

The Post-war Jamaican Immigration to Britain; The Windrush Generation: Were They Immigrants or Refugees in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*

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Abstract

After World War II, the immigration from the West Indies to the United Kingdom started and the post-war Caribbean immigrants moved to Britain. They tried to survive in British society with their fragmented identities but they were sometimes misrecognised as refugees in social life. Considering the Windrush migration in the post-war era, the Jamaicans, who immigrated to London, came to the fore. They had to come through some obstacles through the process of recognition. The position of these Jamaican immigrants in Britain was problematic despite their legal recognition, because they suffered from cultural trauma as a result of their identity crisis. Regarding the post-war Caribbean immigration to Britain in literature, Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* should be highlighted. In this autobiographical work, as one of the representatives of Windrush generation in Britain, the novelist's own experiences can be observed. Levy's social, racial and cultural fragmentation as a hybrid, who was torn between her Jamaican background and English nationality, led her to focus on the lives of the Caribbean immigrants, who have tried to be socially recognised in British society. Even though in the post-war epoch these immigrants were officially accepted in Britain, some of them regarded themselves as refugees, who were misrecognised or non-recognised due to their hybridity. Therefore, in this paper, the process through which the Caribbean immigrants in Britain were legally recognised, together with their social, mental and cultural displacement, will be explored by analysing Levy's *Small Island* in the light of the novelist's own experiences.

Keywords: Caribbean Immigration, Post-war Britain, Windrush Generation, Andrea Levy, *Small Island*

1. Introduction

In the post-war British society, due to the insufficiency of workers in the working fields after World War II, British nation allowed Caribbean people to immigrate to Britain and legally accepted them in the country so as to compensate the labour shortage. Particularly, with the Nationality Act of 1948, people from the colonies or former colonies of Britain started to move to Britain including the Jamaican immigrants coming to England on S.S. Empire Windrush (McMann, 2018). Even though they were eager to be a part of British society and enjoy the Western way of life, they were disillusioned after experiencing cultural problems in the UK. They tried to survive in British society with their fragmented identities and they felt that they were misrecognised as refugees in social life. Considering the Windrush migration in the post-war era, in 1948, the Jamaicans, who immigrated to London, came to the fore. The experiences of Windrush generation in London reflected the in-betweenness and hybridity of these immigrants together with their cultural adaptation problems in Britain. Although they were officially accepted to contribute to the British economy, some of them felt displaced as if they were coming not as immigrants but as refugees and struggled to be recognised socially. In other words, while migrants or immigrants leave their own countries by their own free will and prefer to move to another country permanently for a better future, refugees are forced to leave their homelands and try to find shelter anywhere without considering the advantages or disadvantages of that environment. In this regard, the Jamaican immigrants in the post-war England asserted that they had to overcome some barriers through the process of their recognition. Their position in Britain was problematic despite their legal recognition, because they suffered from cultural trauma as a result of their identity crisis, as a consequence they did not experience the sense of belonging as an immigrant but felt as refugees, who did not have a sense of belonging.

Dwelling on the reason behind the move from the West Indies to the United Kingdom in the post-war period, it can be argued that many British people died during World War II and there was labour shortage in Britain. However, while contributing to the development of English society, the immigrants would also enjoy some rights the government allotted to them. Therefore, both of the countries would benefit from this immigration. Thus, the ship 'Windrush' brought these immigrants from Jamaica and other islands to Britain in the post-war era. For the workers coming from Caribbean countries, it was an opportunity to achieve a better social and economic position, so they were eager to immigrate so as to get rid of poverty, insufficient living and working conditions in their isolation from the opportunities of modern life. In this regard, "[t]he most visible and arguably most significant Commonwealth migration to Britain occurred late in the evening of 21 June 1948 at Tilbury dock in Essex, with the arrival of an ex-German troopship, The Monte Rosa, more commonly known as the Empire Windrush" (Monrose, 2020). This migration reinforced the idea of a multicultural society in which cultural background of these groups differ conspicuously. In line with the

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encounter of the British and the Caribbean, though some cultural problems occurred, it was an inevitability for them to unite; on the one hand, Britain was dependent on labourers in the chaotic environment of the post-war society; on the other hand, Caribbean people were dependent on the better employment opportunities in Britain after suffering from poverty and unemployment in their own country.

When they first arrived in Britain, they were hopeful about their future, because they were in the land of their dreams, the centre of wealth, progress, modernisation and various opportunities. However, after becoming a part of the British society, they started to feel fragmented, isolated, alienated due their cultural adaptation problems. Even if they were officially accepted, they could not easily adapt into the Western culture and experienced culture shock along with identity problems. Due to their identity crisis, they could not attain what they really imagined before their arrival and they recognised that coming to Britain did not mean that they would lead their lives in luxury without any hardships. Despite the legal rights and acceptance that the British government allotted to them, their social adaptation problems caused them to be disheartened.

In this respect, the multicultural structure in the post-war British society changed the social structure of community and caused cultural separation. Though this structure was supposed to create cultural and social union between the immigrants and the British, it led to contradictions due to the differences in terms of culture and race. Nevertheless, the immigrants' eagerness to move to the British society, shows their aspiration to attain British nationality to gain social rights. As Adachi points out, thanks to the national identity shared by the majority and the minority, the immigrants and the British started to communicate with each other, participated in common social environments, so multiculturalism was expected to contribute to the cultural recognition among different cultural groups (2011). Nonetheless, this cultural interaction, because of the identity crisis experienced by the immigrants, did not result in an entirely peaceful and harmonious society in the post-war period.

The fragmented identity of the immigrants caused them to be torn between their own culture and the British culture. Despite the fact that they aimed at adapting into the English living style, they could not completely keep up with the Western way of life due their hybridity. As Panayi also asserts, these immigrants brought their own ethnic identities from their homelands and tried to combine their values with the Western norms (2014). In this manner, it is worth analysing the inner conflicts, cultural fragmentation and culture shock of the immigrants in the post-war English society so as to identify the problematic condition of the Windrush immigrants in the UK after World War II.

2. The Voices of the Windrush Immigrants

Focusing on the interviews with the Windrush generation and their memoirs, what is noteworthy is that they experienced both optimism and pessimism, victory and defeat, joy and distress. Their dilemma reveals that they were looking forward to achieving prosperity with remarkable prospects in a comfortable environment, yet their culture shock led them to challenge identity crisis, feelings of otherness, hybridity and estrangement. Colin Grant, as a British writer with Jamaican parents, in his work, *Home Coming: Voices of the Windrush Generation*, illuminates the inner conflicts of the Windrush generation along with their inadequate environment in the West Indies, their aspirations in the UK and their discouragement.

One of the immigrants, Ethlyn Adams, in Grant's work, reveals the inevitability to move to England as follows: "In Jamaica at the time there was high unemployment and no work. You see the boys leaving colleges and going down to the store Monday morning with their certificates in their hands but there was no work" (2020). The job opportunities in the UK impressed the Jamaican, so they wanted to work and earn money in England and get rid of poverty. Even the educated Jamaican could not find professions in their own country, therefore they decided to have a fresh start in a new environment. In addition, another Jamaican immigrant, Linette May Simms emphasises the necessity to immigrate along these remarks: "All I wanted was to leave Jamaica because I thought England was a better place than Jamaica, because the English people in Jamaica live so well and I thought I would live like that" (2020). What heartened these immigrants after recognising the high economic standards of the English in Jamaica, as seen in the quotation, was to improve their own living and working standards in England and to lead their lives like the English.

Similarly, in Grant's book, Ken Morgan, a Jamaican immigrant as well, stresses the chaos that appeared because of unemployment in the country: "It's a small country, population less than three million. We export people. If there are no jobs here it creates a lot of problems. It creates violence (2020). Due to the scarcity of employment in Jamaica, people started to commit crimes and violence, as a result disorder and uprisings started to destroy the peace in the country, consequently the threatening condition also directed people to consider leaving their country for a better future. Likewise, according to Victor Williams, another Jamaican interviewed by Grant, England was like heaven when he was a child as he explains: "Well, England to me really when I went home, it was more or less like a land of paradise, happiness, everything that is gay, and you could live ever so comfortable without any form of misery or anything like that [...]" (2020). When he was little, he thought that anything associated with positive characteristics symbolised England and once a person attained the chance of going to England, s/he would be cheerful and peaceful forever without any sorrow.

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People in the UK, according to his feelings during his childhood, would be exempt from any kind of torment or destitution.

In the same work, the disillusionment of the Jamaican immigrants in England after their immigration is also depicted, in other words, their perspective towards the life in England changed after undergoing identity crisis and culture shock in the UK as Derek O'Connor, a Jamaican immigrant utters: "I was captivated. I always knew something was lacking, but I couldn't identify it. I never felt totally at home in England. But once I came back to Jamaica I felt, yes, now the pieces are fitting together" (2020). Even though, he was enchanted by the opportunities in England, at the same time he suffered from his fragmented identity and hybridity, thus only when he returned back to Jamaica, he understood what was missing in his soul. Furthermore, the Trinidadian writer, V.S. Naipaul, also stated his inner conflict and contradictory feelings, reflecting both his joy and frustration after immigrating to England: "I was like a man entering the world of a novel, a book; entering the real world. I grew to feel that grandeur belonged to the past; that I had come to England at the wrong time; that I had come too late to find the England, the heart of empire, which I had created in my fantasy" (Grant 2020). His interpretation of England shows that on the one hand, when he first arrived in the UK, he felt that he was entering the world of fiction, full of marvels and surprises, but after spending some time and encountering cultural trauma, he indicated that the country that he had imagined was just an illusion and the real one did not offer him that illusionary environment, consequently he thought that he was too late to find the English society that he had created in his dreams. Therefore, these immigrants experienced divergent feelings about the same culture and environment. Despite their optimistic perspective in the early period of their immigration, they could not help suffering from the pessimism dominating their lives after their immigration.

Moreover, Monroe, in his work, *Black Men in Britain: An Ethnographic Portrait of the Post-Windrush Generation*, also portrays the memoirs of the Windrush generation. One of the immigrants, interviewed by the author, Mr Gold, indicates that he suffered from identity crisis, fragmentation and hybridity because of his cultural clash. Another immigrant, Nev, utters the complexities he experienced in sports among the Westerners, because of his religion. In addition, Red, points out the hardships he faced due to his cultural hybridity and racial difference in the postcolonial Western society leading him to psychological problems. Also, the immigrant, Miss Marie, who, after her marriage, moved to England and had to leave her children behind for working opportunities in the West, emphasises the difficulties she underwent (Monroe 2020).

Likewise, Wardle and Obermuller in their interview with the immigrants, in their work, "Windrush Generation," highlight the cultural and racial discrimination experienced by them. For instance, Ms K, an immigrant refers to her period in the UK after leaving Jamaica as follows: "One day I was in a shop and the security held on to me as I was about to leave the

shop, accusing me of shoplifting. The police subsequently arrived and I was taken to the police station. The police did not find any stolen items; however, when they tried to run a background check on me, I was told nothing was found” (2018). She claims that she was accused of theft due to her racial and cultural difference and then it was revealed that she was not guilty. In this regard, she feels that she is excluded from the British society after being subjected to prejudice.

Considering the interviews made with the Windrush immigrants, it can be asserted that they moved to the West for the sake of better opportunities. However, after becoming a part of the Western society, they experienced difficulties in social life because of their different cultural background, therefore they felt, in some aspects, isolated, alienated and lonely. On the one hand, they were suffering from poverty and lack of education and employment alternatives in their homelands, on the other hand, after their immigration, in the Western society, they had to struggle with identity crisis and cultural adaptation problems.

3. The Reflection of Windrush Generation in *Small Island*

The traumatic experience of Windrush generation has also been depicted in literature. Reflecting the post-war Caribbean immigration to British society, Andrea Levy’s novel *Small Island* (2004) should be analysed to discuss multiculturalism in the post-war British society. The novelist, as a hybrid in England, created this autobiographical work and wanted to portray the cultural conflicts experienced not only by her parents but also by the Windrush generation in general. In her novel, the efforts of the Jamaican immigrants to be recognised in London, can be observed. Her own fragmented identity is reflected through these Jamaican characters in her work.

Levy was torn between her Jamaican background and English nationality. Her father emigrated to England on the Empire Windrush and then her mother followed her husband (Andermahr, 2019). Even if her aim was to shed light on the cultural trauma of her own parents in *Small Island*, the issues foregrounded in the work epitomise the problematic condition of those belonging to the Windrush generation. As a matter of fact, “[...] using Windrush 1948 as a narratological marker for the before and after identity transformation of Britain, Levy allows her characters to unfold individually, in their own voices, the indigenous elements that shaped their respective world” (James, 2010). Therefore, the cultural clash experienced by the characters in the novel represents the author’s own experiences as a hybrid. The Jamaican characters in her novel, as immigrants in the post-war epoch, undergo isolation and displacement in London. Even though in the post-war age the immigrants were officially identified in Britain, some of them regarded themselves as refugees, who were misrecognised or non-recognised due to their hybridity. Therefore, in this paper, the process through which the Caribbean immigrants in Britain were legally recognised, will be analysed,

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together with their social, mental and cultural dislocation, by focusing on Levy's *Small Island* in the light of the novelist's own experiences.

Levy, in her novel, *Small Island*, illustrates the cultural trauma of the Jamaican immigrants in the post-war England by depicting the cultural contradictions between the Jamaican and the English characters. The novel is divided into two historical periods: "Before," before the Windrush migration to the UK and "1948," during and after Windrush migration. One of the narrators, Hortense, is an educated Jamaican woman coming to England to unite with her husband, Gilbert, who is another Jamaican narrator, fighting for Britain during WWII in Royal Air Force and experiencing personal identity problems after encountering culture shock in English society. She characterises the immigrants in the post-war period and their cultural confusion. As a consequence of mass movement from the West Indies, Britain became a multinational country; as Fondo has pointed out, "[m]igration to Britain became particularly vibrant in the post-1945 period and has largely contributed to Britain becoming one of the most cosmopolitan nations in the world. The fact that this migration was mostly from Britain's erstwhile colonies implies that it is in a sense, a continuation of the colonial narrative" (2014). The colonial literature engages with the social, economic and political clash between the coloniser and the colonised in the colonies before decolonisation and uncovers these conflicts between the Europeans and non-Europeans. Likewise, the postcolonial literature again displays the contradictions between these two groups in the post-war era, particularly in social life, in terms of cultural context. However, as Çelikel points out: "Post-colonial literature depicts the white-European-coloniser as the other taking the former colonised from the periphery to the central standing point, whereas reverse is the case in colonialist fiction" (2021). In other words, postcolonial literature allows the formerly colonised nations to reflect their cultural values, identities, social manners and their problems from the centre giving them the primary position and voice. Hence, the immigrants coming from the East to the West, in postcolonial fiction, are portrayed as the self while they are depicted as the other in colonial texts. In this sense, Levy's *Small Island* illustrates the problematic position of the Windrush immigrants foregrounding the cultural trauma and identity crisis of the black non-European formerly colonised in the postcolonial English society.

The post-war trauma of Windrush immigrants is revealed through Hortense and Gilbert in *Small Island*. When Hortense first arrives in London, she finds it hard to find her husband, who has emigrated to London before his wife. Since her English cannot be understood by the taxi driver, she fails to communicate with the native speakers. Although she has received education and knows English, her accent in English is not sufficient enough to communicate in England as reflected in the novel as follows: "I need to be taken to number twenty-one Nevern Street in SW five. Twenty-one Nevern Street. N-e-v-e-r-n S-t-r-e-e-t.' I put on my best accent" (Levy, 2004). Even if she does her best while pronouncing the words, she cannot

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achieve proper communication and feels disillusioned. After starting to lead her life in London, her communication problems with the English continue in her social life as a result she feels humiliated as seen along these lines: “Condensed milk, I said, five times, and still he looked on me bewildered. Why no one in this country understand my English? At college my diction was admired by all” (Levy, 2004). Why she feels angry and frustrated is related to her educational background and her experience at college. Despite her education, she cannot achieve accurate communication in the UK, because the education that she has received in Jamaica is theoretical; since she does not have sufficient experience and practice in social life with the native people, she is discouraged. However, in Jamaica she can be appreciated as there are not so many educated Jamaican in her environment. In fact, the in-betweenness of the character was inevitable for any Caribbean immigrant in the post-war England; despite the fact that they willingly moved from their homeland to the UK, it was hard for them to become a part of the multicultural community in which most of the immigrants complained about cultural dislocation. In this sense, “[t]his prioritization of spatialized and embodied cosmopolitan memory in *Small Island* points to the shared experience of dislocation and displacement that state multiculturalism produces in its determined forgetting of larger, global histories” (Johansen, 2015). Thus, the isolation and estrangement of the Jamaican immigrants in the novel, in a sense, represent the identity problems of the Caribbean immigrants in the post-war UK through the reflection of the cultural transformation in the British society after World War II in 1948.

In the novel, one of the reasons leading the Jamaican characters to experience displacement, is the gap between their expectations and reality. Hortense, before coming to London, expects to lead a fairly comfortable life in the UK, but after finding the house her husband stays in London, she is disheartened due to the insufficient living conditions; since before coming to London, she thinks that everybody in England leads a luxurious and comfortable life as London is the centre of opportunities, prosperity and wealth, conversely she recognises that London does not only welcome the rich but also the poor, whose lives cannot be associated with the abundance and the affluence of the wealthy, and she does not consider the effects of war in society either, so she says to her husband: “Is this the way the English live?” (Levy, 2004), and her husband answers: “This is the way the English live ... there has been a war ... many English live worse than this” (Levy, 2004). Especially, due to the destructive effects of the war, the post-war English society was in turmoil and many working-class people could not overwhelm their economic problems. The reason why Hortense is frustrated is related to her high expectations from the Western society, which has been considered to be the centre of comfort and beauties. In the novel it is not only Hortense but also her friend Celia, who has high expectations about the life in England as seen along these remarks:

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‘Hortense, let me give you a secret. When I am older, I will be leaving Jamaica and I will be going to live in England. I will have a big house with a bell at the front door and I will ring the bell, ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling.’ Her black hair caught by the sun shimmered golden strands in the light. ‘I will ring the bell in this house when I am in England. That is what will happen to me when I am older.’ (Levy, 2004)

The Jamaican characters, like Celia, yearn for moving to England to achieve wealth and freedom. Since the colonial period, they witnessed that the Europeans have represented enlightenment, civilisation and modernisation, therefore if they immigrated to the UK, they could also benefit from the glammers of modern life. It is like a dream for them that would come true if they decided to settle in England. According to Hortense’s friend Celia, leading her life in the UK would save her and offer her new alternatives that will bring light to her dark life, however unlike Celia, Hortense attains the chance of moving to London thanks to her marriage to Gilbert. Even if it is Celia who dreams of getting married to Gilbert to move to the UK, Hortense cuts the ground from under Celia’s feet and also wants to make use of marriage institution for immigration to England as follows:

But what aroused her more than anything else about this man was the thrill of knowing that he wanted to make a life for himself in England. She could see herself finally ringing the bell on that tall house. ‘He wants to return to England soon. She would sail far away from this island, safe in the arms of her handsome RAF man, to a place where he had told her everyone walked on a blanket of gold. ‘Well, Celia,’ I told her, ‘you must let me meet this man who would take you far away from here.’ (Levy, 2004)

For the sake of going to the UK as an immigrant, Hortense decides to marry Gilbert, because he wants to settle in England. Through marriage, she is able to attain the right to enjoy the opportunities in London. Considering the importance of being a part of English society for the Jamaican characters, it can be deduced that they want to get rid of poverty, insufficient living and working conditions in their isolated environment, so the female Jamaican characters try to use marriage institution to have a better life in the West. Before coming to London, Hortense believes that everybody in England leads a prosperous life, however when she arrives in the country, she gets aggravated once she realises the hard living conditions after the war in Britain. Gilbert, impressing Hortense to convince her for marriage, indicates: “ ‘Let me ask you this one question – you ever see a picture of the House of Parliament in London? It is a sight, let me tell you. When you stand there before it, it looks to all the world like a fairy tale castle. You think dragons will breathe fire on you soon. You must see this place’ ” (Levy, 2004). By telling the magnificence of the most significant places in London, Gilbert influences Hortense and makes her feel that if she starts to lead her life in London as his wife, her life will be like a fairy tale.

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Similarly, Gilbert also assumes that there are quite good social and economic opportunities for the immigrants. In addition, as they have contributed to the UK during the war, they would also be supported by the English. Since there are various chances of employment and education there, they will improve themselves and broaden their minds. Therefore, he utters these words to express his willingness to be a British citizen:

Returning to England was more than an ambition for Gilbert Joseph. It was a mission, a calling, even a duty. This man was so restless he could not stay still. Always in motion he was agitated, impatient – like a petulant boy waiting his turn at cricket. He told me opportunity ripened in England as abundant as fruit on Jamaican trees. And he was going to be the man to pluck it. (Levy, 2004)

Considering Gilbert's ambition to return to England after World War II, it can be asserted that it was so irresistible for him that he regards this return as a 'mission' and a 'duty.' If he did not fulfil his aspiration, he would feel defeated. With the purpose of fighting for the English nation during the war, he stays in Britain, but after the war he yearns for going back to the country again for his own goal; he intends to have a better life with innumerable social and economic prospects. Similarly, Hortense wants to accompany Gilbert as his wife so as to benefit from the opportunities of the modern life in the UK, consequently her marriage is not for the sake of love but for the sake of having the right to be a resident in England. She expresses her situation as follows:

'How else will I come? A single woman cannot travel on her own – it would not look good. But a married woman might go anywhere she pleased.' It took Gilbert only two hours to decide to ask me if I would marry him. And he shook my hand when I said yes, like a business deal had been struck between us. In the breath it took to exhale that one little word, England became my destiny. (Levy, 2004)

It is revealed that Hortense is determined to make use of her marriage in order to immigrate to London and attain a more comfortable life, as a consequence she regards her marriage as a business contract, which will enable her to settle in England. Moreover, according to the Caribbean culture, a single woman cannot have a journey from one country to the other. When she becomes a married woman, nobody will question her decision to travel to the UK. As a woman, she wants to escape from the patriarchal values of the Caribbean society and achieve freedom in London. Nonetheless, when she gains the right to go to London, she realises that what she has expected is fairly different from what she witnesses in the city. In terms of physical discrepancies of people in England, she utters these expressions:

The surprising colours in the countenance of all the English people. In no book or tutoring that I had acquired did anyone tell me that so many different types of English

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people could be found. In Jamaica all English people had looked as my tutors at college had appeared. Their hair fair, the colour of baked bread. Their complexion red and ruddy from the sun. It was with great ease that an English person could be distinguished walking along the road from even the most high-class of Jamaican. But here now, in England, so many different complexions were placed before me that my mind became perplexed. (Levy, 2004)

As observed in the quotation, Hortense is astonished to recognise the plurality of various nations, races and cultures; in other words, the multicultural structure of post-war English society when she immigrates. In Jamaica, while she has observed merely born and bred English people, in London she sees different physical appearances of English people. She realises that there is no certain physical classification or categorisation dividing people to determine their identities. Although she is familiar with the English in Jamaica, she gets astounded, in London, to see the divergences in terms of their complexions. It would be worth emphasising that her assumptions about the English and the life in the UK do not coincide with the real life in London, so the gap between her illusionary world and the real world makes her shocked and she begins to feel disenchanted, therefore she suffers from cultural trauma and experiences some conflicts with the English.

The English couple in the novel is Queenie and Bernard, the other narrators in the novel, who represent the Westerners. On the one hand, Queenie, having a boarding house, accepts Gilbert as a lodger in her house and does not discriminate the Jamaican but appreciates their culture; on the other hand, Bernard, who has been sent to India during the war and is said to be lost in the war, returns and cannot help displaying his prejudice towards Gilbert. He is not pleased to have lodgers coming from the ‘small island,’ Jamaica or the other former colonies, and he does not believe that they can overcome eliminating their cultural and racial differences.

Unlike Gilbert, Queenie welcomes the immigrants and she is fond of spending time with Hortense in her social life, but at the same time she is aware of the prejudice towards the immigrants, so she emphasises: ‘I don’t mind being seen in the street with you. (Levy, 2004)’ and Hortense cannot get what she means therefore she says to herself: [...] I was a teacher and she was only a woman whose living was obtained from the letting of rooms. If anyone should be shy it should be I’ (2004). She thinks that she is superior to Queenie because of her education, but Queenie tries to say that some English people may hesitate to have an immigrant friend whose culture is different.

Furthermore, although Caribbean immigrants were recognised legally in the post-war English society, there was also accommodation problem for them; because “[w]hile there was plenty of work in Britain, housing was in short supply, a fact that led to some of the first clashes with the white community” (Bonnici, 2005). As a consequence, the struggles between

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the white and the black during the colonial time, could also be observed in some occasions in the postcolonial era, specifically in social life. Nevertheless, in the novel, unlike her husband, Queenie does not discriminate Hortense or employ racism. Accordingly, Hortense's sensitivity towards the racist approach leads to some misunderstandings, so she begins to believe that all of the English may have biased views towards her. For example, when she applies for a teaching position at a school, she is rejected since the institution wants to accept native English speakers for the teaching position. When the school officer says 'You're not qualified to teach here in England'(Levy, 2004), she feels discriminated, lonely and out of place. When she cannot find a proper position as an English teacher in London, she begins to think that she is inferior to the English and her underprivileged position is the reason of her rejection by the school administrators. Levy's portrayal of the encounter between the former coloniser and the former colonised in the postcolonial Western society, shows that in a multicultural society, social discord between these two groups is inevitable and at the same time it should be eliminated. Thus, it is obvious that:

Andrea Levy's literary exploration of postcolonial themes, such as the emergence of a new geography of relations on a worldwide scale and the development of "new ethnicities" to the contact of others within Britain, sets in perspective geographical and historical (dis)continuities and revises the traditional oppositions between center and margin, the local and the global. (Duboin, 2011)

With the rise of postcolonial literature, the stereotyped roles and the binary oppositions determining the self and the other, in other words, the centre and the margin, the global and the local have been eradicated and conventional norms about categorisations have been replaced with a plural and multi-ethnic society. In this multicultural society, it is not interesting to witness some divergences between the Westerners and the non-Westerners, in spite of their efforts to harmonise with each other. In this perspective, while Hortense complains about being discriminated by the English, she also blames her husband, Gilbert, for the discrimination they have been subjected to; she believes that his inability to talk English properly and his Jamaican manners cause them to be segregated as she utters: 'Anyone hearing Gilbert Joseph speak would know without hesitation that this man was not English. No matter that he is dressed in his best suit, his hair greased, his fingernails clean, he talked (and walked) in a rough Jamaican way' (372). Regarding her husband's failure to imitate the appearance and manners of the English, she does her best to be accepted, therefore she tries to mimic those in BBC and improves her English as she indicates: "I repeated. And I listened once more. To prove practice makes perfect, on two occasions a shopkeeper had brought me the item requested without repetition from me. With thanks to that impeccable English evidenced on my wireless, I was understood easily" (Levy, 2004). Thanks to her self-determination and efforts to improve her English, she begins to make progress in her communication with the English. Nevertheless, despite her success, she does not feel

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completely proficient due to her identity crisis and hybridity. The reason why she fails to overcome her cultural trauma is based on the misperception experienced by most of the immigrants in the post-war English society: “They thought of themselves as being already British” (Sharma et al., 2017). In other words, they assumed that once they were accepted to work in Britain, they would be regarded as British. When they realised that they could not escape from their hybridity, they were disheartened. Similarly, Hortense realises that no matter how much she stays in British society, she will be a Caribbean individual, not a British citizen.

Towards the end of the novel, Queenie gives birth to a black child due to her affair with another Jamaican character Michael, another lodger in her house during the war, and she decides to give her black child to Hortense and Gilbert. The depiction of 1948 Britain is different from today’s harmonious and peaceful multicultural British society and the portrayal in the novel exposes that in spite of the multiracial structure of post-war English society, some people might have prejudice towards racial differences and hesitate to have interaction with them. As a result, Queenie kneels before Hortense and Gilbert for persuading them to take her black baby and to adopt him while trying to convince Bernard to abandon the baby along these remarks:

‘Hortense, please. I trust you and Gilbert. I know you. You’re good people.’ I was begging, I know I was, but I didn’t care. She was trying to hand him back to me. I pushed him towards her again. Shoved the little mite back into her arms. That was when I heard Bernard. ‘Queenie, what in God’s name are you doing?’ He was on his feet standing over me. ‘I want them to take him, Bernard.’ ‘He’s your child. What are you saying?’ ‘Listen, Bernard. He needs a home. A good home.’ ‘He’s got a home.’ (Levy, 2004)

In the light of the conversation, it can be asserted that Queenie does not want to bring up a black child as a white mother and her supportive attitude towards her black lodgers has disappeared when she supposes that the multiracial family structure will be a problematic situation and may be a hindrance in the future for the child. She believes that even if they do their best to look after the child, the child will not feel belonging to the family, so he will suffer from homelessness. In this regard, Queenie, despite Bernard’s approval of bringing up the child, thinks that due to the biased views of the public, it will be hard for them to overcome the prejudice of society, because people will wonder why she has got a coloured child and her secret affair will be revealed so the child may not bear such a kind of burden. In addition, she is not sure whether or not her husband can protect the child from social taboos, as a consequence she says: “And people snigger at you in the street and ask you all sorts of awkward questions. Are you going to fight for him? All those neighbours ... those proper decent neighbours out in the suburbs, are you going to tell them to mind their own business?” (Levy, 2004). The baby’s racial difference, according to Queenie, will make the community

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to be suspicious about them; when people ask them questions about the mystery behind the child with prejudice, she is not sure whether or not Bernard will be able to struggle with those neighbours for the sake of the child. Though Bernard insists that they can say they have adopted him, she fears that the child may be exposed to racial discrimination. As Queenie is not strong enough to face the prejudice of society, she begs the Jamaican couple to accept the baby as their own. Before coming to the UK, Hortense has never imagined that an English woman would kneel before her as she points out as follows:

I never dreamed England would be like this. Come, in what crazed reverie would a white Englishwoman be kneeling before me yearning for me to take her black child? There was no dream I could conceive so fanciful. Yet there was Mrs Bligh kneeling before Gilbert and I, her pretty blue eyes dissolving beneath a wash of tears, while glaring on we two Jamaicans, waiting anxious to see if we would lift our thumb or drop it. Could we take her newly-born son and call him our own? (Levy, 2004)

What makes Hortense puzzled is that she has regarded the English as superior as the former coloniser and considered her own people as underprivileged as the former colonised, however she realises that they have changed their roles with each other and she feels bewildered. Hortense and Gilbert adopt the black child deciding that the baby will suffer in a multiracial family. They aim at embracing the child with love and compassion, in a sense, they are convinced that the child may be a victim of racial segregation in a white family. This viewpoint can be regarded as a social message stressing the necessity to eliminate any kind of inequality and separation in the post-war multicultural English society. As McLeod also suggests, [...] the anxieties raised in post war British discussions of miscegenation surface in similar ways when the adoption of children is socially discussed and administered [...]” (2006). Therefore, it can be argued that the postcolonial society encompassing a multicultural, plural, multiracial structure, could not completely overcome all of the cultural, racial or social contradictions between the Westerners and non-Westerners in the 1948 England.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Levy’s *Small Island* sheds light on the cultural problems between the Jamaican immigrants and the English in the post-war 1948 England by centring on the adaptation problems of these immigrants in English society. As a result of the social encounter of these two groups, it has been observed that, while some English characters have prejudice towards the immigrants, some encourage them. Moreover, some Jamaican characters think that they have to endure the insufficient conditions in that society because World War II has devastated the economy of Britain whereas some reject those unsatisfactory living conditions and they feel not as immigrants but as refugees.

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Furthermore, on the one hand, there appears a promising future in that society since it is multiracial and multicultural uniting different cultures and races in the same environment, on the other hand; there is uncertainty in the novel as well about the reconciliation of these groups in that period; it is not clear whether or not different nations from different cultural and social backgrounds in the novel will come to terms with one another and accept each other with their disparities. Thus, the novelist effectively portrays the panorama of the ambiguity in the post-war English society during 1948 and after the immigration of the Windrush generation, in terms of cultural, racial, social matters, and at the same time, she reveals the prejudgment of both groups towards each other while trying to conform to one another in that multi-ethnic society.

In this respect, it can be suggested that the cultural adaptation problems of the Jamaican in the post-war English society, caused them to suffer from identity crisis and experience worries in social life. Thus, it should be noted that the author interestingly presents that the immigration of the Windrush generation to the post-war Britain in the 20th century, led to some cultural obstacles in that period, but observing the peaceful environment in the multicultural British society of the 21st century, it can be stated that after coming together and sharing the same environment, these different cultures and races have recognised one another with their unique cultural background and created a congenial society in which individuals appreciate the cultural and racial disparities of each other and pay special attention to contributing to one another's self-improvement with cooperation and solidarity.

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