

The ‘Pleasures’ and Displeasures of Exile in Caryl Phillips’s *The Final Passage* (1985) and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* (1990)

AbidLabidi: Assistant Professor of English Literature,

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, King Saud University, Riyadh.

(Received 26/1435H; Accepted for publication 27/7/1435H)

Keywords: Diaspora, migration, exile, exclusion, marginalization, home, memory, nostalgia.

Abstract: Drawing on a close textual analysis of Caryl Phillips’s *The Final Passage* and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* and a theoretical framework grounded mostly in Migration and Diaspora Studies, this article addresses the complexities of migration from poor Caribbean countries to the industrialized West. It also examines the contentious passage from the certainties of home to the perils and intricacies of exile. Central to this paper is also the investigation of the migrant’s grappling with his/her border existence once his/her craving for the West is bluntly ridiculed in the host country with systematic racism, marginalization, displacement, un-belonging, exclusion, and other related predicaments. I finally examine the role of memory and nostalgia in preventing the migrant’s total loss in the new exilic milieu. More often than not, the migrant’s unfulfilled dreams in the host country and the many of discomforts of exile awaken him/her to the true value of home and the place of origin.

❖ This study is funded by the Research Center of the College of Arts at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

In his article “The Mind of Winter,” Edward Said considers migration the central feature of our contemporary era, which he describes as “indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, [and] mass migration” (440). Postcolonial critic Bénédicte Ledent suggests that migration has “become one of the most common experiences of the twentieth century” (158) attributing this worldwide propensity to expatriate to the large scale migration of labor, the sway of warfare and conflict worldwide, and a radical improvement in transport systems and communication technology. Most often, the migrant leaves his/her place of birth to flee one or more of the following adversities: war, conflict, hunger, poverty, religious or

ethnic persecution, natural disasters, lack of opportunities, or to simply escape a general malaise with life at home. Added to its centrality to our modern era, migration, and its related complexities, have become equally essential to its circulating discourses, mainly in mass media, political discussions, socio-economic and cultural debates, the reports of international organizations, film, music, and literature.

According to various estimations, between 100 and 150 million people live outside their countries of origin today forming exilic minorities, mainly in Europe and North America¹. In an increasingly globalized world, migration, in its various forms, does

¹ See, for instance, Elleke Boehmer (226) and Patrick Taran (7).

not simply concern one specific region or nation, but has rather become a subject of worldwide impact due to its ever-increasing numbers, multifaceted implications, and serious effects on the migrants themselves, their countries of origin, and their new countries of relocation. Reflecting on the current waves of intense migration across the world, Phillips, in his essay collection *A New World Order*, describes our era as:

an age in which migrations across boundaries are an increasingly familiar part of our individual lives as national borders collapse and are redrawn. An age in which nations bind together in regional clusters and eliminate old immigration laws, and in which illegal movements from one country to another become increasingly desperate as economies fail and wars continue to rage. (132)

The Caribbean: a nation of migrants

The views imparted to us above about migration as the major feature of our age gain further significance in the peculiar Caribbean context. Said's assessment of our era as the age of "mass migration" can best describe the migratory history and identity of Afro-Caribbean people. Their colossal migration unfolded centuries earlier within the cross-Atlantic transfer of slaves from Africa to the Americas. Hence, notions of belonging and origin hardly apply to Afro-Caribbean people who trace their roots to an involuntary migration that severed millions of Africans from their ancestral homes and dis/placed them in New World. Thus, transit, border crossing, and the constant propensity to migrate represent an essential, if not the

essential, feature of Caribbean people's history and identity as critic Tobias Doring argues (7).

The Caribbean world cannot be confined to its conventional geographical borders, but rather stands as an "external frontier," with boundaries reaching out to Africa, Europe, and The Americas; the very trajectory of Europe's mercantilist triangular trade. Doring proposes that "voyaging" and "passage" have outlived the experience of slavery, and stand today at the heart of Caribbean culture and realities (7). The deportation of slaves out of Africa and their resulting exile have, in fact, been inherited by their descendants whose very consciousness and identity are powerfully informed by their forefathers' initial exile, hence the important term 'Diaspora,' often used to describe the dispersal and rootlessness of the Black Man. Emphasizing the diasporic dispersal of the Black Man of the Caribbean, renowned Barbadian novelist and essayist George Lamming states that "[t]here is a Caribbean in Amsterdam, Paris, London, and Birmingham; in New York and in other parts of North America" (9).

The migratory history and diasporic identity of Afro-Caribbean people have, in fact, substantially affected the type of literature produced in the region for decades. The prominent Caribbean Poet Kamau Brathwaite suggests that "[e]xile is the first significant feature of Anglophone Caribbean writing" (297), and that "the emigrant has become a significant factor on the literary scene" (7). Besides, the firsthand migratory experience of most Caribbean writers has made migration an indispensable theme of

Caribbean letters as most major Caribbean writers have themselves been migrants (to Britain or North America), and Caribbean literature has for decades been written from abroad.

'The Pleasures of Exile'

The Final Passage and *Lucy* intersect in their similar contextual backdrop: Caribbean migration to Europe and North America that started in the 1950s and has continued to the present, though with lesser amplitude due to the many restrictions put on entering the West. *The Final Passage* and *Lucy* explore their female protagonists' hope-filled journeys to the West and their disillusionment in the spaces they had for long adored and dreamt of. Central to both narratives is the migrant's failure to come to terms with physical and psychological exile in the 'adopted homeland.' In *The Final Passage*, Leila's exilic anguish in England proves utterly destructive after the lonesome death of her mother (a clear emblem for "The Mother Country") and the failure of her marriage. She, thus, realizes that she has been "drawing upon the artificial cylinder of blind hope" (197). As the narrative draws to a close, Leila appears to be physically and psychically worn out and out of place "like a transplanted tree that had failed to take root in foreign soil" (Phillips, *The European Tribe*, 9).

Likewise, Kincaid's deeply psychological novel *Lucy* chronicles one year in the life of its protagonist who has newly entered the world of her countless dreams; New York, where she works as an *au pair* in a racist household. Central to *Lucy* is the dramatization of its protagonist's exilic

identity and struggle with her border existence as a social, racial, and cultural outcast: "I was a young woman from the fringes of the world" (95). Throughout the novel, Lucy is constantly divided between her memories of home and the cruel circumstances of the place she had for long aspired to become part of. The narrative closes with Lucy's realization that her white employers can never be family to her and that America, where she put much hope, can never become home to her. Lucy falls into solitude and is ultimately lost in the hostile and bleak world of New York.

Dreams of 'beyondness' and the images migrants construct of their new dwelling places in the "white world (that is to say, the real world)" (Fanon 37) are often adorned with great expectations and luring promises. Fanon addresses the colonial's fascination with the ideal world of Europe: "Imprisoned on his island, lost in an atmosphere that offers the slightest outlet, the Negro breathes in this appeal of Europe like pure air" (21). Europe becomes the very "air" the West Indian "breathes" articulating an enthrallment with the center's fabulous magic. In *The Final Passage* and *Lucy*, dreams about England as the 'protective' "Mother Country" and America as the great land of opportunity take hold of many a character. In both narratives, the physical act of migration is preceded by an intense longing to the boundless world beyond the island's limited space and scarce opportunities. Lucy, Leila, and Michael intersect in their idealistic conception of England and the US as ideal loci of achievement and opportunity where one can

“seek [his] fortune” (*The Final Passage* 19) and make a new start away from the crippling limitations of home. Looking forward to his impending journey to the US, Arthur in *The Final Passage* expects his new destination to be the “[l]and of milk and honey!” and the “[l]and of plenty” (80). Similarly, Leila feels confident in her new life in the metropolis, and expects England “to be a new start” (15). “For West Indians,” Frias suggests, “the tie--in the form of an umbilical cord reaching the Atlantic to Mother England--has historically been an invitation to the promised land, to a better life” (164).

Victim to a colonial dependency complex and unfounded dreams about migration, many a character in *The Final Passage* and *Lucy* share an idealistic conception of the outside world as a ‘Garden of Eden’ where ‘great expectations’ can be made real and the ‘hard times’ of home overcome. A naïve passenger in *The Final Passage* “knelt and kissed the ground” (143) when the ship he boards to “The Mother Country” reached London, the city of his protracted dreams; this gesture discloses the ‘sacred’ image the Western metropolis acquires in the heart of most immigrants, mainly the inexperienced ones. Another passenger betrays an ‘inborn’ infatuation with England, its glorious history, and achievements. This infatuation is expressed through a tremendous pride in “know[ing] anything about England,” “reading about the place” since the age of “five” (140), reading Churchill’s *History of the English People* and all the volumes of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and reciting the history of the Industrial Revolution (142).

The speaker’s obsession with England is suggestive of a subtle inferiority complex which colonial subjects and neo-colonial migrants often feel towards the Western metropolis. Fanon elaborates on the deep psychic structure of the black migrant and the way he perceives “The Mother Country”:

The Negro who knows the mother country is a demigod. [...] Many of them, after stays of varying length in metropolitan France, go home to be deified. [...] and the man who is leaving next week for France creates around himself a magic circle in which the words Paris, Marseille, Sorbonne, Pigalle become the keys to the vault. [...] In the eyes of those who have come to see him off he can read the evidence of his own mutation, his power. (19, 23)

The halo of grandeur ascribed to the Western metropolis also powerfully governs Lucy’s perceptions of America, the greatest country in the world in the view of most Caribbean islanders. Lucy’s passage to her new American ‘home’ is preceded by intense “day-dream[ing]” (3) about the lures of New York. This confession can be enlightening in this respect: “The undergarments that I wore were all new, bought for my journey” (4). Lucy’s preparations for her American journey mirror the extent of her hopefulness, and the “new” “undergarments” she bought for the occasion represent a rite of passage of sorts to enter her new adopted homeland. The New York Lucy reaches used to be the subject of her ceaseless day-dreaming:

As we drove along, someone would single out to me a famous building, an important street, a park, a bridge that when

built was thought to be a spectacle. In a day-dream I used to have, all these places were points of happiness to me, all these places were lifeboats to my small drowning soul, for I would imagine myself entering and leaving them, and just that--entering and leaving over and over again--would see me through a bad feeling I did not have a name for. (3)

The new sites Lucy's eyes eagerly fall on used to be the very objects of her intense imagination and dreaming. We easily capture the intenseness of Lucy's dreams about the country she had for long yearned to reach. Before reaching New York, Lucy's powerful imagination about its various "places" was a source of enormous pleasure to her: "all these places were points of happiness to me." Lucy's yearning for the freedom of movement--as can be guessed from the phrase "entering and leaving over and over again"--is what matters most for her as an immigrant. Besides, the verb "used to" suggests that Lucy's "day-dream[s]" about America was a habit in moments of despair. Lucy's confession "all these places were lifeboats to my small drowning soul" tells how dreams about a world she had never seen could provide her "soul" with psychic rest and mental escape. The pleasures of the 'brave American world' are indicated by her enumeration of its various constituents: "famous building," "important street," and breath-taking bridges and parks.

The Caribbean migrant's intense dreams about the magic of the metropolis are often made more intense by society's splendid views about 'abroad' as the locus of opportunity and luck. Long before she

reaches England, Leila starts, quite naively, to dream about London as the ideal place where her problems can be solved:

She was going to England to be with her mother. [...] May be as family it was what they needed? There was work there, wasn't there? And there was opportunity? [...] she knew Michael did not understand her or her desire to escape the life she was trapped into. [...] she knew that he too would come to England because Calvin needed a father, and because she did not want her mother to see her as having failed in something she did not wish her to partake of in the first place. But if the marriage did fail again in England, thought Leila, it would not be her fault. Nobody could blame her. (95)

It is very telling that the word "England" is reiterated thrice in this passage; a confirmation of Leila's fascination with a country she has not seen yet. As indicated by Leila's hopeful tone, England is perceived as a welcoming 'home' where she can find peace and "escape" the difficult "life she was trapped into." By coming to England, Leila hopes to be reunited with her sick mother, improve her reckless husband, and put an end to the failure of her marriage at home. England is, thus, endowed with a healing function not only for economic problems, but also for precarious family relationships. Most importantly, migration is not a matter of choice for Leila; leaving for "The Mother-Country" is rather an unavoidable undertaking if she wants to rebuild her shattered family anew: "Maybe as a family it was what they needed?" The association between "England" and "mother" ("She was going to England to be

with her mother") evokes tropes of "The Mother Country" and "Mother England," and alludes to the potential of "England" to protect, quite like a mother, its colonial offspring.

England is also pictured by Leila as a prosperous place that offers "work" and "opportunity" to its new-comers. The material lure of England is stressed underscored by Leila when she tells her husband the following: "There [is] work there," "And there [is] opportunity." In a similar hopeful manner, Leila points out to her friend Mille the many miracles of migration asserting that being in England "can be anything but good for a young family," and that England "is where all the opportunity is" (106). The material and economic lure of the country of relocation is often of crucial importance in the act of migration, and can be discerned in the experience of many characters in *The Final Passage*. For instance, Bradeth, Michael's closest friend, naively believes that "every colored man in England have [sic] a good job that can pay at least \$100 a week" (104). Bradeth's assumption articulates an unfounded misconception of England as a place where the crippling poverty of the small Caribbean world can be easily overcome. Michael's grandfather pronounces a similar speculative assumption about the outside world as the real remedy for the material destitution of the Caribbean, and advises his grandson on the many blessings of migration:

Ambition going teach you that you going has[sic] to flee from beauty, Michael. Panama? Costa Rica? Brazil? America?

England? Canada, maybe? West Indian man always have to leave his islands for there don't be nothing here for him. (42)

The "ambition" of the "West Indian man" is associated with the necessity ("have to") to try his chance in outside worlds such as "Panama," "Costa Rica," "Brazil," "America," "England," and "Canada." Except for its natural "beauty," the Caribbean has "nothing" to offer to its children, hence the need to "always" "leave" in search for better life conditions and opportunities. Regarding migration as a necessity is a Caribbean reality that has been confirmed by the large migration waves (mainly to Europe and America) the region has witnessed since the early 1950s. Contemporary mass migration out of the Caribbean has been essentially caused by the severe poverty that has for centuries taken hold of most Caribbean nations.

The Caribbean subject has most often been victim to a colonial dependency complex that has resulted in a constant craving for "The Mother Country" and its metropolis. This craving for the West has gone hand in hand with a perception of the native Caribbean space as a worthless and God-forsaken world where one's life is predictably barren and worthless. The migrant's low self-esteem and his/her inclination to find a better place in the metropolis are related to a colonial education that subtly alienated the colonial subject from his/her own culture and identity. "Because French education alienated the average black Martiniquean from his earlier cultural experiences," MazisiKunene suggests, "he inevitably

developed an aversion to his family and consequently to himself" (18). In *The Final Passage*, Leila's obsession with a migratory proclivity has made her irredeemably unhappy and dissatisfied with the island of her birth. She, thus, "desire[s] to erase from her mind all memory" of her past (16), and "[n]othing was allowed to remain in focus;" "all was either too distant or too close, unrecognizable, soon past and forgotten" (16). It is, in fact, very telling that Leila "takes as little as possible with her to remind her of the island" (15) of her birth. This gesture articulates an aspiration to put the past behind and liberate the self from the realities and circumstances of the former life. The words "erase," "distant," "unrecognizable," and "forgotten" insinuate to Leila's desire to expunge her past in her native island and make a fresh start in what she believes to be the 'protective' "Mother Country." The migrant's discontent with home and his/her hunger, so to speak, for an alternate belonging in the centre can be further studied through the following extract from the novel in focus:

We not buying return, you know. We both decide it's a new life for us over there so we just going come back when we come back. Not enough space to grow or do things here. [...] It's just that I don't want to spend the rest of my life looking for small work when I know I can get big work if I want it. Me, I want a car and a big house and a bit of power under my belt, like any man does want. This country breed too many people who just cut cane in season and happy to be rum-jumbie out of it. (103)

Michael evokes his pending journey to England and the way his "new life" there will look like. He is 'dazzled' by dreams of migration and a wishful thinking about the pleasures of living in England. The expressions "new life," "big work," "a car," "a big house," and "a bit of power" bring to the fore Michael's certainty about his forthcoming good life in the metropolitan centre. The many comforts of Michael's new life are suggested by his affirmative tone and the emphatic use of the verb "decide." Michael's confidence in the upcoming pleasures wraps the new destination in an idyllic image, and creates what we might call 'nostalgia for the future'; as if Michael had formerly belonged to the world he is now aspiring to enter for the first time. Possessed by baseless expectations, Michael perceives England as the very antithesis of his Caribbean home island. By underestimating his native island and glorifying England as the saviour from the hardships of his former life, Michael articulates a tremendous schizophrenic split between his life in the Caribbean and his dream about the West, which is, in fact, one of the major results of the colonial experience and education. In the forthcoming section, Michael's zeal to enter the Western world of his countless dreams will be tested against the reality of his arrival to London and his endeavours to find his way in the complex world of the exilic metropolis.

The Dis/pleasures of Exile

The disorientation and shock of arrival migrants often face in their countries of relocation are central to the narratives of

Lucy and *The Final Passage*. The utopian image migrants usually draw of the abundant fortunes of the metropolis starts to fall apart once they set foot on their new adopted 'homes,' thus awakening them to the harsh realities of exile and the value of the real home they left behind. In *The Atlantic Sound*, Phillipsexplores the disillusionment of the early generation of Caribbean migrants to the Mother Country: "shortly after disembarkation, the West Indian migrants of the fifties and sixties discovered that the realities of this new world[were]more challenging than they had anticipated" (15). The challenging realities of exile are, in fact, evident in the experience of Leila and Michael as soon as they set foot in "The Mother Country." To her greatest disillusionment, Leila spends her first night in "The Mother Country" in a "bathroom," while Michael shares the bed "head to foot" with his friend Earl (150). Leila's journey to England lasted two weeks, and this is what she immediately faces when the "ship shudder[s] to a halt":

For the first time in two weeks the ship shuddered to a halt. Leila looked at England, but everything seemed bleak. She quickly realized she would have to learn a new word; overcast. There were no green mountains, there were no colourful women with baskets on their heads selling peanuts or bananas or mangoes, there were no trees, no white houses on the hills, no hills, no wooden houses by the shoreline, and the sea was not blue and there was no beach, and there were no clouds, just one big cloud, and they had arrived. (142)

Leila's disillusionment and shock of arrival to "The Mother Country" cannot go unnoticed in the above passage. As the ship reaches London, Leila discovers that the first word she must learn is "overcast," an indication of her permanent exile in the country of her dreams. The remarkable reiteration of the adverb of negation "not" and the negative determiner "no" suggests the fall of Leila's dreams about a warm welcome in the 'adoptive country.' As the ship comes close to its 'promised' destination, Leila is struck by the sight of London as a place where "everything seemed bleak." The absence of "green mountains," "trees," and beaches suggests the thick austerity and lifelessness of this new place. The gap between Leila's two worlds (i.e. home island and London) is so wide that she predicts a life of lasting exile in the country she for long aspired to reach. Underlining the disparities between Leila's two worlds suggests how she has traded, so to speak, the pleasures of home with the bleakness and disorientation of the new place of relocation. Leila's division between the conflicting spaces of home and exile is further explored in this extract from the novel:

On the fifteenth day the wind died and Leila saw land; the high and irregular cliffs of England through the cold grey mist of the English channel. She clasped together the collar of her light cotton dress and shivered. Overhead a thin fleet of clouds cast a bleak shadow across the deck, and the sluggish water swelled gently, then slackened. Leila stood at the front of the ship with six or seven more. Nobody spoke. It was still early

and they waited, as if trapped in a glass case, while the other voyagers were still getting up, or feeling sick, or sleeping. The thin white strip of cliff grew vertically as an hour passed and the ship edged its way towards land. Then the word spread and the group multiplied to a crowd and Leila felt herself being pushed. (137)

This passage illustrates the rift between the migrant's hopes and the realities of their exile. Leila's first view of "The Mother Country" is desolate and disillusioning; the sight of the "irregular cliffs of England" generates negative attitudes towards the new place Leila has dreamed about for so long. The "cold grey mist of the English channel," the "fleet of clouds," and the "bleak shadow across the deck" signal the cold welcome and further disillusionments Leila will have to grapple with. The chilliness of the new place (conveyed by such words as "wind," "cold," "mist," and "clouds") stands in sharp contrast with the warmth and idyllic natural beauty of the island of her birth: the "bright semi-circle of the capital" that "was reflected in the water like an elaborate candelabra," "the dew that prepared to dampen the earth," "the crickets [that] cried out" (19), and the "small proud island" "overburdened with vegetation and complacency" (20); all this "had been her home" (20), which Leila had exchanged with the "cold grey mist" of the new world she has ultimately embarked on.

Leila's disillusionment with "The Mother Country" is also experienced by Lucy when she first comes to the American metropolis. Lucy's division between irreconcilable

worlds (the island of her birth and New York) can be examined through this extract:

I was no longer in a tropical zone, and this realization now entered my life like a flow of water dividing formerly dry and solid ground, creating two banks, one of which was my past--so familiar and predictable that even my unhappiness made me happy now just to think of it--the other my future, a grey blank, and overcast seascape on which rain was falling and no boats were in sight. I was no longer in a tropical zone and I felt cold inside and out, the first time such a sensation had come over me. (5-6)

Lucy's realization that she is no longer in "the tropical zone" deeply saddens her. As she enters the "gray," "blank," and "cold" world of New York, Lucy realizes the extent of loss her migration has given rise to. The certainties of home ("familiar" and "predictable") are soon shattered and replaced by a cold uncertain life. The cold Lucy faces in her new milieu is not only physical, but also deeply psychological, hence the significance of her confession: "I felt cold inside and out." This revelation makes more sense when juxtaposed with the opening sentence of the passage: "I was no longer in a tropical zone." Lucy reiterates this sentence twice to emphasize the loss she feels after leaving her country in a "tropical zone" and choosing to come to a "cold" environment. The interplay between "cold" and "tropical" suggests Lucy's shift from the warmth of home and family to the coldness of exile and un-belonging. Lucy's acute dislocation is also confirmed by the word

“overcast,” a new form of identity she has to adjust herself to while in New York.

As Kincaid's narrative gradually unfolds, Lucy's disenchantment with her new 'home' escalates further and further. Lucy understands that her dreams about America are now ironically mocked by its “ordinary, dirty, worn down” places (4). Thus, dreams about a better life are shattered against the grim reality of the spaces Lucy formerly valued, and the great 'American Dream' is steadily ridiculed by the randomness of the “ordinary” and “dirty” places of New York. In fact, it does not take long for Lucy to realize the following: “It was not my first bout with the disappointment of reality and it would not be my last” (4). Lucy's cynical tone about the sad “reality” she embarks on foreshadows the further disillusionment (“would not be my last”) she will have to struggle against as long as she stays in New York.

Besides, Lucy gradually finds out the death-like nature of the places she has for long esteemed and looked forward to reaching. The big lake whose “origin” and “history” were taught to her as part of her colonial geography classes turns out to be a mere “body of water” unworthy to “make a song about” (35). To Lucy's greatest disillusionment, this mythologized lake “looked so ordinary, grey, dirty,” and “-unfriendly” (35) testifying to the fragility of her idyllic visualizations of the American world of her dreams. The new setting (with its bleak places, dim colours, and cutting cold) foreshadows the boundless alienation Lucy will be subject to in her new American 'home.' The “fixture of fantasy” that

overwhelmed Lucy prior to her arrival to the US steadily ebbs away giving room to a sharp “disappointment” with the new “reality” of cold exile (4).

The migrants' shock of arrival is often a preparation to the deeper rejection and racism they face in the country of relocation. Counter to their expectations that “both worlds might belong to them” and that Britain “would remain true to her promise” of “protect[ing] the children of her empire,” migrants face instead outward racism and marginality (Phillips, *The Atlantic Sound*, 15). “[M]uch to their dismay,” Phillips adds, “they discovered that the mother country had little, if any, desire to embrace her colonial offspring” (15). Indeed, the exile's real ordeal starts when he/she begins to seek employment, housing, health services, and integration in the new society. Marlene Nourbese Philip explores the host country's impermeableness to the black migrant, particularly in the English and Canadian contexts:

The perceptions and attitudes of the dominant society, however, must also be taken into account in the dynamics of belonging and becoming. And there is nothing in either English or Canadian society that suggests that African people are particularly welcome by the host society. From the establishment--location and number--of immigration offices overseas, to the policing of Black people domestically, including their difficulty in obtaining adequate employment, housing and education, the evidence of the lack of welcome, if not open hostility, is there. (18)

The “lack of welcome,” “open hostility,” and failure to fit into the host country’s social, cultural, and economic fabric constitute the major obstacles against which migrants in *The Final Passage* and *Lucy* struggle. Counter to their assumptions about the host country’s warm welcome and ample opportunities, the migrant’s life takes reverse paths within the appalling realities of exile. The racist signs “COLORED QUOTA FULL” (167) and “IF YOU WANT A NIGGER NEIGHBOUR VOTE LABOUR” (122) Leila encounters while seeking work and housing in London exert a severe “emotional execution” (128) on her, and prevent her “from making contact with others in a society controlled by those who wish to cling to their allegedly unchanging metanarratives of nation and tradition” (Nyman 143). As a matter of fact, the mentioned slogans and racist attitudes they clearly divulge were part and parcel of the black migrants’ realities in Britain in the 1950s when “verbal” and “physical abuse” represented “the norm for Caribbean migrants” (Phillips, *A New World Order* 269). These prejudiced slogans alert Leila to her lasting un-belonging and England’s impermeableness to the black outsider. The slogan “IF YOU WANT A NIGGER NEIGHBOUR VOTE LABOUR” reflects how the image of the black migrant can be exploited by politicians and political discourse in general. In fact, the slogan “Keep Britain White” became very popular in the British political scene when the Conservative government heavily deployed it to win the 1955 elections (271).

Leila’s painful experience in “The Mother Country” evokes the dilemma of being a black migrant in a Western metropolitan culture and society. Being Caribbean, black, and migrant is the worst combination an individual can wrestle with in a racially-divided Britain. Such an identity generates a set of hostilities, and is often associated with crime, theft, violence, drugs, unemployment, and second-rate citizenship. Phillips explains how blackness has been the major reason behind the blunt marginalization of Afro-Caribbean migrants in Britain:

The greatest blow to their soul was the ‘news’ that because of the colour of their skin, they would inevitably experience difficulty being accepted as British. This fact cast a particularly dark cloud over their lives, and over the lives of countless thousands of other West Indians who had arrived in the mother country clutching a British passport. (241)

The black migrant’s division between conflicting worlds and his/her inability to fit within an exilic present that refuses to be owned characterize Lucy’s struggle for integration in her new American ‘home.’ Lucy’s shock of arrival to the presumed ‘homeland’ is made even worse by the unequivocal racism and exclusion she finds herself bluntly exposed to. Indeed, dreams of integration in the new country of dwelling are opposed by the host society’s impervious repulsion toward the outsider. The host community’s discriminatory attitudes towards the coloured migrant make it all the more clear to Lucy that New York could never become home to her. Separated from

the island of her birth, Lucy is from the beginning called "the Visitor" by Mariah and Lewis, her white employers. Lucy's marginality in her employers' household and her position as "a hyper-marginalized subject" (Das1954) among her host white family can be further studied through this extract from the novel under scrutiny:

It was at dinner one night not long after I began to live with them that they began to call me the Visitor. They said I seemed not to be a part of things, as if I didn't live in their house with them, as if they weren't like a family to me, as if I were just passing through, just saying one long Hallo!, and soon would be saying a quick Goodbye! (13)

The above passage maps out the way Lucy remains an outcast in a profoundly psychic sense. The label "Visitor" Lucy is granted in Mariah's and Lewis's household awakens her to her marginal status in the space her new family will forever refuse to share with her. The label "Visitor" foreshadows Lucy's temporary stay and later dismissal by her 'adoptive family' as confirmed by further developments in the plot. Lucy's un-belonging to her new 'family' is outwardly confirmed by her employers' avowal that she "seemed not to be a part of things," an assertion of her outside-ness and marginality. Despite the pity Lucy elicits in her white employers, this coloured servant from the fringes of the world remains an outsider par excellence. Mariah's attempts to consider her a "friend" are blown apart by her enduring otherness: a coloured servant "from the islands" (56). Mariah's "insist[ence] that we be friends," Lucy remembers, "had

apparently not worked out very well" (143), and she ended up "insisting that I be the servant and she the master" (143). By mapping out the social functions of each side ("master" versus "servant"), Mariah reminds Lucy of the hierarchical racial rules she must prudently observe and abide by while serving this white family.

Lucy's division between a desolate present, a bygone past, and an uncertain future gives rise to an acute feeling of abandonment and loneliness: "I shall always be this way--all alone in the world" (93). Dreams about a welcoming home are completely shattered and replaced instead by a bleak feeling of exile and loneliness. In a letter she interestingly addresses to herself, Lucy articulates her utter aloneness and seclusion and the host community's total indifference to her exilic predicament:

At the top of the page I wrote my full name: Lucy Josephine Potter. At the sight of it, many thoughts rushed through me, but I could write only this: 'I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it.' And then as I looked at this sentence a great wave of shame came over me and I wept and wept so much that the tears fell on the page and caused all the words to become one great big blur. (164)

It is important to note that these are the concluding lines of Kincaid's entire novel. Lucy's bitterness cannot be missed, and her thoughts tell the way unfounded dreams about America are shattered one after the other. The verb "wish" suggests that Lucy has been merely hoping for the impossible. In this letter, Lucy is both the addresser and the addressee, an indication of her utter

loneliness and desolation. Lucy's failure to love and be loved by the people she lives with indicates her utter rejection and outsider-ness. In Lucy's new world, love is so rare a luxury that the mere thought of it triggers "a great wave of shame" as if Lucy were yearning for forbidden pleasures; love exists in another place, beyond what Lucy can afford to reach by the time the narrative moves to a close. Lucy's story ends with the abundant tears ("I wept and wept so much") she heavily sheds causing every single word of the letter she writes "to become one great big blur." Lucy's tears shed light on the extent of her failure in the new adopted 'home' and her regret at having chosen a life in exile. The tears also imply a subtle nostalgia for the homeland; "the place that [she] came from," and "longed to be back in" (6). In what is to come, I intend to closely investigate the manifestation, implications, and functions of the mentioned nostalgia for the exilic subject once dreams of integration in the country of relocation fail to materialize.

Home: A/gain and A/ways

The revaluation of home and the nostalgia for the place and people of origin are central to the experience of migration in general. Said proposes an elaborate analysis of the relationship between the exile and his/her original home:

For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. (442)

As dreams of a better life in the metropolis fail to materialize, Leila and Lucy experience an intense nostalgia for their places of birth as an escape from their exilic entrapment. For instance, Leila's search for a better life in "The Mother Country" is crushed against the many ordeals she grapples with in the hostile world of London; England, "in whom she had placed so much of her hope," "no longer held for her the attraction" (203) she had for long yearned for. In reaction, Leila decides to start off yet another journey back to the island of her birth where belonging and refitting might cure the wounds of her disastrous exile: "At least the small island she had left behind had safety and two friends" (203).

Likewise, Lucy's affectionate perception of the place she came from gets particularly intense after the many repulsions of her exile. In the face of the thick blackness that wraps her life in the cold American metropolis, Lucy finds refuge in the memories of her Caribbean home to escape the appalling conditions of her exilic loneliness and seclusion. This extract sheds light on Lucy's nostalgic evocation of the home she once considered worthless:

What a surprise this was to me, that I longed to be back in the place that I came from, that I longed to sleep in a bed I had outgrown, that I longed to be with people whose smallest, most natural gesture would call up in me such a rage that I longed to see them all dead at my feet. Oh, I had imagined that with my one swift act—leaving home and coming to this new place—I could leave behind me, as if it were an old garment

never to be worn again, my sad thoughts, my sad feelings, and my discontent with life in general as it presented itself to me. In the past, the thought of being in my present situation had been a comfort, but now I did not even have this to look forward to, and so I lay down on my bed and dreamt I was eating a bowl of pink mullet and green figs cooked in coconut milk, and it had been cooked by my grandmother, which was why the taste of it pleased me so, for she was the person I liked best in all the world and those were the things I liked best to eat also. (6-7)

Initially seeking emancipation from the unhappy circumstances of her past life in Antigua, Lucy realizes that she is inextricably bound to it. What used to be a subject of hatred has now become a source of adorable remembrance. The past Lucy formerly neglected as "an old garment never to be worn again" has now become a focus of nostalgic reminiscence and evocation. Lucy's nostalgic tone is expressed by the verbs "imagined," "dreamt," and "longed" (reiterated four times) thus articulating a profound eagerness to be reunited with her former life in Antigua. The juxtaposition of Lucy's "new place" and her pre-migratory past life in the Caribbean bespeaks the centrality of home and its interference with her present in exile. As Lamming suggests, migrants are often "subject to and dependent on influences from their place of birth" (4). It is only by looking at things from a distance that Lucy realizes the falsity of her assumptions about both home and migration. Lucy's crushed hopes about a better life in the new 'adoptive' country bounce her back, as it were, to the many

pleasures of home, which she formerly overlooked and regarded as "an old garment never to be worn again."

Repulsed by the impermeable host country where she occupies a mere border status, Lucy has nothing but the memories of her home and family to sustain her. In fact, Lucy regrets her "one swift act" of "leaving home and coming to this new place" (6), and blames herself for not caring to know "everything" about her people and island of birth: "people in my position in the world should know everything about the place they are from" (134-135). This reconciliation with the place of origin, despite its limitations and shortcomings, is essential for shielding the migrant's identity and restoring his/her psychic balance in exile. The significance of the migrant's reevaluation of home and his/her desire to reconnect with the place of origin are elaborately dwelt upon by James Clifford: "The language of Diaspora is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home. This sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing" (453). As a matter of fact, the migrant's reevaluation of his/her home and nostalgic recollections of the pre-migratory past are defence strategies against the many challenges and frustrations of exile. It is only after dreams about a better life in exile begin to fall apart that the migrant starts to re-consider his/her conceptions and attitudes of the homeland as a place that is always ready to welcome its children back.

Conclusion

In this article, I mainly purported to explore the dilemmas and frustrations of being a Caribbean black female migrant in the West. Through a text-based study of two Afro-Caribbean novels (Phillips's *The Final Passage* and Kincaid's *Lucy*) I investigated how the idealistic pictures and dreams migrants often construct of Europe and the US are often shattered by the bleak realization that they are not welcome in the new host country. Escaping their countries' poverty, lack of opportunities, political corruption, and post-independence economic inequalities, Caribbean migrants to Europe or North America have often faced "racist discrimination, second-class citizenship and alienation" (Birbalsingh x). Indeed, as soon as he/she reaches his/her new country of relocation, the black migrant promptly realizes that the Western "legacy from slavery and colonialism" is still fiercely at work, and that "the accumulated negative message of the centuries [is] the same" (Sutcliffe 6).

As Leila's and Lucy's experiences can tell, the repulsion and impermeableness of the new country of dwelling often nail down the black migrant into a borderline existence, with all the exclusion, racism, and hostility such an existence entails. Leila's and Lucy's attempts to reinvent themselves anew away from the crippling limitations of their Caribbean homes have utterly failed, and their dreams for a better life never materialized. While trying to remove themselves from their troubled poor homes (for instance, Lucy states that "I would not come home ever" (128)), these female

migrants find out that they are inextricably bound to the places and people they had left behind. Leila's likely home return and Lucy's irresistible nostalgia for the place where she wants to die ("I wanted to die in a hot place" (141)) confirm that home can neither be totally left behind nor swapped over with new borrowed countries. This resilient attachment to roots and places of origin is also powerfully expressed by the writers themselves; after an initial subterranean revulsion, and subsequent departure, from her home island Antigua, Kincaid regretfully asserts that she "would be nothing if [she] hated it [i.e. Antigua]" ("From Antigua to America" 140). Despite a life of exile away from St. Kitts, the island where he was born, Phillips has always called attention to the umbilical attachment that binds him even to the entire Caribbean world².

When *Lucy* and *The Final Passage* move towards their closures, Lucy and Leila are still migrants in the US and England, respectively. Their return to the islands of their birth is evoked as a mere wishful thinking that has not materialized yet. The reader is left with many interrogations about the promises of a possible happy return to the native country after the many atrocities of exile. One might wonder if Leila's and Lucy's probable return to their home islands, if it is going to happen at all, would not be fraught with further disappointments and frustrations. In fact, the migrant's relocation

² Phillips expresses his strong attachment to the Caribbean in the following words: "It has always kept me sane, the fact that I was born in the Caribbean. I will always pay my dues towards that" ("The Legacy of Othello" 187).

into the native country can run opposite to the nostalgic idealization of home.

References

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Birbalsingh, Frank, ed. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
- Boehmer, Elleke. "Response to Caryl Phillips's 'Border Crossings.'" *Displacement, Asylum, Migration: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures*. Ed. Kate E. Tunstall, K. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 226-231.
- Brathwaite, Kamau. *Roots*. Michigan: U of Michigan Press, 1993.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 2006. 451-454.
- Das, Pratima. "Narratives of Rage and Rehabilitation: Hyper Marginality and the Strategies of Resistance in Jamaica Kincaid's *My Brother and Mr. Potter*." *European Academic Research* 8 (2013): 1953-1974.
- Doring, Tobias. *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1952. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967.
- Frias, Maria. "Out of The Kumbla: Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985)." *On Writing (And) Race in Contemporary Britain*. Eds. Fernando Galvan and Mercedes Bengochea. Alcala: Servicio De Publicaciones de la U.A.H, 1999. 163-170.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *Lucy*. New York: Plume, 1990.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. "From Antigua to America." Interview with Frank Birbalsingh. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. Ed. Frank Birbalsingh. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 138-151.
- Kunene, Mazisi. Introduction. *Return to my Native Land*. By Aimé Césaire. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969. 7-33.
- Lamming, George. "Concepts of the Caribbean." Interview with Frank Birbalsingh. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. Ed. Frank Birbalsingh. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 1-14.
- Ledent, Bénédicte. "Crossing a 'Human River of Shattered Lives': Caryl Phillips's Diasporic Fiction/Vision." *The Literary Criterion* 35.1-2 (2000): 157-169.
- Nava, Mica. "Thinking Internationally: Gender and Racial Others in Postwar Britain." *Third Text* 20.6 (2006): 671-682.
- Nyman, Jopi. *Home, Identity, and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009.
- Philip, Marlene Nourbese. *Frontiers: Selected Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture: 1984-1992*. Stratford, Ontario: The Mercury Press, 1992.
- Phillips, Caryl. "Border Crossings." *Displacement, Asylum, Migration: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures*. Ed. Kate E. Tunstall, K. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 210-225.

Phillips, Caryl. "The Legacy of Othello, Part (1)." Interview with Frank Birbalsingh. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. Ed. Frank Birbalsingh. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 183-190.

Phillips, Caryl. *A New World Order*. London: Vintage, 2002.

Phillips, Caryl. *The Atlantic Sound*. London: Vintage, 2001.

Phillips, Caryl. *The Final Passage*. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Said, Edward. "The Mind of Winter." *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill

Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 2006. 439-442.

Sutcliffe, David. "Introduction." *The Language of the Black Experience: Cultural Expression through Word and Sound in the Caribbean and Black Britain*. Eds. David Sutcliffe and Ansel Wong. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 1-12.

Taran, Patrick. "Human Rights of Migrants: Challenges of the New Decade". *International Migration*, 38.6 (2000): 7-51

