars, Ana is still disappointed in Marisela and does not want to let her in her life again (Cruz 286). Ana stops looking for any *other mother*. In Ana's case, other mothering fails to provide her care, trust, and support.

Soon after the disappearance of the figure of the *other mother*, the figure of the real mother reappears in Ana's life. Ana's mother arrives in America. With her arrival, Ana's individual identity that is largely controlled by her mother is back. Ana's mother occupies a lot of Ana's freedom. She anticipates physical and verbal abuse. She comments: "And just like that I become a child again, and my impulse is to hide the uncooked rice, the slippers, the hangers, the belts, everything Mama can find to hurt me. But I can't hide her words; they are worse than a horsewhip" (Cruz 299). In America, Ana's mother continues to control Ana and influences her decisions. She comments about Ana's apartment being small and dirty (Cruz 298). Ana's mother continues to force Ana to perform the role she created for Ana. She wants to see Ana as a submissive wife. Ana knows that her mother can't defend her against any spouse violence because her mother's "allegiance is to Juan" (Cruz 276). Ana can't access her individual identity and apply self-care and the only thing she does is take care of her family, but Juan is the only one who receives compliments (Cruz 300). Although, as a wife, she understands how hurtful another woman in a wife-husband relationship could be, upon discovering that Juan has a love relationship with another woman, she does not empower her daughter and tells Ana to "shush

[her] mouth" (Cruz 305). Her domain of control is only in the apartment because outside the apartment she becomes the weak migrant. Ana analyzes her mother's character in America saying: "Out on the street she's a mouse, inside the apartment she's a lion" (Cruz 300).

Ana is condemned to take her share of the conflicting relationship between Caribbean mothers and their daughters. Ana's identity is accessed through her mother's physical and verbal abuse. Ana knows nothing of herself but the weak and silenced girl whose beauty serves as an opportunity for her mother to leave The Dominican Republic and live in America. Being in America alone, Ana seeks to rely on the figure of the *other mother* to fill the vacancy she feels. Both female figures fail Ana. If Rose, her neighbor, resists Ana, Marisela uses Ana for her benefit. Ana's relationship with her mother is renewed after her mother's arrival in America. Ana's identity is formed by her mother. Ana struggles with her life and self-esteem. There is no way to self-discovery and empowerment. She can't reconcile with her identity if her mother is in her surroundings.

Intersectionality

Cruz portrays Ana's struggle in America as she faces gender discrimination, marginalization based on race, and neglect because she is an immigrant. Ana's struggle as a woman starts early in her life when she faces gender discrimination as a daughter who must perform the role her mother creates for her. In America, because of her abusive husband, Ana's struggle enhances her loneliness and the deficiency of her English language. The discrimination she faces is because of the overlap of her race and gender. She is presented as a confused, silenced, and abused girl lacking self-esteem.

Crenshaw, in her article, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," explains this straddling of race and gender in the context of

immigration in America. She introduces the concept of “intersectionality” as a defining factor that explains the identity of women of color because of the “intersections of race and gender” that make them “marginalized” from “discourses” within “feminism and antiracism” (358). Crenshaw argues that the law in America ignores the demands of women of color because it cannot address these “intersectional identities” (358). Crenshaw believes that because the law does not protect women of color from discrimination, these women try to avoid clashing with the law and resist any form of help for the sake of protecting their families from shame and preventing their private lives from being exposed to the public (358).

Immigrant women of color, in particular, suffer from "double subordination" because they are not protected by the law since the strict policies on immigration disregard the intersectional needs of immigrant women of color when abused by their male partners (Crenshaw 359). Their legal status is very problematic. They can't seek help from the law to avoid the attention and bad reputation of their families. Moreover, linguistic imperfection is another "structural problem" that hinders immigrant women of color from reporting the domestic violence they are exposed to by their male partners (Crenshaw 239). Some immigrant women of color cannot read and understand the information about shelters and ask for support from them. Communication with shelters also requires a certain level of language to be qualified for social protection. The illiteracy in the English language for immigrant women of color makes it harder for the shelter's administrators to document their information correctly, which sometimes results in turning them away. Their intersectional identities create "intersectional subordination" … which is "frequently the consequences of the imposition of one burden interacting with pre-existing vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" (Crenshaw 359). The law does not fulfill its

role by protecting immigrant women of color from danger. On the contrary, it magnifies the problem by disempowering them a lot further.

Ana's identity in America is intersectional and lacking empowerment and support from her surroundings. Although Ana does not like Juan the moment she sees him and her "tears rise", she feels that America might have a magical touch on her life, mitigating how she feels towards her future husband. As a young girl, Ana has high expectations of her life in America, anticipating it to be full of fun and luxurious things (Cruz 5). She thinks she will "be the woman with dollars, and fine clothes, and beautiful skin from all the good lotions" that Juan will buy for her in America (Cruz 21). She believes immigrating to America will give her the chance to escape her mother's abuse and hopes that Juan will be a respectful and supportive husband.

> In New York I'll have a closet full of dresses and jewelry. All kinds of purses and shoes. And Juan will pay for me to go to the salon every week and get my nails done. And he'll take me to see shows and we'll go dancing with live bands. And our house will be full of his friends and family. Every day will feel like party (Cruz 32).

Her imagination goes on to see herself touring "inside the skyscrapers, in the snow, under all the bright lights" (Cruz 39). She has a plan to empower herself and stand up for herself and her family. She says: "I'll demand what I need from Juan, for myself and my family. I will make myself indispensable" (Cruz 39).

Ana's idea of her life as Juan's wife does not become the way she expected it to be because Juan's bad treatment appears at the beginning of their marital life. During the process of preparing Ana's papers to leave with him to America, he acts as if Ana is an ignorant woman who lacks knowledge of simple things. He fakes her birth information and adds a picture that is not Ana. He makes her four years older (Cruz 42). When reaching America, Juan treats Ana as a

passive woman. Her role is only to serve him, and she has no choice in deciding the path of her life. The figure of the controlling mother is replaced with the controlling and oppressive husband. It is the same form of gender discrimination, but a different performer. Planning her life, Juna says to Ana: “In September, you’ll go to a secretarial school so you can learn how to type. And then you’ll work at my friend’s agency. Don’t you worry, everything’s been decided” (Cruz 60). Moreover, she is set under psychological surveillance and threatened to not do anything without his consent and blessings. He says to Ana: “Be careful, Ana, I have eyes everywhere, you understand me (Cruz 61)? One day, she opens the door to her neighbor, an old man, and takes the mails from him. When she tells Juan, he slaps her across her face so hard and makes the blood comes out from her teeth saying: “That is so you remember, when I say not to do something, you have to respect it” (Cruz 69). She expects a rosy life in America but meets another form of gender discrimination.

She lives without goals to drive her individual success. She feels so lonely to the point that she befriends pigeons. Her husband does not like what she is doing to the pigeons and calls them “the rats of the sky” (Cruz 74). Although Ana does not defend herself in the presence of Juan, she rebels against him when he is not around. Because she knows feeding the pigeons infuriates him, she does it when he is gone. (Cruz 125). The five pigeons visit her regularly (Cruz 75). She names them “Yohnny, Juanita, Betty, Teresa, and Lenny” after the names of her siblings (Cruz 75). Sometimes, the pigeons invite friends and come with another group of pigeons looking for food (Cruz 75). Although it is an act of kindness towards animals, Juan condemns it. Ana says: “If they don’t eat the rice I put out for them, I stash away the plates before Juan arrives” (Cruz 75). She removes any traces of her kindness to the pigeons.

Ana's subordination in America grows as she has no place to go to and the only person she knows is her abuser. Crenshaw explains that "structural intersectionality" describes the situation of women of color being exposed to physical assault due to their lack of empowerment (358). She shows that "many women of color, for example, are burdened by poverty, childcare, responsibilities, and lack of job skills. These burdens, largely the consequences of gender and class oppression … [that] make[s] battered women of color less able to depend on the support" of people outside her domestic sphere (358). Immigrant women face a strict immigration law. Crenshaw writes:

> A person who immigrated to the United States in order to marry a U.S. citizen or permanent resident had to remain "properly" married for two years before even applying for a permanent resident status, at which time applications for the immigrants' permanent status were required of both spouses. Under these circumstances, many immigrant women were reluctant to leave even the most abusive of partners for fear of being deported. (359)

This means that immigration laws are complicit in discriminating against immigrant women. Cultural barriers also play a role in limiting the chances of help immigrant women can have such as "no opportunity to leave the house and no understanding of public phones. As a consequence, many immigrant women are wholly dependent on their husbands as their link to the world outside their homes" (Crenshaw 359). Ana's complex relationship with her mother and the way she is used to marry Juan show a great deal of the cultural conflicts Caribbean women immigrants have outside their home countries.

Juan finds Ana to be the most vulnerable type of woman in America. She is a young immigrant woman of color who knows only him and is fully dependent on him. He oppresses her

without mercy. He keeps reminding her of her duties while he does not carry out his duties as a husband (Cruz 75). She complains that "when Juan comes home all he wants to do is relax. He does not want to hear that the heater did not come on until late afternoon or that the drain in the sink is slow-moving" (Cruz 82). When he takes her shopping, she talks about her needs, to which he responds by threatening her and saying: "wait until I get home later. You'll regret that smart mouth. (Cruz 129). He abuses her to the point where she prefers to die (Cruz 90). He hits her and does not care if she faints (Cruz 95). Ana considers herself as a "dead fly" in her marriage (Cruz 280). She does not want him to touch her and fears for her safety. She reflects: "Right then I decided I will leave him. If I stay he'll kill me … I wish him dead" (Cruz 98). Ana is surprised to see his vulnerability on New York streets while he treats her aggressively. As a person of color, Juan avoids racial discrimination in New York streets and the intense security practices of New York Police Department such as stop-and-frisk. The officers of the New York Police Department treat men of color as potential criminals by stopping them while these men are walking, questioning them, and searching them to find any hidden weapons. According to Desmond Patton et.al. they show that these practices are common among the officers of New York Police Department, and they are done for so long until "in 2013, the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York ruled that stop-and-frisk practices were unconstitutional and directed the police to adopt new policies, which required more justification and documentation if a pedestrian is stopped" (1). When Ana looks down the window, she sees Juan is not the Juan she knows. He "keeps his head down when he passes the police. Inside the apartment, he is a bull. On the street, he looks small, vulnerable, even scared. As if [she] can blow him away like a speck of dust" (Cruz 113). His vulnerability in public is similar to Ana's mother's weakness in the street of New York, both of them are abusive to Ana and hinder her self-growth.

Juan's spousal abuse goes beyond physical discrimination. Being disrespectful to Ana, he is in a romantic relationship with a woman called Caridad. He manages to meet her between his jobs (Cruz 122). Ana reaches a limit in which she can't take any more discrimination and physical violence. Therefore, she decides to leave America and run away from Juan (Cruz 101). Although she has little money, she decides to seek help from people. She says: "if the ninety dollars in my purse aren't enough for an air ticket, I'll beg to be let on the plane. I can show the bruise around my neck. Someone has to have mercy on me" (Cruz 101). Her escape does not succeed because she is discovered by her brother-in-law who convinces her to stay in America as it is the best thing she can do for herself (Cruz 104). Her life with Juan is full of insecurity, but her social situation forces her to stay in America with him.

The intersectionality of immigrant women is institutionalized because they face more difficulties that hinder them from seeking help when they are abused by their husbands. As an immigrant woman of color, Ana suffers from double marginalization that hinders her from taking advantage of services and places that might provide her support against domestic violence. The report of domestic violence is part of the health and educational systems. In the hospital, when Ana comes to examine her pregnancy, the nurse does not provide her with good and professional support. She gives Ana a guide for domestic violence support services and lets her go. Although the signs of abuse are so obvious on Ana's body and the nurse knows of Ana's imperfect English, the only help she does is to give her the paper without further intervention. Ana says: "The nurse hands me some glossy papers but I catch her sneaking glances at my neck and arms. Here's some information, Senora Ruiz-Cancion. Places you can go if you need help or have trouble" (Cruz 133). Examining a pregnant woman who obviously faces domestic violence, the health practitioner makes "certain choices … [as] "allies" [that] can reproduce intersectional

subordination within the very resisting strategies developed to respond to the problem" (364). When Juan discovers that Ana has access to an institutional support system through these guides, he slaps her face, drags her hair, pushes her into the bed, hits her, and throws the paper in the trash (Cruz 152). He warns her of telling people about his abuses to her and explains that because she is in America, she might lose her baby if she does not listen to him (Cruz 152). Ana thinks of trying to seek help from these domestic violence support services. However, she feels hesitant to seek help from them knowing that the process might introduce more complications to her life.

> I manically open the drawers and stuff clothing inside of a bag. I can go to one of those places on the pamphlet the doctor had given me, the one with the map that Juan crumpled up and threw away but that I later retrieved from the garbage and hid in a drawer. Red dots signaling safe spaces. But then what? (Cruz 275)

It is her final question that shows how unproductive this step might be. Crenshaw addresses the situation of immigrant women of color when they seek help from domestic violence services. She argues that the problem could take a far worse track because of the "inaccessibility of domestic violence support services for many non-English women" (365). These centers demand women to be proficient in English (Crenshaw 365). Moreover, as part of their registration process, they ask for the abused woman to call them herself for "screening" (Crenshaw 365). Some immigrant women find no place in which to stay when rejected by these shelters and are forced to be homeless or become easy targets of more abusive people (Crenshaw 365). Ana does not speak English very well and her knowledge of women's justice and support procedures is very limited. Most importantly, Ana is vulnerable to her husband's abuse because she is dependent on him for her legal status. Moreover, any report of domestic violence abuse might

jeopardize their migrant legal status, take their child, deprive them of raising him or her as unqualified parents, call attention to themselves, and deport them from America (Crenshaw 359).

Ana's identity finds room for empowerment and growth during the absence of her husband. Upon the intervention of the US in the Dominican Republic, Juan goes back home to protect and manage his business and leaves Ana under the care of his younger brother, Cesar (Cruz 166). Ana starts to breathe freedom and pave her way towards empowerment. She understands the importance of acquiring the language of the country. Thus, she starts to attend "ESL lessons at the rectory next to the church" (Cruz 183). Moreover, she has a more positive outlook on life. She starts to enjoy music and walks around the city (Cruz 189/192). She motivates herself to become more independent. She says: "I'm no longer the child my mother shipped. I'm about to become a mother. There's no reason to be afraid" (Cruz 183). Realizing the importance of money, she decides to use her skill in cooking and sell Caribbean food with the help of Cesar. She sells pastelitos in downtown and during events without telling her husband (Cruz 204). She grows money to compensate for the money Marisela does not pay to Juan and collects some money for her necessities (Cruz 257). Ana develops a romantic relationship with Cesar (Cruz 262). Cesar and Ana decide to leave New York and live in Boston (Cruz 268). She has high hopes for Cesar to return and take her with him.

> Cesar is preparing an apartment for us. He's looking into playgrounds and daycares. He's looking for a school where I can study, and a job flexible enough to so I can care for the baby. He is planning to wait two months, until the baby is born. Then we will run away together. (Cruz 271)

She thinks of escaping the control of her mother and the abuse of her husband. However, when Cesar comes back to New York to give her details about his arrangements for their new life in

Boston, she decides to refuse Cesar's offer and stays in the same apartment waiting for her husband and family to come (Cruz 293). Ana knows that Cesar is not able to take full care of her, her baby, and her family (parents and brothers) because he struggles with finding jobs. The time she spends away from her mother and husband introduces her slightly to maturity and sensibility.

Both masculine figures, Juan, and Ana's father, fail to provide Ana with the protection she needs as a young woman. When Juan comes back to America, he resumes abusing and cheating on Ana. Ana receives a letter from her father, and he concludes his letter with the phrase "Juan is a good man", Ana sarcastically says to herself "Yes, Papa, a good man pays the rent, provides for his family works hard. A good man keeps his word. He cheats on his wife. He almost chokes her to death. He punches, slaps, trips, and hurts her. Yes, Papa, Juan is a good man" (Cruz 276). Juan owns a huge part of Ana's parents' land in the Dominican Republic (Cruz 276). They must love Juan and ignore Ana's discrimination. However, the time Ana lives without her mother and Juan introduces her to maturity, independence, and courage. Ana confronts Juan in front of everyone about his infidelity to her. Although he hits her so hard and destroys her Dominicana, her money saver box, she humiliates him in front of his older brother. During their confrontation, He says desperately:

> This is what happens when you get involved with backward people. I told Ramon they would be more trouble than it's worth. But he insisted. And insisted. And I went and married her, trying to make the whole … world happy, but nobody's happy. Nobody (Cruz 316).

These claims from Juan show his overall unhappiness. Juan, as a migrant in America, expresses his lack of satisfaction with his life. Although the novel does not include any details of Juan being an unhappy migrant or facing any forms of racism, the link between abusing his young

wife and racism is worth mentioning. Crenshaw demonstrates that violence against women of color and migrants is another "manifestation of racism" (362). Migrant men of color abuse their women because of the oppression and lack of power they face from society. "It is probably true that racism contributes to the cycle of violence, given the stress that men of color experience in dominant society" (Crenshaw 362). Although the novel does not explicitly include any type of oppression Juan faces, it gives some information about the situation of his younger brother, Cesar, who works in a factory that is shut down by the immigration officers (Cruz 240). This incident gives perspectives on overall restrictions immigrants face in the job market. When Cesar learns about losing his job, he expresses his frustration on the streets of New York, which makes him get detained by the police for a few hours (Cruz 240). He must leave for Boston and connect with some people he knows to help him find a job (Cruz 246). However, Crenshaw believes "the chain of violence is more complex and extends beyond this single link" (362). She believes that if this is the case, it is less productive to make the solution of domestic violence giving men "greater male power" (Crenshaw 362).

Ana is a young Caribbean girl whose perception of living in America is pictured in her mind as a life full of fun, luxury, and joy. She comes to America and finds herself imprisoned in a small and dirty apartment with no loyal friends and welcoming neighbors. Over and above, her husband abuses her with no mercy. Ana as a migrant woman of color, her race and gender overlapping, finds herself at the intersection, deprived of everything that could assist and empower her. Domestic abuse is not a new thing to Ana for she is a victim of her mother's control and oppression long before she comes to America. Ana's identity struggle is informed by lack of self-discovery and being used to serve others more than herself.

Alexia Arthurs's "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands"

Another collection of short stories by a Jamaican American author shows more perspectives about Caribbean women's struggle in America. This part focuses on a short story called "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands" in Alexia Arthurs's collection *How to Love A Jamaican*. It describes the complex relationship between two Jamaican girls, Kimberly and Cecilia, in New York. Although they share a Caribbean cultural heritage, they have irreconcilable differences that lead to many conflicts causing them to split up.

Both girls live in New York City. While Kimberly comes to America when she is six years old, Cecilia is born in America to immigrant parents (Arthurs 10). Attending the same university, the first time they meet in freshman orientation, Cecilia ignores Kimberly, but once they take a photography class together, Cecilia admires Kimberly's photographic skills and they become close friends (Arthurs 4/6). They start to have lunch together and share stories about their mothers and how Caribbean mothers are so controlling of their daughters (Arthurs 12). They visit each other and enjoy walking along the Hudson River, having coffee, and exploring neighborhoods (Arthurs 18). This strong friendship does not last for a long time because they disagree about the way they negotiate their race and cultural heritage in their Caribbean-American identity (Arthurs 31).

The story demonstrates two representations of the identity struggle of two Caribbean girls in America. Both girls have similar roots, yet they identify themselves differently. They treat their Caribbean cultural heritage distinctly. Kimberly considers herself Caribbean more than American. Cecilia does not think of Jamaica as her home. Cecilia does not maintain a strong connection to her roots, and she is fully assimilated into colorblind American bodies. The struggle between Kimberly and Cecilia is demonstrated in the story through whether each should

privilege her Caribbean roots over the American side of her identity, and thus act as possessing values and quality of their ethnic background. This struggle shows up in their conversations and views about Caribbean food, the concept of race, and White individuals. Both adopt extreme views of their cultural identity, race-consciousness versus colorblindness.

Race-Consciousness

Kimberly is the main character in the story. She is also the narrator who passes her opinion and judgment on events and people around her. She also evaluates herself and the way she interacts with other characters as the story unfolds. Kimberly does not only identify herself as a Jamaican girl, but she also believes that her role in America should be restricted to racial consciousness which makes her very conscious of her Blackness. Her constant criticism of Cecilia, abhorrence of White individuals, comments on social injustice in America, and fixation on her skin color and racial stereotypes reflect greatly her identity struggle in America. Because she is attentive to her race and Caribbean heritage, she thinks her job is to segregate herself from the White community, enhance racial justice, hate the Whites, demand loyalty from any Black individual, and ask for unconditional solidarity from Caribbean immigrants in America.

W. O. Brown discusses the characteristics of individuals who are conscious of their races in his article, “The Nature of Race-Consciousness.” One of the most ostensible characteristics of a person who is aware of his/her race is that he/she always plays the role of the victim. “The ideology of the oppressed” is a feeling that a race-conscious individual develops constantly (Brown 90). As a result, a race-conscious person is excessively sensitive to any insult he or she receives about the inferiority of his/her race (Brown 92). Race becomes an “object of feeling, sentiment, and thought” to which its members have “obligations” to “serve, fight for, [and] be loyal” (Brown 92). Consequently, they “exalt” its “virtues”, and its “men” (Brown 92).

Furthermore, “race prejudice” accompanies race consciousness and divides races into “dominated” and “dominant” groups (Brwon 94). People of all races become aware of their “differences” (Brown 94). The conflict between races results in the creation of stereotypical pictures of each race. Brown adds that because the “dominant” people are conscious of their race, they create their permanent roles in the world as the saviors whose “duties” and “obligations” are to “uplift” and civilize the backward races” (95). In the meantime, the “backward races” always have faith in the futurity of their destiny (Brown 95). They believe that their race has much better chances in the future and do not accept that their race is “to suffer forever the status of an outcast” (Brown 95). They also sympathize with other races who went through violation, colonization, and struggle and create an alliance with these minorities through “spiritual unity” and “common cause” (Brown 96). In the Western world, these minorities believe their enemy is the White people of America and Europe.

> In the modern world the oppressed races have a common foe, the white peoples of Western Europe and their cousins of the United States. This isolable and convenient enemy makes the emergence of sentimental solidarity among the oppressed easy. The mechanisms of modern communication aid in the diffusion of this feeling to all the oppressed children of men. The oppressed have common experiences, face the same problems, those involving racial status, and hence speak a common language, ideologically speaking. (Brown 96/97)

Race consciousness inhabits the core of racial groups’ emotional, ideological, and behavioral acts which they find as the necessary way to validate themselves, fulfill their roles, and react to the world.

The aforementioned elements of race consciousness are all factors of Kimberly's identity formation. As a Black girl with a Caribbean heritage, Kimberly is fixated on people who look like her. When she joins a college in New York, her attention is directed to Black girls (Arthurs 5). During "freshmen orientation", of all the new students in the program, she is focused on Cecilia who is "the only black girl" (Arthurs 5). She looks at her with hope of a strong friendship, solidarity, and connection. Kimberly says: "we each had to say our name and where we were from. When it came to Cecilia's turn, I had already memorized her name from the nametag, and carefully, without bringing attention to myself, took her in: flawless dark skin, silky relaxed hair…, tall, thin, beautiful" (Arthurs 3). Kimberly takes a larger step and goes to talk to Cecilia.

> When the group was dismissed, I walked up to her to ask which part of California she was from. This was the only question I could think to ask her. "The Bay Area," she told me, and it was clear that she wasn't particularly interested in me, that although we were black women, that was neither here nor there" (Arthurs 4).

Kimberly realizes that being a Black person in America with a Caribbean heritage is not an easy way to negotiate identity, a problem that the protagonist, Lila, in *Know Lila Knows* by Elizabeth Nunez, experiences as a college professor who comes to teach for one year in America. While Lila takes time to bridge her identity with Black Americans, Kimberly believes that being conscious of her Black race is the only way in which her identity should be formed. When Cecilia gives her a vague answer, "The Bay Area," she immediately plays the oppressed role and believes that Cecilia is rejecting her and does not want to have any relationship with her (Arthurs 4).

The ideology of the oppressed is clear when Kimberly talks about her life with her mother. She feels that it is not fair for her and her mother to live in an apartment with two bedrooms on the "second floor of a house," while people live in spacious houses "with a backyard, a front yard, and an attic" (Arthurs 20). She feels that her mother is victimized because her job is "to take care of White people's children in the city" (Arthurs 20). She shows that her mother is currently babysitting "red-haired twins, Anna and Aaron" (Arthurs 20). Kimberly is focused on the idea that old Black women such as her mother are destined to serve White people and take care of their children. She says: "Sometimes, when I was in the city, I would see black nannies pushing strollers with White children and I couldn't help thinking about my mother" (Arthurs 20). Kimberly's description of her mother aligns with the stereotypical view about Black women in the American cultural context. In this regard, J. Stanley Lemon argues in his article, "Black Stereotypes as Reflected in Popular Culture, 1880-1920," that with the twentieth century, racial stereotypes about Black people show in the popular culture of America depicting them as "the image of the Negro as servant and maid", "Old Uncle Tom or Uncle Remus, Aunt Jemima or Mandy the maid, Preacher Brown and Deacon Jones, Rastus and Sambo, and the ol' mammy" (102). These stereotypes become so familiar that people do not see them as degrading and hurting the feelings of Black people's children (Lemon 102). Kimberly feels sorry for her mother because her mother's job matches the stereotypical view of Black women in American popular culture. Kimberly thinks that her mother's job is a result of social oppression and an internalization of stereotypical views of Black people.

Kimberly thinks of her Blackness as a formation that should be highly appreciated and served by Black people such as Jamaicans. She believes that Black people should unify, serve, and fight for their race. Kimberly exalts Black Americans and admires Black girls. The fact that she

mentions two Black celebrities at the beginning of her story tells a great deal about her strong connection to her race. She celebrates Kayne West's[6] artistic achievement and Kelly Rowlands's beauty (Arthurs 3). Because Cecilia does not share Kimberly's attachment to her race, Kimberly's constant criticism of Cecilia structures most of their interactions throughout the novel. Although she likes Cecilia's physical appearance, she disapproves of her name, her accent, and the way she dresses, eats, and forms her social relationships (Arthurs 3). Her mixed attitude towards Cecilia is clear since their first meeting in the college's orientation.

> But Cecilia isn't the kind of name that brings to mind a black girl, and that day when she spoke, telling us that she was from California, her voice reminded me of all those blonde white girls on reality television, confirming that, as I suspected, she was a white girl trapped in a black girl's body – an Oreo …Cecilia was an Oreo who really might have forgotten the color of her skin. (Arthurs 3-4)

The Oreo[7] metaphor refers to African Americans who act like White Americans. Kimberly categorizes Cecilia as one of them. Kimberly does see herself as an Oreo because she is highly preoccupied with her Black race and Caribbean heritage. Aiming to criticize racial assimilation with White people, Kimberly admits that she had some Oreo character moments during high school when she used to enjoy trivial activities such as "ceramic classrooms" and "coffeeshop music" (Arthurs 4). Kimberly hates that Cecilia is a friend of White people, walking with them, laughing with them, and living with them together in the university dormitory. It is so shocking

---

[6] It is problematic that Kimberly includes Kanye West in her catalogue of Black excellence because West has relationship only with White girls. His wife and the mother of his children divorces him because of irreconcilable differences in their personalities. He shows up in media and talks about his mental health and private life.

[7] The Oreo metaphor is a popular idea in the racial discourse in America. It is derived from the satiric novel *Oreo*, written by Fran Ross in 1974. Oreo is a type of cookie that has three layers. The first and the third layers are made of chocolate and look black. The second layer which is inside the first and third layers is white and made of vanilla. The novel tells the story of a girl who is born to an African American mother and Jewish father. Deserted by her father at the age of two, Oreo spends most of the novel looking for her father in New York City. The novel questions the identity of biracial Americans and how to negotiate their mixed roots in America.

to Kimberly that Cecilia is in a romantic relationship with a White man. Kimberly says: "One time I saw her holding hands with a white boy, who was a little bit handsome when I crossed my eyes, but mostly ugly" (Arthurs 5). Kimberly, as a race-conscious individual, believes that the people of the White race dominate the people of the Black race. She does not want to be friends with them and questions any Black person who befriends them.

When Cecilia and Kimberly share a photography class, they get closer and become close friends (Arthurs 12). However, this friendship does not last for long. Kimberly constantly judges Cecilia's close relationship with White students and criticizes the complete neglect of her Caribbean heritage and Jamaican roots. Kimberly hangs out with Cecilia's social group but feels socially distant from them because they are White. Kimberly admits that she is more preoccupied with her race and heritage. She says: "It seemed clear that Cecilia was the kind of black girl who didn't think about her race as much as I did. It seemed to me that the world wouldn't let me forget" (Arthurs 16). Kimberly criticizes Cecilia's obsession with White men and finds it very humiliating for all Black girls (Arthur 17). When Cecilia says that she likes "blue-eyed men," Kimberly finds it very degrading and dangerous (Arthurs 16). When she encourages Cecilia to read *The Bluest Eye*[8] by Toni Morrison, Cecilia replies that she has read it and becomes annoyed with Kimberly's suggestion (Arthurs 16). Shocked, Kimberly says: "I didn't understand how Cecilia could say that she liked blue eyes as though there wasn't anything to liking blue eyes. As if blue eyes were an innocent desire for a black woman" (Arthurs 17). Kimberly believes that Cecilia should run away from White people because she considers them oppressive and dominating of other races. In a discussion with Cecilia, Kimberly says, "When it comes to race

[8] *The Bluest Eye*, published 1970, is the first novel written by Toni Morris. It tells the story of a young African American girl called Pecola who was bullied for being ugly by her school and neighborhood community. Her wish for blue eyes demonstrates her inner struggle with her society. The novel sheds light on the difficulties African Americans face with institutional racism and social stereotypes.

relations, the white man is the single most oppressive entity in the world, and you're asking me what's wrong with a black woman preferring white men" (Arthurs 17). Although Kimberly does not mention any event in which she faces racism from White people, she tends to alienate herself from them. She does not like to hang out with Cecilia's White friends (Arthurs 13). Kimberly also does not like The White woman, Sheryl, in their neighborhood. She finds her disgusting, annoying, and ugly. She criticizes her clothes, obesity, and manners (Arthurs 8). Kimberly describes Sheryl as an intruder of people's privacy because she tells Kimberly's mother about the financial difficulties of the Haitian family in their neighborhood (Arthurs 8). She finds the interaction between the White community and the Black community is negative and hurtful. She says: "When you're invisible to a white person, you can almost get used to that. But when it's a black person, you can't help feeling hurt" (Arthurs 8). Kimberly believes White people consider themselves superior to other races and act as hypocrites towards Black people. She says: "I wonder if white people are as good at reading us. Probably, not. We've spent our whole lives observing them. It makes sense that we'd be good at it" (Arthurs 9). Examining Cecilia's White friend, she judges his parents who pretend to like the Black girl and cheer for their relationship as typical parents when in reality they are not, and they don't find her beautiful (Arthurs 6). Moreover, Kimberly does not want to have a lifelong relationship with a White partner. When Ryan, her White boyfriend, breaks up with her, she gets over him quickly (Arthurs 29). She is not thrilled with their relationship in the first place. When Cecilia brings a Black man, Troy, just to make her old White boyfriend, Adam, jealous, Kimberly argues with Cecilia and gets very angry at her (Arthurs 30). Kimberly thinks it is a demeaning step of Black girls to use Black men only to provoke White men.

Kimberly also hates that Cecilia neglects the Caribbean side of her identity. As a race-conscious individual, Kimberly believes diasporic Black people in America should be connected to their culture whether African or Caribbean through their lifestyles. They should honor their local food and music. Kimberly likes and eats Jamaican food and expects from Cecilia to do the same. She is shocked that Cecilia does not know much about Jamaican food's names. She says: "When I told Cecilia that my favorite food was oxtail and that my mother was making it for my dinner, and that she should come over, she said, 'Oxtail? That sounds familiar to me.' She grew up eating American food" (Arthurs 20-1). According to Kimberly, she believes that when Cecilia's mother gives her "cornmeal porridge," she hates it and asks for "boxed cereal with cold milk" (Arthurs 21). Moreover, Kimberly is very connected to Jamaican fruit. In a reminiscing moment, she remembers Jamaican apples and criticizes how Cecilia could not understand Kimberly's strong attachment to Caribbean food.

> How could I describe to her the white flesh of a Jamaican apple- an apple totally unlike any American one? How could she understand my disappointment when I moved to Brooklyn as a child and discovered that the apple I loved was unavailable to me in this new place? How could she understand the loss of not being able to eat a fruit I picked by hand in my grandmother's yard? (Arthurs 29)

Furthermore, Kimberly criticizes Cecilia's lack of knowledge and appreciation of popular culture such as music and TV shows by the Blacks in America. She says: "I would've been surprised if Cecilia could recite a single line from a Tupac song" (Arthurs 24). Kimberly believes Cecilia's lack of knowledge of her Black race has a negative influence on her identity. She argues that she feels sorry for Cecilia because Cecilia as a Caribbean Black American is raised without knowledge of any Black "references" (Arthurs 29). Kimberly mentions one day the television

show *Girlfriends*[9] and becomes horrified that Cecilia has never heard of it (Arthurs 29). Kimberly finds Cecilia a hopeless case. She feels sorry that some parts of their identity in America are not accessible. She describes the silences between her and Cecilia as if "something had been stolen from" them (Arthurs 29).

As a person who is conscious of her race, Kimberly is very sensitive to the issue of racial justice in America. She cares about how minorities and immigrants are hurt and harmed by White people in America. During a party, she passes on her opinion of the TV Show *Girls* and argues how it features only White Americans and ignores other ethnicities in America. In a discussion about the TV series *Girls*, Kimberly says:

> It was true that there were no black people, underrepresentation blah blah blah, but I couldn't imagine any of the characters having black friends unless the black friends were as white-washed as they were … I really can't imagine Hannah or any of her friends having poc friends. Or at least not any poc friends who don't share the same class and ideologies as they do. (Arthurs 27)

Furthermore, Kimberly thinks that White Americans are oppressive agents to other races because wherever they go, they bring with them a lifestyle based on fitness and fun gatherings that might not be affordable to non-White Americans and immigrants. In Kimberly's opinion, the TV Show, *Girls*, shows an example of how White Americans are oppressing the Blacks and other races unconsciously. She believes the show gives a good picture of gentrification, which is when White individuals move and live in neighborhoods of minorities and immigrants and as a result, rent goes up and other expensive facilities are opened such as coffee shops and yoga studios (Arthurs 27). She asks, "White people oppress us without even trying" (Arthurs 28). She adds

[9] *Girlfriends* is a popular American Television Series that featured Black women in America between 2000 and 2008.

that it is hypocritical of White Americans to engage in racial justice activities such as Black Lives Matter and at the same time become an important part of discriminating against other races by moving to their neighbors (Arthurs 30). Kimberly believes that the Black race is "eternally being disrespected" (Arthurs 30).

At a moment of questioning, Kimberly thinks desperately about the struggle of her identity and how she can negotiate her identity in America. She knows that she is a Black girl with a Caribbean heritage, but she finds people who are from the same origin and heritage do not act and think like her. Thinking of Cecilia, Kimberly says: "Who was to blame? Her parents? White supremacy? Assimilation? And why did it matter to me that she understood and appreciated our shared heritage" (Arthurs 29). Kimberly, as a race-conscious individual, understands the important of her Caribbean roots and takes it upon herself to enlighten Cecilia and protect her from forthcoming racism and trauma. She believes that no matter how hard Black individuals in America ignore each other, they eventually share commonalities and can't be invisible to each other (Arthurs 4).

Colorblindness

While Kimberly is preoccupied with race and her sense of belonging, Cecilia's relationship to her place of origin and cultural heritage is marked with neglect. Her Caribbean identity is peacefully replaced with her American identity. Cecilia's migration situation is different from Kimberly. Cecilia's parents come to America as immigrants and Cecilia is born and raised as an American citizen. She looks at herself as American more than Caribbean. Ceceilia does not have any emotional attachment and psychological bond with her Caribbean heritage. Her American identity is informed by colorblindness through identifying herself as an American, not Black American. Her identity's struggle is found in her avoidance of Black Americans or any person

who shares with her ethnicity, her strong ability to assimilate to American mainstream culture and lifestyle, and lack of recognition of her Jamaican roots.

When dealing with assimilation in the context of Cecilia's experience in America, it is important to shed light on how assimilation operates within migration and how colorblindness exists in American cultural discourse. In his article "Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation," Berry shows that immigrants subscribe to different mechanisms for self-identification in host countries and that assimilation is one of them (6). He shows that assimilation involves "when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures" (Berry, 9). These individuals forget about their place of origin, and native cultural practices and lifestyle. Hall defines assimilation, in his article "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," as a process of "dragging the whole society into some imitative relationship with this other culture which one could never quite reach" (8). His definition shows that a diasporic individual who seeks assimilation will not quite reach the newly formed identity and will be in a constant struggle to match the original. Because the newly formed identity is not quite the same and will always look fake, the diasporic individual might clash with another individual, with whom he or she shares cultural commonalities and background, and who believes in the importance of acknowledging their race and difference.

Another important aspect of Cecilia's identity is that she subscribes to American colorblindness, which considers all Americans the same regardless to their skin color. Cecilia believes that race is not a determining factor in self-identification, a matter that Kimberly finds important to all Black diasporic individuals in America. Accordingly, Kimberly identifies Cecilia as a person who has an invisible whiteness. Cecilia is fully assimilated to White Americans. She

also believes as an American the right thing to do is not to see skin color. In this regard, colorblindness works to legitimate whiteness. Lipsitz shows:

> Colorblindness does not do away with color, but rather reinforces whiteness as the unmarked norm against which difference is measured … colorblindness is a one-way street. It is invoked as an ideal and imperative only when color consciousness is used to address and redress the unearned privileges of whiteness. (24)

Promoting colorblindness shows to what degree diasporic individuals have subconsciously internalized whiteness and aspired to be White Americans so that they acquire more wealth and opportunities.

Cecilia has a strong desire to assimilate to White Americans. To achieve this, she should avoid Black people and only be friends with White Americans. The very first word Cecilia says in the story shows her intentional avoidance of Black people. Her vague answer to Kimberly about her place of origin as "The Bay Area," shows her lack of interest in Kimberly, the only Black girl in the group (Arthurs 4). Although they meet randomly in college many times, Cecilia pretends not to remember Kimberly or having seen her before (Arthurs 5). Even though they take a class together, Cecilia continues to ignore Kimberly (Arthurs 6). When Cecilia and Kimberly become close friends, Cecilia admits to Kimberly that she likes White Americans and tells her that she will always be attracted to White men, and she prefers men with "blue eyes" (Arthurs 16). She does not want to be judged on her preference and considers any judgment from Black individuals a hypocritical move. Kimberly recounts: "One time we got into a mini-argument because Cecilia thought it was hypocritical for black women like me to say that we prefer black men but then judge black women who prefer white men" (Arthurs 17).

Cecilia's parents are fully assimilated to an American upper-class lifestyle. From Kimberly's point of view, she believes that "the Wellingtons [Cecilia's family] were proud to tell people that their only daughter was studying in New York. Her parents seemed to be people who had lost some sense of who they were" (Arthurs 20). Their lifestyle does not include any connection to Caribbean heritage. Her mother raises her differently and allows her to forget her connection to her roots (Arthurs 21). From Kimberly's satirical description of Cecilia's family's weekly routine, Cecilia and her parents seem to be preoccupied only with performing American upper-class activities.

> The Wellington family residence, Cecilia told me, was an entire house with a backyard, a front yard, and an attic. Of course, they had a dog. On Saturday mornings, she and her mother would get lattes at the farmer's market, and on Mondays, when her father was off from work, he mowed the lawn. When her mother wasn't teaching economics, she was gardening, and when her father wasn't teaching chemistry, he was watching sports. It all seemed so quintessentially upper middle class (Arthurs 20).

Cecilia lives in a place that is refined and improved through the co-existence of White people with Black people. Cecilia prefers to live in "a place with a Starbucks on the corner and an H&M and a bougie sandwich shop on the same block" (Arthurs 23). Moreover, she likes to surround herself with White girls and wear clothes like them such as "crop tops" (Arthurs 5). Cecilia is afraid of dry skin and applies moisturizer heavily to avoid it. Kimberly comments: "I had no idea why, so late at night, she was rubbing lotion into her hands. She kept tubes in all of her purses. I teased her about it- that incessant need to moisturize throughout the day-but I wondered if growing up dark-skinned in a place like the Bay Area had done a number on her" (Arthurs 28).

Cecilia does not consider race as an important element in her identity in America and adopts a colorblind way of thinking. Based on her reaction to Kimberly's comments about the TV Show, *Girls*, criticizing the show as ignoring different races other than White, Cecilia appears embarrassed and annoyed, and gets into an argument with Kimberly afterwards.

> "Everything is about race with you."
>
> "And not enough is about race with you."
>
> "You embarrassed me tonight. All those things you were saying about gentrification and *Girls*, you embarrassed me." (Arthurs 30)

Kimberly and Cecilia clash over the treatment of their Blackness. As Kimberly considers her Blackness as the most identifiable element in her identity, Cecilia's Blackness is invisible to her and becomes uncomfortable when Kimberly brings it up during the course of their friendship. Cecilia is not eager to know anything about her Jamaican roots and she does not consider Jamaica as her place of origin. If she goes to Jamaica, she goes as a tourist. She has been to Jamaica two times: the first time is when she was a baby with her parents and the second time was with a group of her high school classmates (Arthurs 29). Cecilia does not want to know anything about Jamaica because she feels her obligation as an American citizen is to identify herself without race and get closer to White Americans (Arthurs 31). Kimberly criticizes Cecilia saying: "Your parents are Jamaican and you aren't know anything about the country" (Arthurs 31). Moreover, Kimberly avoids music made by Black Americans and doesn't eat Jamaican food. She intentionally shuns anything that reminds her of her Jamaican self and roots.

The last meeting between Kimberly and Cecilia carries a climactic moment of their identity struggle. It is when Kimberly shouts at Cecilia saying, "You're a nigga like the rest of us," Cecilia walks away from Kimberly and does not look back at her (Arthurs 31). Kimberly loses

Cecilia forever. The story ends with their separation. It significantly shows a race conscious individual can't reconcile with a colorblind person who does not see race and acknowledge her place of origin. Kimberly is focused on herself as descendant from enslaved people, and Cecilia is focused on her colorblind American identity. Kimberly admits that her preoccupation with race troubles her and because of that, she has hard feelings towards Cecilia.

> I wanted to hurt Cecilia for complicated reasons including the fact that she seemed to carry a lighter burden on her back. She could forget herself. She would graduate without loans because her parents could afford to pay for her tuition … I envied her for reasons that weren't even her fault. (Arthurs 31)

The confrontation that happens between Kimberly and Cecilia shows the dilemma that Black Americans from different cultural backgrounds go through in America. For Caribbean people to immigrate and settle in America, they must be aware that American society is marked by continuous dialogues about racial identity, colorblindness, race-consciousness, and race-neutrality. It takes time for Caribbean immigrants to understand and be part of the dialogue about racial discourse. Situating themselves within the conversation of race and identity in America is part of negotiating race in American cultural discourse. Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans are defined as Black Americans whose different understandings of race create problems among themselves and confusion of what the identity of a Black American should be.

Their crisis is explained by Gary Peller in his article, "Race-Consciousness," in which he discusses the concept of race in mainstream American culture. He examines a critical moment in America for Black Americans with no way of moving forward. He believes the root of the problem starts with the confrontation in the 1960s over race between advocates of integration, justice, and enlightenment and those proponents of segregation (Peller 127). After the

integrationists and liberals won the confrontation, they got into another confrontation with Black nationalists because integrationists believe "the repudiation of race-consciousness defines conventional civil rights thinking" (Peller 127). He believes that Black Americans in America are forced to reject being conscious of their Black race by integrationists because it is an equal concept to White Supremacy. Peller believes that the idea of Black nationalists taking pride in their Black race "should be understood as a symbol of the core assertation that race-consciousness constitutes African Americans as a distinct social community in much the same way that national self-identity operates to establish the terms of recognition and identity in "regular" nations" (137). Integrationists believe that Black Americans should embrace colorblindness and "transcend the bias of particularity which they see as the root of racist consciousness" (Peller 130). Integrationism started as a good project for Black Americans and then it took them to a permanent identity struggle over the negotiation of their race. Black immigrants such as Caribbeans find themselves stuck with their identification as Black Americans who should embrace either the colorblind integrationist's vision of race or Black nationalism's concept of race-consciousness.

The story of Kimberly and Cecilia shows how Caribbean immigrants join the identity struggle of Black Americans. Arguments about race, relationship with White individuals, and the negative consequences of neglecting cultural heritage structure the way Caribbeans talk with each other and feel towards each other in America.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to take an analytical approach to literary representations of identity struggle in contemporary Caribbean-American literature. My analysis has shown that Caribbean subjects in the USA-based diaspora experience struggles that are related to the negotiation of their racial identity, communication with people, and restrictions of immigration policies. Their journeys present them as either confused, marginalized, weak, less secure, alienated, or passive bodies. Their stories end in departure, death, loss, or continuous confrontations with their surroundings.

My study grouped texts based on the nature of these subjects' diasporic experiences, which are a short-term stay as expatriates, a long-term stay as immigrants, children of immigrant parents, or migrants, and women. I argue that identity for these subjects is produced based on Caribbean cultural background, race, gender, and political actions. Therefore, my analysis examines closely the journeys of these subjects in America and explains their conflicted emotions, actions, and psychological conditions. In addition, it is important to mention how these subjects are positioned in American contexts. When immersed in the American experience, these subjects sometimes make choices to eliminate racism and discrimination through withdrawal from any public services and engagement. Moreover, these subjects at some point take American fictional characters as their role models in their lives. Caribbean subjects disagree over the value of their Caribbean heritage and the acknowledgment of their Black race. I add that Caribbean women in America have a double marginalized status because of the overlap of their gender, race, and immigration status. Their immigration experience presents a distinct complexity that weakens and disempowers them. From another perspective, some Caribbean immigrant women

decide to convey the stories they have witnessed to the world to raise awareness and provide a real-life experience of Caribbean immigrants in America. When these subjects are denied entry, they lose their power, respect, and identification. My study has shown that a shared element of struggle is present in each of these subjects' stories.

In chapter two, I argue that an analytical reading of two contemporary Caribbean-American novels, *Disposable People* and *Now Lila Knows*, reveals a new perspective on Caribbean identity struggle to move away from the Creole identity of Caribbean people to a bridging identity with Black Americans and consider self-identification a determining factor in foreign bodies' experience in America. The two novels show that identity formation intersects with personal experience, memory, place, and history to generate an identification of self that matches the complexity of the Caribbean identity's negotiation. *Disposable People* and *Now Lila Knows* foreground the transformational aspect of the Caribbean identity and centralize full exploration of the Caribbean identity struggle. The two novels' protagonists, Kenneth and Lila, live for a period in America, and each experiences a different reaction toward Americans. Kenneth's experience is centered around class and his shame creates a barrier to forming positive relationships with people. On the other hand, Lila's experience in America is linked to race because she is led to negotiate her racial identity and find a partnership with Black Americans that strengthens her position in America.

Ezekel Alan's *Disposable People* shows the consequences of childhood memories and poverty on personal growth and open-mindedness. The novel argues that the protagonist's struggle to accept himself, his failure to have good long-lasting relationships with real women, and the impossibility of forming a positive opinion about others (i.e. Americans) result from his childhood memories, self-shame, and personal insecurities. Kenneth's resistance to communicate

with people in America points to the struggle he went through to reconcile with himself and his past. His return to his childhood village and facing death there show how he grapples with himself to mitigate his self-shame and ease his painful past.

Elizabeth Nunez's *Now Lila Knows* demonstrates the difficulty of situating Caribbean selves in conversations about race in America. The novel shows the protagonist's struggle to identify herself in American society and institutions. The forced assimilation she experiences at the beginning of her arrival in America creates doubleness in her consciousness, which drags her to more fragmentation and confusion in her decisions and attitudes. It is after more acquired knowledge, reading, and realization of her postcolonial history, that she becomes fully aware of the necessity to bridge the gap she feels in her identity and ally with Black Americans. Her story as the novel unfolds depicts her growth as a woman of color and hints at the Caribbean-American identity gap and social justice in America. By the end of the novel, Lila decides to leave America and asks to be replaced by any Black female professor from America. Lila believes that Black American female scholars should be given a chance in academia in America as a way to finish her business of enhancing America's racial justice.

In chapter three, I argue that a postcolonial critical reading integrated with decolonial studies of two contemporary Caribbean-American texts, *Brother, I'm Dying* and "Cheap, Fast, Filling" reveals a level of struggle for Caribbean subjects in American cultural discourse. The two stories show that identity formation for Afro-Caribbean subjects is marked by separation, isolation, unwelcoming bodies, and constant depression. The stories' protagonists, Edwidge Danticat, Danticat's father, her uncle, and Lucien come to America, and each finds unsuccessful communication and integration. The experience of Danticat's family is centered around the racialization of Haitian immigrants. Danticat shares their experiences with the world to attract

attention to Haitian's struggle inside and outside Haiti. From another perspective, Lucien's experience in America is informed by the failure of his project to imitate the lifestyle of Hollywood. His lack of success creates more struggle for him.

Danticat, in *Brother, I'm Dying*, shows the consequences of violence and discrimination on Haitians. The novel argues that the protagonists' lack of security and resources in their home country drives them to leave and immigrate, a decision that results in more trouble for them. Danticat's father, as a Haitian immigrant, prefers to separate himself from any form of national engagement and decides to drive his cab throughout the street of Brooklyn to avoid racism, yet he still receives it inside his cab. Danticat's uncle travels to America a lot for tourism and medical care. After being threatened in Haiti, he flees looking for security. Upon arrival, he is denied entry and moved to a detention center. As a detainee, he suffers from a lack of identification, empowerment, and kindness. His liminal self leads him to self-shame, health deterioration, and then death. Danticat's memoir shows Danticat's hybridity in which she creates for herself a free space to reflect on her family's struggle over the years for stability, security, and happiness.

Lucien, in "Cheap, Fast, Filling", demonstrates the influence of Hollywood on his life decision and character. The story shows the protagonist's reason for immigrating to America and experiencing the thrilling vibes he sees on TV. When he lives in Miami, he realizes the unattainability of his goal. He becomes sad, confused, and ignorant of his reality. With less space and food, he becomes melancholic and disadvantageous. People in society alienate him and push him away from their circles because he could be a potential danger to them. Part of grieving his lost self, he consumes Hot Pockets from 7-Eleven daily and considers them the limits of his happiness.

In chapter four, I argue that the analysis of two contemporary Caribbean-American texts, *Dominicana* and *Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands*, reveals a new perspective on the Caribbean identity struggle concerning the concepts of race, gender, and immigration in American discourse. The two stories show that identity formation for Caribbean women is marked by the overlap of race and gender and the disagreement over assimilation to the colorblind vision of all citizens in America. The protagonists, Ana, Kimberly, and Cecilia live in America, and each finds race and gender structure their identity in ways that disempower them and put them in constant questioning of who they are and how to improve their situation. Ana's experience is centered around her intersectionality which creates a barrier for her to move forward as a Caribbean immigrant young girl. From another perspective, the experience of Kimberly and Cecilia in America is informed by confrontations about how each considers race a determinant factor in their identity formation.

Ana, in *Dominicana*, shows the consequences of gender discrimination and domestic violence on personal growth and women empowerment. The novel argues that the protagonist's conflicting relationship with her mother and her position as an immigrant woman of color who inhabits the intersection of race and gender work together to weaken her and make her more vulnerable to racial and gender discrimination in America. Ana's relationship with her mother shows that Ana serves as a tool for her mother to only improve the family's financial situation and help her family immigrate to America. Ana's identity in America leads her to be an object of spousal abuse because she depends fully on him for immigration status, money, shelter, and communication. Her social circle and the laws of immigration fail to support her and leave her struggle alone.

Kimberly and Cecilia, in “Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands,” demonstrate the difficulty of situating Caribbean young girls in conversations about race in America. The story shows the protagonists’ struggle to identify themselves in the American discourse of race. While Kimberly is strongly connected to her Caribbean heritage and Black race, Cecilia identifies herself as an American more than Caribbean. Their relationship is full of moments of confrontations and arguments about race and how to interact with White Americans. Their conflict climaxes when Kimberly reminds Cecilia of her history as a descendant of slaves in the West and the impossibility of changing herself from a Black person to a White person, even if she dresses, eats, talks like White people, and surrounds herself with them. By the end of the story, both Kimberly and Cecilia part ways, a moment that describes a critical time for Black people in America. If Black diasporic individuals believe that race does not matter in their identification and that ignoring their race is a progressive step for all Americans, they will be pushed to embrace colorblind thoughts that legitimate whiteness as a superior feature of humankind. While some Black diasporic individuals assimilate into colorblind American bodies, others do not, which puts the two groups in constant confrontations with each other.

The identity struggle discussed in my dissertation is an important part of the conversations about identity struggle as a whole; however, the conclusions from these literary analyses made contributions to the past Caribbean studies about identity negotiation for Caribbean people. In addition, the Caribbean-American approach taken in my analysis enlightens theorists of literary and cultural studies about the situation of immigrants and the problematics of racial classification in the West which is a home for many diasporas such as African, Jewish, Armenian, Chinese, Iranian, Arab, and Afghan. The analyses made in my dissertation also influence the worldwide understanding of these diasporas, as there are many similarities between their diasporic situations

in Western countries such as America, Canada, and Europe. Moreover, my dissertation contributes to the establishment of Caribbean-American studies as a full-fledged field that should have a significant place in the US academy and worldwide higher education institutions. Caribbean-American literature should not be subsumed under African-American literature and African studies.

The conclusion of my analysis of diasporic Caribbean subjects in American contexts is that diasporas reveal the harsh reality of living in heterogeneous societies composed of people from different cultural backgrounds, races, and ethnicities. Diasporic individuals' struggle is a significant indication of their lack of happiness. Moreover, their alienation is an important link to the difficulty and the impossibility for heterogeneous societies to successfully integrate and include everyone in a unified engagement. Caribbean-American authors are the loudest voices to share the experiences of their parents, ancestors, and acquaintances to give a testimony of what is like to be a diaspora impacted by wars, displacement, slavery, and colonization.

This dissertation is a starting point for further studies in diaspora and immigration. In future research, I would like to examine different types of diasporas in American contexts represented in a greater quantity of literary and digital representations from non-Western authors. The focus will be on tracing the shift of narratives about heterogeneity as the core aspect of the Western world and how non-Western authors respond to it and represent it in their writings and speech on digital platforms. Moreover, I will examine case studies of immigrants from different parts of the world and research their individual experiences about host countries and how relocation has influenced their identity and decisions.

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, 2014.

---. *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Alan, Ezekel. *Disposable People*. Ezekel Alan, 2012.

Arthurs, Alexia. "Light-Skinned Girls and Kelly Rowlands." *How to Love a Jamaican*. Picador. pp. 3-31.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*. Routledge, 1998.

Bailey, Carol. "Performance and the Gendered Body in Jamaica Kincaid "Girl" and Oonya Kempadoo's Buxton Spice." *Meridians*, vol.10, no. 2, 2010, pp. 106-123.

Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and Postmodern Perspective*. Translated by James Maraniss, Duke University Press, 1996.

Bernabe, Jean, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant, "In Praise of Creoleness." translated by Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar. *Postcolonialism: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, edited by Gaurav Desia And Supriya Nair, Rutgers UP, 2005, pp. 274-289.

Berry, John W. "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaption." *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1997, pp. 5-34.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Bhatia, Sunil, Anjali Ram. "Rethinking 'Acculturation' in Relation to Diasporic Cultures and

Postcolonial Identities." *Human Development*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1-18.

"Brother, I'm Dying." *C-Span*, 11 Nov 2007, [Brother, I'm Dying] | C-SPAN.org.

Brown, W. O. "The Nature of Race-Consciousness." *Social Forces*, Vol 10, no. 1, 1931, pp. 90-97.

Brubaker, Rogers. Frederick Cooper. "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2000, pp. 1-47.

Burney, Shehla. *Pedagogy of the Other: Edward Said, Postcolonial Theory, and Strategies for Critique*. *Counterpoints*, vol. 417, Peter Lang AG, 2012.

Chisholm, Ruth. "CaribLit Talks to Ezekel Alan, Author of *Disposable People*." Caribbean Literature Action Group, 1st August 2023, www.cariblit.org/septemper-book.html.

Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1994, pp. 302-338.

Crenshaw, Kimberle` W. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Critical Race Theory*, edited by Kimberele` Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas. The New Press, 1995, pp.357-383.

Crew, Hilary S. "Feminist Theories and the Voices of Mothers and Daughters in Selected African-American Literature for Young Adults." *African American Voices in Young Adult Literature: Tradition, Transition, Transformation*, edited by Karen Patricia Smith. Scarecrow P, 1994, pp. 79-114.

Cruz, Angie. *Dominicana*. Flatiron, 2019.

Danticat, Edwidge, *Brother I'm Dying*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Riverhead Books, 2007.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Dufault, Roseanna L., "Edwidge Danticat's Pursuit of Justice in *Brother, I'm Dying*." *Journal of Haitian Studies*, vol. 16, n. 1, 2010, pp. 95-106.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 2008.

Fouron, Georges. "I, Too, want to be a Big Man": The Making of a Haitian "Boat People," *The New African Diaspora*, edited by Isidore Okpewho and Nkira Nzegwu. Indian University Press, 2009, pp. 78-108.

Franchina, Miriam. "Italian Crossing the Caribbean: Two Case Studies." *Age of Revolutions,* 14 December, 2020, Italians Crossing the Caribbean: Two Case Studies – Age of Revolutions.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Bloomsbury Academic, 1970.

Garrison, Vivian, and Carol Weiss. "Dominican Family Networks and United States Immigration Policy: A Case Study." *The International Migration Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1979, pp. 264-283.

Gay, Roxane. "Cheap, Fast, Filling," *Ayiti*. Grove Press, 2011.

Hall, Stuart, "Créolité and the Process of Creolization." *Creolizing Europe: Legacy*

and Transformations, edited by Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Shirley Anne Tate, Liverpool University Press, 2015, pp. 12-25.

---. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Theorizing Diaspora*, edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pp. 233-247.

---. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities." *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*. Kingston. Jamaica: West Indies UP, 2001. New Left Review. Web. 18 Oct 2019.

Hanna, Mary. "*Disposable People*, Ezekel Alan's Brilliantly Innovative Debut," *The Sunday Observer*, 4 March 2012, pp. 7.

Jefferies, Judson. "The United States and Haiti: An Exercise in Intervention," *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 47, n. 4, 200, pp. 71-94.

Kaus, Alaina. "Reclaiming History: in Edwidge Danticat's *The Framing of Bones* and *Brother, I'm Dying," MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol.69, n. 1, 2023, pp. 97-117.

Knepper, Wendy. "In/justice and Necro-natality in Edwidge Danticat's *Brother, I'm Dying*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 47, n. 2, 2012, pp. 191-205.

Lamming, George. *The Pleasure of Exile*. Allison & Busby, 1984.

Lemons, Stanely J. "Black Stereotypes as Reflected in Popular Culture, 1880-1920." *American Quarterly*, vol. 29, n. 1, 1977, pp. 102-116.

Lipsitz, George. "The Sounds of Silence: How Race Neutrality Preserves White Supremacy."

Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across Disciplines, edited by Kimberele` Crenshaw, Luke Charles Harris, Daniel Martinez HonSang & George Lipsitz. The Regents of University of California Press, 2019, pp. 23-51.

Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Mohanty, Chandra. "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. edited by Chandra Mohanty and Torres Russo. Indiana University Press, 1991, pp. 2-47.

Nelson, Maldonado-Torres. "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies: Globalization and the De-Colonial Option*, vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2007, pp. 240-270.

Nunez, Elizabeth. *Now Lila Knows*. Akashic Book, 2022.

Oswald, Debra, L., et al. "Experiencing Sexism and Young Women's Body Esteem." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, vol. 31, n. 10, 2013, pp. 1112-1137.

Patton, Desmond, et al. "Stop and Frisk Online: Theorizing Everyday Racism in Digital Policing in the Use of Social Media for Identification and Criminal Conduct and Associations." *Social Media + Society*, 2017, pp.1-10.

Rabe, Stephen. "The Caribbean Triangle: Castro, and Trujillo and U.S Foreign Policy, 1958-

1963." *Diplomatic History*, vol. 20, n. 1, 1996, pp. 55-78.

Roorda, Eric Paul, et al., editors. *The Dominican Republic Reader. History, Culture, Politics*. Duke University Press, 2014.

Stitt, Jocelyn. "The Caribbean and the United States." *Caribbean Literature in Transition: 1970-2020*, edited by Ronald Cummings and Alison Donnell, University Press of Cambridge, 2020, pp. 284-299.

Stone, Carl. "Jamacia in Crisis: from Socialist to Capitalist Management." *International Journal*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1985, pp.282-311.

Tölölyan, Khachig. "Rethinking Diaspora (s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment." *Diaspora*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1996, pp. 3-36.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Routledge, 2017.

Wilson, Camille. "Other Mothering." *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*. Edited by Andrea O'Reilly, Sage Publication, 2010.

VITA

Samirah Munahi Almutairi
English Department, Old Dominion University,
5000 Batten Arts & Letters
Norfolk, VA 23529

Education
PhD English, Old Dominion University, August 2024.
M.A. English Language and Literature, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, May 2012.
B.A. English Language, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, February 2006.

Publications
Almutairi, Samirah. (2024). "The Controversy of Teaching World Literature and the Importance of Translation in The Field of English Studies," *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies 8* (1): 227-236.

Almutairi, Samirah. (2020). "Junto Diaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao: A Narrative of Identity and Diaspora," *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 4 (4): 202-212.

Almutairi, Samirah, (2018). Postcolonial Reading of Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 2 (4): 125-129.