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Klára Krčková

Diasporic Features in the Fiction of Andrea Levy

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

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*Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala
samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce
a s využitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.*

V Olomouci dne

Podpis autora práce

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Introduction

Among the post-colonial authors of the twentieth century, the motive of diaspora has been examined thoroughly from many aspects since it is an important phenomenon typical for the ethnic minorities which settled down in a foreign country. On the other hand, until the recent past, there have not been many texts concerning the Caribbean diaspora, that evolved in the second half of the twentieth century in the United Kingdom. Andrea Levy, one of the descendent of the original immigrants who came from Jamaica, was born in Britain and she considers herself a British author with a dual cultural background. However, during her childhood, she did not have any models to look up to. This was one of the reasons why she started writing about her Caribbean background. The second reason was that she wanted to inform the public about the past of her ancestors, their traditions but also their participation in the British history, which has not been taught at schools at the time when she was growing up. Levy's aim was to raise the awareness of the public of the role which West Indians took in the Second World War and also to negotiate the attention for this ethnic group within the predominant discourse of English culture and education.

This thesis focuses on the diasporic features in Andrea Levy's fiction, namely in the novel *Small Island*. It examines the atmosphere in the United Kingdom in 1948 as described by Levy and the development of the ethnic diaspora. It is also concerned with the dimension of space as a crucial basis of constituting one's identity far from the homeland and situated within the alien environment. The cultural identity of the immigrants in Britain is a key issue in the post-colonial period and Andrea Levy builds up her novel on a series of metaphors; some of them generally known among the Caribbean minority and some of them of her own origin to illustrate the problems lying under the question of belonging for the West Indians in the United Kingdom.

Although Levy is not the only writer of Caribbean origin who deals with the issue of diaspora, she is acknowledged to be one of the most significant and awarded currently active authors among them.

1 Post-war situation in Britain

After the Second World War, the United Kingdom was, as many other European countries, destroyed and found itself in a need of workers. As a colonial empire, Britain had a great potential of manpower overseas which could be effectively used to reconstruct the destroyed country, similarly as the men from the colonies had already helped as volunteering soldiers during the war. The government started a campaign with a clear goal - to motivate people from the colonies to come and work in the United Kingdom, declaring that they need more helping hands and promising the workers that they would obtain a good job, find a solid nice place to live and settle down in Britain for the rest of their lives. People from the West Indies were offered relatively cheap tickets for the journey and many of them considered this a great option to start a brand new better life.

On 22 June 1948, the Empire Windrush, a S. S. ship formerly called Monte Rosa, arrived at Tilbury with 492 passengers from Jamaica who planned to start a new life in England. This was the first wave of immigrants from the West Indies and there were more to come in the following years, counting from hundreds to thousands as the wives and children of the Jamaicans came to settle in the United Kingdom, too. Within next several years, the number of West Indians coming to Britain rose considerably; until 1953, the numbers of immigrants counted around two thousand people or less per a year but in 1954, about 24,000 immigrants, mainly family members of the already coming men, sailed to the United Kingdom. The numbers of immigrants have not declined and ten years after the arrival of the Empire Windrush, there were about 125,000 of them.¹ The ships from the West Indies steered not only for London but also for Liverpool and other large industrial cities in England. The Jamaicans, together with all the other citizens of Britain's colonies and former colonies, were due to the 1948 Nationality Act granted the United Kingdom citizenship, they had the same passports as British inhabitants and could stay in the United Kingdom for the rest of their lives. Those who had already served there during the Second World War thought of their arrival as a return home.

¹ Peter Fryer, *Staying power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Chippenham: Pluto Press, 1984), 372.

2 Andrea Levy and her experience

Andrea Levy builds up her writing on a personal experience. She was born in England in 1956 to Jamaican immigrants but she is partly of Scottish and Jewish descent, too. Her father came to Britain as one of the passengers of the Empire Windrush and her mother followed him six months later. Levy's parents could be both included in the so-called 'Windrush generation' and their memories and shared stories undoubtedly influenced the author's prose greatly together with her own experience. However, Levy was born in the era of racial unrest in the United Kingdom. In August 1958, the Notting Hill riots broke out and gangs of white youths, who used to call themselves 'Teddy Boys', attacked West Indian community members. The riots lasted for more than a week with hundreds of aggressors fighting in the streets every night but only few of them were charged with racial motivation.

Ten years later, Enoch Powell, a member of the Conservative Party, gave his infamous Rivers of Blood speech in which he openly criticised the growth of immigration; he suggested that Britain would become a country in which the black men would rule the whites in the horizon of fifteen or twenty years. He urged the government to stop the immigrant policy unless a racial discrimination of the British inhabitants would start and even suggested to consider the option of re-emigration back to the colonies. Powell's speech surprised the public and caused a discussion within the society which split it in two.

Also, there was another riot in London, taking place in Lambeth in April 1981². The so-called Brixton riot was caused by the recession in the early 1980s and the aggressors focused mainly on the African-Caribbean community which at the time suffered high unemployment. All these factors influenced Levy throughout her life and after her father's death in 1987, she decided to share her experience with the public and started writing her first novel, *Every Light in the House Burnin'*, which was published in 1994. Two more novels followed in the 1990s; *Never Far from Nowhere* (1996) and *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999). In these novels, Levy dealt with the theme of Jamaican immigrants living in Britain from the point of view of the second generation; the children who were born already in Britain. In 2004, Levy published her fourth novel, *Small Island*, which focused on the history of the West Indian minority in the United

² Wendy Knepper, 'Andrea Levy's Dislocating Narratives' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy* (EnterText, 2012), 3.

Kingdom and described the 'Windrush generation's' arrival into England. The novel was immediately a great success and won several awards for literature, namely Orange Prize for Fiction (known as The Women's Prize for Fiction now), the Whitbread Book of the Year (known as the Costa Book Awards since 2005), and a year later, the Commonwealth Writers Prize. In 2010, Andrea Levy published her latest novel, *The Long Song*.

3 Characters coming into Britain

In *Small Island*, Levy depicts not only the events happening in 1948 in England but she also follows the past of her characters in the retrospective chapters, reaching back to England, Jamaica, but also India and the United States. The four main protagonists of the novel are two married couples; Queenie and Bernard, who are both of British origin, and Hortense and Gilbert, who came from Jamaica and represent the first generation of immigrants from the West Indies. Levy uses these four characters as narrators of the story; they alternate in each chapter and narrate from their perspective. Therefore, we can follow the characters' immediate impressions when Gilbert, similarly to Levy's father, arrives on the Empire Windrush into London, and six months later his wife Hortense joins him. For Gilbert, the cruise to England is a return since he had worked there during the war as a volunteer in RAF.

After the war and his return to Jamaica, Gilbert is determined to live and work in Britain. However, he lacks the money for a ticket and is offered help from Hortense, who also desires to settle down in the Mother country, as the Jamaicans tend to call the United Kingdom. Hortense suggests a deal: she would lend Gilbert the money if he marries her, therefore she could join him in England soon as his wife and start a new life there. The two young people do not have anything in common, except their goal, and the proposal is as far from romantic as imaginable, as Levy describes: "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."³

³ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 100.

4 Expectations of the immigrants

The reality after coming to Britain did not meet the expectations of the immigrants from the West Indies. They all hoped to find a good job, a place to settle down with their families and to bring up their children, but England appeared to be quite different than they thought. For Jamaicans, Britain had been always referred to as Mother country - the uniting heart of the whole British Empire and an authority which they should look up to. With no doubt, the concept of Mother Country was an idealized image but as the citizens of the United Kingdom, the inhabitants of the former British colonies were encouraged to believe in their equality to British white population already since their school age because of the colonial education. Fernández states, that "the idea underlying the logic of the new-comers was that of coming to the 'Mother Country'; a country that was waiting for them; a country portrayed in the colonial imaginary as a place of opportunities; a country immigrants from the British ex-colonies were eager to defend".⁴ Levy's characters share the same trust in what they consider to be a safe place and the notion of Britain as a solid reliable pillar is unquestioned at first. The passengers of the Empire Windrush are fascinated by England. Their first impressions of the tall buildings, trains or even chimneys declare how little they knew of life across the ocean. Inevitably, the Windrush generation experienced a shock once they faced their Mother country in an effort to assimilate. England was an unfriendly cold grey place, other than it used to be traditionally described among Jamaicans.

Miss Ma, who has never been to England before, sends her son Michael overseas and argues, that "He has gone to England with the purpose of joining the Royal Air Force ... They need men like my son. Men of courage and good breeding. There is to be a war over there. The Mother Country is calling men like my son to be heroes whose families will be proud of them."⁵, but she could hardly imagine the actual situation in Europe during the Second World War. Likewise, Gilbert's family suppose that their son would study at the university in Britain once the war is over; from his point of view, these are his relatives' demands, though he himself hopes to succeed: "Man, I know chance when it is before me and here was one ripe for picking. Come - the law was on the list. I did not place it there, they did - up there among accountancy and medicine."⁶

⁴ Irene Pérez Fernández, 'Representing Third Spaces, Fluid Identities And Contested Spaces In Contemporary British Literature' (Atlantis 31.2, 2009), 149.

⁵ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 59.

⁶ Levy, *Small Island*, 198.

However, his application is refused at the Colonial Office and he is offered only a much lower position instead - to work as a bread baker. Gilbert feels insulted and humiliated, he struggles to find himself a job but the employers merely look at him and shake heads or come with an excuse to avoid hiring a black man. The same complications come when Gilbert tries to find himself and his wife, who is about to join him within few months, a place to live. Unfortunately for him, the owners of the houses in London were all unwilling to take a black lodger. Gilbert complains, "So how many gates I swing open? How many houses I knock on? Let me count the doors that opened slow and shut quick without even me breath managing to get inside. Man, these English landlords and ladies could come up with excuses. ... Man, there was a list of people who would not like it if I came to live - a husband, wife, women in the house, neighbours,..."⁷ As for many other black immigrants, his hopes proved to be too optimistic and the growing frustration demotivates him. Gilbert learns that unlike during the war when his blue RAF uniform granted him some prestige, few years later he is treated as an unwanted child and the Mother country could be rather called a stepmother. Although he keeps some of his ambitions, he takes a job of a driver for the post office, partly giving up the former ambitions.

Six months after Gilbert's arrival, Hortense comes to join him; however, she is disappointed when her husband is not waiting for her in the dock to greet her as he had promised her in the letters. Instead, Hortense has to find herself a taxi quite alone in the unknown city and get to the house where Gilbert lives in the hope that there is a reasonable explanation why she had been left waiting for so long. As soon as Hortense tries to communicate with the locals, she faces difficulties; the taxi driver does not understand her pronunciation, which firstly confuses the young woman but secondly, it humiliates her with every repetition of the direction: "It took me several attempts at saying the address to the driver of the taxi vehicle before his face lit with recognition. '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. An accent that had taken me to the top of the class of Miss Stuart's English pronunciation competition. ... But still this taxi driver did not understand me."⁸ Hortense had been proud of her perfect accent since back home in Jamaica, she had been repeatedly assured that this is her eminency

⁷ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 215.

⁸ Levy, *Small Island*, 17.

compared to the other students at school. In her mind, she keeps telling herself that it is not her who is wrong; she refuses to admit how different her education and the actual reality of a spoken British English might be. Hortense's shock, unlike Gilbert's, is even worse because her expectations were based only on the idealized image of Mother country given to her at school. In addition, her husband, whom she had known only for five days before they got married, supported these false expectations with letters praising the new life and loving words. Hortense had always considered herself being above the average West Indian people because of her lighter honey-coloured skin and her family roots; when narrating, she reminds herself of how famous her father is in Jamaica and highlights her upbringing, manners and education. In all senses, she had aspired to represent the notion of Britishness as it had been presented to her.

5 The British and their opinion on the West Indians

On the other side, in contrast to the expectations of the black immigrants, *Small Island* describes also the white English inhabitants and their reception of the post-war era. The predominant Anglo-Saxon society has just started recovering from the Second World War and despite of how encouraging the invitation to the West Indians sounded, the majority of British population had no intention of a warm welcome for the wave of new settlers. As Fryer says, "though half of Britain's white population had never even met a black person - and among those who had the acquaintance had been mostly casual - prejudice against black people was widespread."⁹ Levy captures the white men's reactions in everyday conflicts; some of these are merely brief implications showing the daily atmosphere whereas other cause complications to the characters. There are also features of parody as the author is able to describe the situations with humour, not only criticising the lurking prejudices within the white population but at the same time illustrating how puzzled the English people were, confronted with a mostly unknown and unfamiliar ethnic group. The typical embodiment of this social prenotion is one of Queenie Bligh's neighbours, Mr Todd, who openly despises the immigrants and partly blames Queenie for spoiling the area's reputation by letting the 'darkies', as he calls them, to live in her house as lodgers. He tells Queenie with horror a story of how his wife was forced to step off the pavement into the road when she met two black women

⁹ Peter Fryer, *Staying power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Chippenham: Pluto Press, 1984), 374.

in the street. There was obviously not enough room for all of them to walk by and none of the black women had the decency to let Mrs Todd pass. The neighbour considers this as an outrageous insult of his wife in public and refers to this incident to imply that the immigrant minority is getting 'out of hand'. As many other British inhabitants, he maintains the presumption that the newly coming West Indians should be controlled and separated from the rest of the society. Mr Todd also believes that the immigrants' motivation to move to England is the National Health Service. "For the teeth and glasses. That was the reason so many coloured people were coming to this country, according to my next door neighbour Mr Todd,"¹⁰ Queenie describes, and although this accusation might sound unfair, Jamaica - unlike the United Kingdom - did not provide any health care to its inhabitants at the time. Queenie, as one of the few white people who treat the West Indians well, tries to ignore Mr Todd's insistent complaints but by doing so, she takes a risk that the gossips would eventually turn against her, too. Although the black immigrants were mostly considered to be of a lower status or even outside the British society, officially, they had the UK citizenship and in general, people rather avoided racial marks and hid themselves behind the mask of politeness, usually followed by a 'no, we are sorry'.

Although this social mask might seem to have no space for diversion unless the person would be immediately degraded in the eyes of mainstream British inhabitants, Levy finds one specific exception - little children, who do not know the rules yet and speak frankly what is on their mind without any self-censorship of their behaviour. Being too young to understand the tension within the society, they are curious about anything unknown and much more open towards everything new. Through their voices, Levy offers us an insight into the uninfluenced mind of a child who has not seen a black person in its life: "'Look! She's black. Look, Mum, black woman.' The white woman then turned a glassy gaze on me. ... She nearly pushed the pram into a lamp-post before leaning forward to admonish the pointing child. 'Don't point, Georgey. She's not black - she's coloured.'"¹¹ It became a rule to call the black immigrants 'coloured' to avoid using an offensive term and the children were soon taught of 'proper' ways. Not having enough experience with the West Indians themselves, the British developed strong prejudice against these strangers and assumed a cold attitude towards them. Since

¹⁰ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 111.

¹¹ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 334.

children are generally sensitive to fear of something unknown and in the early age, they mostly adapt their parents' behaviour and reactions, it does not come as a surprise that the young Anglo-Saxon generations shared the same distance from the immigrants from the colonies.

6 Cultural identity of the minorities

Since the immigrants from the West Indies were segregated from the locals, they had only two options left - to return to Jamaica or to stay in the United Kingdom under the given circumstances and adapt themselves to the life in Britain. For most of them, England was a dream which they would not give up; the idea of sailing back to Jamaica was unthinkable. Firstly, the conditions and life standard in their own home country were rather poor, considering that in "the West Indies, the cost of living had almost doubled during the war. There was large-scale unemployment, and those without work were desperate. There was no relief of any kind; no dole; no children's allowances; no social security at all."¹² Most of the new coming immigrants were young people who intended to settle down, start a family, and find a job and a nice place to live. Secondly, they thought of themselves as being already British and only hardly in the course of time admitted that their position in the United Kingdom is of a lower minority. They were separated and moved into the suburbs of London and other large cities and basically forced to create their own community, a diaspora within the inhospitable environment. They lived in a small island, as the title of the novel indicates, and for many of them, the crucial question was, where did they belong? The Jamaicans have searched for their cultural identity and for Levy, this question appears in all her works not only considering the first generation of the immigrants, but also their descendant throughout the second half of the twentieth century up to the present day.

Hall proposes two views of a cultural identity; the first as a one collective culture, a notion which is carried by all its members one by one. The connection between the people who share the same cultural identity would be their past, the same history and ancestors which bind them together as a group. By these means, "our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes

¹² Peter Fryer, *Staying power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Chippenham: Pluto Press, 1984), 373.

which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history".¹³ In contrast to this theory of a uniting essence among the members of one cultural identity, Hall presents a second definition, according to which cultural identity and belonging to a specific ethnic group is not only a matter of 'being', but also 'becoming'.

By these terms, he claims that cultural identity does not lie in the past only but should be defined by its future, too. Hall further explains that cultural identity cannot be defined by one given place, time, tradition and culture for good; it is in a constant process of evolving from somewhere and undergoing a transformation. In his concept, it can be influenced, shaped through time and space; which corresponds to the experience of the young Jamaicans building up their 'territory' based on common principles and developing not only by itself but also by the 'outer' impulses. Furthermore, Hall argues that "only from this second position ... we can properly understand the traumatic character of 'the colonial experience'. The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation".¹⁴ Levy in her prose captures this feeling as well as the sense of 'otherness' and being different while using the first person narrative in the chapters dedicated to either Hortense or Gilbert. By the narratives, it is easily possible to see the differences between the two Jamaicans but these could be identified mostly by their inner thoughts and as Murphy argues, while the readers "will see and hear significant distinctions among the West Indians, the British characters in the novel see the West Indians as undifferentiated others defined entirely by their race."¹⁵ The author depicts as her characters struggle to find their position in the new surroundings and apparently suffer from the primary shock; the way of surviving in Britain for them is to adapt, incorporate in what Hall calls the still undergoing process.

¹³ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' in *Identity - Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 223.

¹⁴ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' in *Identity - Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 225.

¹⁵ Anne Murphy, 'Stranger in the Empire: Language and Identity in the 'Mother Country'' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 126.

7 Diaspora as a process and a dialogue

The phenomenon of diaspora could be examined from various aspects. It is not only a material but also an imagined barrier which divides its members from the major society. After the Second World War and with the start of increasing immigration into the United Kingdom, the original Anglo-Saxon majority feels endangered by the invaders from abroad. Parts of the cities, in Levy's prose the suburbs of London, change their faces remarkably as they become inhabited by the ethnic minorities. Inevitably, the events described in *Small Island* show us the starting point of Britain's development from a relatively monoethnic society into a multicultural one, piece by piece; as Fernández suggests, agreeing with Hall on the issue, "the spatial dimension is an important factor in a multicultural society because spaces in such a setting are in an ongoing process of negotiation and change".¹⁶ Unfortunately for the members of the diaspora, they cannot take back the evolvement of the community, neither can they truly return to their origins. The very concept of 'home' as a stable solid place resisting through the history does not work here. The community gains its space through a metaphorical dialogue with the Mother country, now already losing her attributes of maternity and instead of a warm welcoming face changing its image in the eyes of the West Indians into a reserved stranger. Gilbert in his mind describes her as a filthy tramp: "Ragged, old and dusty as the long dead. Mother has a blackened eye, bad breath and one lone tooth that waves in her head when she speaks. ... She offers you no comfort after the journey. No smile. No welcome. Yet she looks down at you through lordly eyes and says, 'Who the bloody hell are you?'"¹⁷

In *Small Island*, Hortense sees everything that comes from Britain as an ideal to which she is supposed to approximate. Being English is the norm she was taught to reach and put it as her priority in life. During her training in Jamaica, she proved to be one of the most ambitious girls and got used to a relatively high standard of living. However, Hortense is determined to become a teacher in a prestigious school in England; she is a young self-confident woman who had been throughout her studies always assured by the teachers of how outstanding she is. With this in mind and with her pride, Hortense would do anything to fulfil her plan, she would even make a deal with Gilbert Joseph and marry him only for the purpose of getting into Britain and

¹⁶ Irene Pérez Fernández, 'Representing Third Spaces, Fluid Identities And Contested Spaces In Contemporary British Literature' (*Atlantis* 31.2, 2009), 148.

¹⁷ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 139.

although the locals do not approve of this, Hortense does not feel bothered even by her Christian upbringing and marries Gilbert as a matter of business, not love, when she feels the opportunity to get closer to her desired goal. The actual life in England disappoints her greatly; in her naive fantasies, the Mother country was supposed to be almost a dreamland. The image of the United Kingdom as presented in Jamaica by the colonial teachers could be compared to a land from a fairy tale, indeed, as there had been created a true myth to be looked up to. But even after her arrival and several encounters with racial prejudices, Hortense stubbornly holds to her aim.

She considers herself above Queenie who tries to treat the black woman well and to help as much as she could. Hortense merely refuses to talk to the white woman; she wonders at her behaviour and secretly criticizes her landlady but does not object straight into her face. "It's all right. I don't mind being seen in the street with you. You'll find I'm not like most. It doesn't worry me to be seen out with darkies.' Now, why should this woman worry to be seen in the street with me? After all, 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. And what is a darkie?"¹⁸ Hortense despises Queenie's poor clothes, which are baggy, grey and do not even fit the woman's figure. In contrast, everywhere Hortense goes, she puts the effort to look as representative as she can, wearing white gloves and a hat. Levy builds up her comic on the opposition of these two women, putting them against each other and contrasting not only their appearance but their attitudes as well. They are obviously not willing nor able to understand each other, they cannot see the motivations of the other woman's actions clearly and make only false assumptions based on their own mentality and background. Although Queenie tries her best to comprehend Hortense's needs and to create a friendly atmosphere for the young black woman, she only guesses what to do. This incapability of empathy stems in the fact that the characters grew up on the opposite sides of the world; their ways of expressing emotions are profoundly different.

Nevertheless, Hortense soon has to face the critical refusal which strongly shakes her belief. She comes to Islington to apply for a job of a teacher, wearing her wedding dress to make the best possible impression on the ladies inside the office. However, the women in the office do not care about her recommending letters as soon

¹⁸ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 231.

as they find out that they are from Hortense's employer and the headmaster of her school, both from Jamaica, and not England. The qualifications which Hortense gained in her homeland are not sufficient enough for her to qualify as a teacher in the United Kingdom. This is the turning point for the young woman whose ambitious plans shatter within a moment together with a part of her self-esteem as she embarrasses herself in front of the ladies by stepping into a cupboard instead of leaving the office. For a lady such as Hortense, the shock caused by the whole event is almost devastating and it is Gilbert who helps her to calm down. Levy shows how the West Indians in Britain had to settle for a lower status than they were used to in Jamaica, which was a daily practice in the 1950s and the following years; their qualifications were not taken into account and the professions offered to them were for the most part those which the white people were not willing to take themselves. Night shifts, sweeping the streets, delivering mail or labouring in factories were those posts for which the 'Mother land' called upon her children to come as an aid.

The original plan and goal of the government's campaign was clear; to fill the job positions of the lowest sort quickly by workers at the lowest expenses possible. As Fryer states, "in the late 1950s, more than half the male West Indians in London has a lower-status jobs than their skill and experience fitted them for."¹⁹ As for women, their chance of getting a job which would meet their original training was no higher than for men. The immigrants were not considered being reliable enough for the British to employ them in an important reliable position. Such jobs were primarily reserved for the British, following the presumption that the black strangers from overseas cannot be trusted and their working qualifications gained at home were of no value because it would be hardly comparable to the corresponding certificates granted in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, as suggested, Britain asked its colonies for 'helping hands' but that was all it wanted; a strong labouring class of workers who would fill the empty positions. However, the 'Mother country' never asked for neither brains nor mouths that might complain about its policy.

¹⁹ Peter Fryer, *Staying power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Chippenham: Pluto Press, 1984), 374.

8 Language barrier as a feature of diaspora

One of the significant and distinguishing features of the immigrants from the West Indies, besides their skin colour, is the typical dialect. Although it is not a material barrier, it is one of those perceived widely among the population. It clearly creates a distance between the immigrants and the locals in the United Kingdom who cannot understand the Jamaican accent. Murphy argues that the speech of the Jamaicans "is often incomprehensible to the English, in part because the Jamaicans are far better educated than the working-class English people they encounter"²⁰ but taking this in account could be questionable since not all the Jamaicans of the 'Windrush generation' were as educated as Hortense; for instance, there are some of them such as Kenneth who could be hardly compared to the other characters in the novel by his poor intelligence and lack of social skills.

From the point of view of the British, the black immigrants seemed like mute creatures, not able to speak the language, or at least not properly, which degraded them almost at the level of animals or primitive tribes who may wear the same clothes but are not comparable to the European society by any means. In this light, the white people talk of the Jamaicans as of savages and speak to them in simple English as if communicating with a child or a mentally ill person. Hortense in her thoughts remarks, that "Mrs Blight was a punctilious teacher. The shop with meat in the window she tell me is a butcher. The one with pretty pink cakes is the baker. And each time she tell me she want me to repeat the word."²¹ Hortense, who had been always proud of her pronunciation, is then humiliated when she is not able to order a can of condensed milk at the grocery store and after repeating her demand several times, she gives up and points her finger at the milk. Eventually, she decides to train her English by listening to BBC, where the Received Pronunciation had been spoken at the time, and learning to speak 'as the English', therefore the reception of the locals gets to be better.

Levy builds one of the most touching and powerful scenes of the novel on the language barrier as Gilbert stands out and speaks to Mr Bligh: "'You know what your trouble is, man?' he said. 'Your white skin. You think it makes you better than me. You think it give you the right to lord it over a black man. But you know what it make you?

²⁰ Anne Murphy, 'Stranger in the Empire: Language and Identity in the 'Mother Country'' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 125.

²¹ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 333.

You wan' know what your white skin make you, man? It make you white. That is all, man. White. No better, no worse than me - just white. ... we both just finish fighting a war - a bloody war - for the better world we wan' see. And on the same side - you and me. We both look on other men to see enemy. You and me, fighting for empire, fighting for peace. But still, after all that we suffer together, you wan' tell me I am worthless and you are not. Am I to be the servant and you are the master for all time? No. Stop this, man. Stop it now. We can work together, Mr Bligh. You no see? We must. Or else you just gonna fight me till the end?"²² This speech raises Gilbert in Hortense's eyes and she finally realizes the qualities of her husband whom she had considered a plain person; suddenly, she becomes aware of how intelligent and strong he is; although being married to him for a half of a year, only now she feels some sympathy for the young man and admires his courage. However, in contrast to what Hortense hears and how touching the monologue is for the readers, it is still only a monologue. The barrier in communication between Gilbert and Bernard does not allow the characters to come to terms with each other, Bernard is not able to understand and he stays ignorant to Gilbert's moving speech which might have had the potential to conciliate the two men through their memories and experience of war.

9 English daffodils

Although the shared language might seem to be a connecting element for the West Indians and it is a sign which clearly casts them out of the British society, is it not true that they would use the language in the same way. As for Hortense, her ability to speak what she considers to be flawless English is a matter of prestige. In Jamaica, as portrayed in the retrospective chapters, the spoken language divides the society into classes and even without any other hint being provided, an observer could easily sort the characters into various backgrounds, estimate their level of education and perhaps intelligence; or it would be at least very likely to judge an unknown person by these criteria.

In Levy's novel, Hortense is well aware of the importance of possessing a fluent speech; in her case, the urge to reach the ideal is a part of her snobbery, which forms a distance between her and the other characters. Besides the fact that Hortense regards the

²² Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 525.

language as a key to her future carrier, it becomes a token of prominence. Marquis claims that by using various voices, not only those of the narrators but also those of the other minor characters of the novel, Levy "calls attention to points of connection among peoples as well as moments of collision and difference in the making and unmaking of history."²³ Even among Jamaicans in their home country, there are remarkable differences in language which cause misunderstandings. In *Small Island*, Hortense tries to teach her grandmother, Miss Jewel, the proper English - the same as the King speaks - by reciting a piece of a poem by William Wordsworth on daffodils. The choice of the poem by the character is deliberate since Hortense thinks Wordsworth is the typical English gentleman whom all the members of the 'Empire' should admire. The passage which she chooses refers to the landscape in England and daffodils as the national symbol:

"I wander'd lonely as a cloud,
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils."²⁴

However, although at first Miss Jewel repeats the words of the poem correctly, eventually she ends up with her own version of the poem, influenced by her dialect; her imagination shapes the original text and transforms the verses into a considerably different form: "'Ah walk a cloud and den me float over de ill. An' me see Miss Hortense a look pon de daffodil dem.'"²⁵

Furthermore, the symbol of daffodils carries a very specific meaning to it in *Small Island*. As Sofía Muñoz-Valdivieso points out, "in postcolonial criticism, the teaching of this lyric has become to embody the constrictions of the imperial system of education in the colonies"²⁶. It was no accident that Levy chose this specific poem by William Wordsworth to appear in the novel. In the context of the British former colonies, it is a canonical text well known by the people since it became part of the educational program spread all over the British Empire at the time. Children at schools read this poem; the teachers were instructed to praise Wordsworth's work and encourage

²³ Claudia Marquis, 'Crossing Over: Postmemory and the Postcolonial Imaginary in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and *Fruit of the Lemon*' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 38.

²⁴ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 43.

²⁵ Levy, *Small Island*, 44.

²⁶ Sofía Muñoz-Valdivieso, 'Metaphors of Belonging in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Jonathan P. A. Sell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 109.

the pupils to learn the lyrics by heart so they could recite them in front of the parents during the meetings.

The poem was supposed to be an exemplary text for every child to see the Englishness in its pure form; the massive strategy aimed to teach the inhabitants of the colonies how to become part of the Empire by imitating the English lifestyle, habits and values, too. However, for a person who has never left their birthplace, it was truly difficult to imagine such an abstract notion that a daffodil might be for someone who has never seen one. Nevertheless, in the effort to approximate the ideal of being truly English, the West Indians would memorize words and concepts that did not make sense to them or were very vague and hardly imaginable in their real form. Marquiz remarks upon this issue that is sometimes called 'the daffodil gap'²⁷ by the post-colonial writers.

This absurd phenomenon is turned into a parody in Andrea Levy's novel, showing how Miss Jewel transforms the poem according to her taste; the very opposite effect than what the colonial education program struggled for. The Empire required its subjects to assimilate to Englishness, not the other way around. Levy faces this issue with humour but at the same time shows us how her character, Hortense, takes her education seriously and accepts all the information about the Mother country as a given unquestionable fact. Daffodils in the post-colonial writing became a metaphor for the Empire's power over its colonies and the control of how the next young generations would be raised and led by the central strategy.

The system of education given by a higher authority proved to be rather confusing for the Jamaicans since it was not constructed to support their natural identity based on their homeland, the place where they were born and spent their lives. Instead, it emphasized the role of the United Kingdom as a centre and heart of the whole Empire and focused on its leading role for the colonies. This system developed in the subjects strong loyalty towards the Mother country, but suppressed any form of 'pure' nationalism and patriotism related to Jamaica itself as a country. Here originates the question of identity of the West Indians; not only those who immigrated but of those who stayed in the Caribbean, as well. Their sense of belonging had been systematically divided and split into two lands of which one had always been preferred and put above the other.

²⁷ Claudia Marquis, 'Crossing Over: Postmemory and the Postcolonial Imaginary in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and *Fruit of the Lemon*' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 51.

Daffodils were used to target the aspects of Britain which should be admired and looked up to. They were also supposed to present Mother country in the best light, depicting it as a dreamed ideal land, a place where everyone would want to spend their lives. However, this image of Britain has been idealized for the purposes of popularity and has not reflected the present reality as shown in Levy's novel through the eyes of Queenie in her memories. England after the era of industrialization is far from the beautiful pastoral landscape that the children in Jamaican schools were told about and which became a largely spread myth based on a nearly religious devotion to an unknown yet omnipresent entity.

10 Mother country and her children

As indicated in the chapter above, the United Kingdom built up its image through a series of metaphors presented to the inhabitants of the colonies as a matter of fact. The strongest metaphor was undoubtedly the one presenting the relationship between the colonies and the United Kingdom as a filial bond of a child and a mother. This metaphor is widely understood among any culture and civilization of the world because the maternal bond stands in the centre of every society as the ground of family. The idea of a 'mother' carries the denotation of safety, love, intimacy, familiarity, responsibility, understanding, and moral as well as material support in the times of need. The Mother country was then described as a beautiful young woman, a smiling figure. It is a generally positive term which together with its simplicity, since it is an easily adopted principle, became an effective tool of control over an enormous mass of people around the world.

By establishing this basic premise of a bond, "metaphor has traditionally articulated the interaction between the metropolis and the colonies ... with the conventional filial metaphor of the centre of the empire as the 'mother country' and the colonies as her children."²⁸ This notion of being permanently young in the childhood age efficiently suppressed any possible desire for independency in the colonies; as metaphorical children, they were encouraged to imitate the Mother in every way and to be ready to help her if she would ask for it. Although this 'relationship' was actually one-sided, most of the West Indians truly felt loyalty towards the United Kingdom, they

²⁸ Sofia Muñoz-Valdivieso, 'Metaphors of Belonging in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Jonathan P. A. Sell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 99.

- in a sense - loved their mother and they were willing to give her any support possible, even join the war without questioning it for a moment. This blind loyalty is presented in *Small Island* in the character of Gilbert who repeatedly raises the metaphor of England as a Mother country and for whom "colonialism entails an immense sense of feeling British. His colonial education has taught him to revere the Mother Country ... This intimate bond inspires him to join the Royal Air Force when the War breaks out."²⁹ Gilbert Joseph fulfilled his duty, he fought for his Mother country in the war, but eventually he finds out that it will not grant him help in reward.

Both Hortense and Gilbert in their chapters mention how they were instructed at school about the Mother country; they had to memorize facts from geography and history, learning to name the rivers, mountains and cities that they have never seen before, in result of which they knew the distant land better than they knew their own homeland and the geography of Jamaica. The same effort to assimilate to the 'Mother' was put also in the training of good manners and behavior, always inspired by the United Kingdom as a kind of devotion.

As a counterpart to this figure of a 'Mother', who is presented to the West Indians during their lives in the Caribbean as a loving maternal entity but proves to be rather decrepit and hostile³⁰, there is Queenie; a white woman living in Britain for all her life. Queenie is in many aspects a realization of the abstract concept which was called a 'Mother'. When first meeting Hortense, Queenie is described by the black woman as "a blonde-haired pink-cheeked Englishwoman with eyes so blue they were the brightest thing in the street."³¹ Queenie, whose name implicates the trait of being 'royal' and her actual name is Victoria, referring to Queen Victoria who ruled England in the nineteenth century, has the qualities of a welcoming character; she does not mind taking coloured lodgers into her house as well as a woman of a lower status who appears to be a prostitute. This lack of prejudice and open-mindedness represents exactly the prototype of a candid maternal character who accepts the lost children, offers them not only a place to stay but also a comfort and sympathy, as she tries to help Hortense in her first days in London by guiding her around the city and through the shops. However, the response of the immigrants differs; Gilbert, who had been seeking

²⁹ Ole Laursen, "'Telling Her a Story': Remembering Trauma in Andrea Levy's Writing' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 65.

³⁰ Sofia Muñoz-Valdivieso, 'Metaphors of Belonging in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Jonathan P. A. Sell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 107.

³¹ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 13.

for the sense of coming home and finally meeting his distant family, is grateful for Queenie's help and similarly to the 'Mother country', he develops some loyalty and duty of protecting the Englishwoman and he would fight for her in the same way he would for Britain. Hortense, on the other hand, is too proud to accept help from Queenie and she joins the woman merely because she does not know how to refuse.

11 Dimensions of space in terms of identification

Space is an important category in Andrea Levy's narrative since it changes thoroughly during the time in the novel and it affects the characters in their actions. The spatial dimensions also vary, corresponding to the narrator of each chapter. Ellis points out the variety of locations in the novel by saying, that "the novelistic discourse traverses multiple geographic locations, including Jamaica, the racially segregated United States, India, and London. This accumulative and overlapping approach to time and space defies a singular articulation of the experience of migration and empire while suggesting instead a plurality of moments, locations, and perspectives."³² By presenting four different points of view, Levy in her polyvocal novel depicts how each of the characters understood the concept of space, its divisions and searching for an identity based on the place that could be labeled as a 'home'.

Dividing the spaces presented in *Small Island*, England - namely London and its periphery - is viewed by the characters as a central point to which they all relate and in which they all meet at the same time in 1948. For Queenie and Bernard, London is a place where they live, a place with a rich history that is stable and although changing and developing in the past provided them some solid ground to build their living and work on. Of course, the face of the city changed thoroughly after the Second World War and it hardly reminded the characters of London before the war.

11.1 Bernard's shock and refusal

Each of the characters react in their way to the image of post-war England; Bernard, who had spent the wartime in India, is shocked to see the transformation which happened in his country within few years. From his point of view, "England has shrunk. It was smaller than the place I'd left. Streets, shops, houses bore down like crowds,

³² Alicia E. Ellis, 'Cultural Production in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 71.

stifling even the feeble light that got through."³³ His perspective of the place he had left is shaped by the war experience, the need of seemingly endless travelling in the unknown country far from Britain. In Bernard's memories, London remained the same, but the reality has changed while he was abroad fighting for the United Kingdom. He suddenly does not recognize his home and comments on it by thinking that it was "hard to believe this had been my home for most of my life. Nothing was familiar. Had it always looked so exhausted? So friable? Buildings decaying and run down. Rotting ashes. Cracked plaster. Obscene gaps where houses once stood."³⁴ This is the first shock which Bernard experiences; the contrast of memories and reality of the visual image of the city.

The second shock comes soon after when he sees a black woman - Hortense - in his street. Moreover, after finding out that this woman accompanies his own wife and lives in their house, Bernard is truly disgusted. For him, he chose to undergo the terrors of war to protect his country but now, when the war is finally over, he finds strangers invading his territory. As many other Englishmen after the war, Bernard expected that Britain would need to be reconstructed, repaired and then that it would return to its previous appearance step by step. However, he has not admitted to himself that the former face of England might have been lost forever and that the post-war development of his country might turn into a 'colonialism in reverse'; Bernard primarily refuses this fact and considers the immigrants from the West Indies unwanted strangers and even enemies entering foreign borders similarly to the war times but as such, they should be chased out and sent back to where they came from. He is driven by his racial prejudices and similarly, the overall Anglo-Saxon majority in the United Kingdom was not willing to accept the immigrants as their equals and as the citizens of Britain. On the individual level, Bernard tries to win back his home; to force the black lodgers out of the house in which he succeeds but he is not able to do this around the whole United Kingdom and eventually, as Fernández states, "Bernard is obliged to dismantle his whole system of beliefs and accept the presence of Black citizens in London."³⁵

³³ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 424.

³⁴ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 428.

³⁵ Irene Pérez Fernández, 'Representing Third Spaces, Fluid Identities And Contested Spaces In Contemporary British Literature' (*Atlantis* 31.2, 2009), 150.

11.2 Sharing the space

Opposed to Bernard, Queenie, his wife, is clearly an advocate of the newly coming immigrants. She was born in Britain just like Bernard, they both grew up in a similar atmosphere, but she decides that her opinion on the West Indians would be quite the opposite. Fernandez further points out that "all members of British society are forced to make adjustments and redefine their sense of belonging and this is an issue that was not explored in depth in early Black British texts. In relation to the latter, Levy's novel portrays a crucial moment in British history and marks the beginning of present-day multicultural British society."³⁶ Queenie is, unlike the rest of the British society, not concerned with the skin colour of her lodgers in which she might be considered as mature among the other Englishwomen; partly it is because she secretly hopes that by doing something what her husband would not approve and taking in the coloured lodgers, she could challenge the destiny and make Bernard come back to complain about it himself. The other reason for Queenie to accept the immigrants is her natural temper. She is free of the conventionally spread prejudices, she proves to be a frank friendly person who takes care of the others, but also, she needs some help herself since her husband has left her to run their house and she feels lonely, too. For Queenie, who has experienced the war in England and watched the destruction of the country during the wartime, it is not exactly crucial to keep the space for herself only. She offers the rooms in her house to the immigrants, sharing the place to live and by this, making a welcoming and gracious gesture. By this event, Levy depicts - on a small scale - probably the ideal dialogue between the metropolis and the colonies in terms of negotiating and co-existence within the given space.

11.3 The immigrants' sense of space and belonging

For the immigrants, Hortense and Gilbert, space is a valuable and desired property since even back in Jamaica, they could not relate themselves fully to some specific place and base their identity upon it. While raised to look up to the 'Mother country', they never became truly rooted in the West Indies. However, even after travelling to Europe in the hope of finding their identity there in the United Kingdom, they lack any sense of belonging to the country. Not only because they feel rejected but

³⁶ Irene Pérez Fernández, 'Representing Third Spaces, Fluid Identities And Contested Spaces In Contemporary British Literature' (Atlantis 31.2, 2009), 150.

foremost, they do not understand the local mentality, they are neither allowed nor able to become part of the British society as they would wish. Instead of finding a home overseas, the characters soon realize they must create the home themselves even in the unfriendly environment and the atmosphere of the racial hatred among the English society.

With this realization, there is a hope for Gilbert and Hortense to free themselves and eventually achieve their desired goal to settle down in the United Kingdom which is no longer seen as a 'mother' to them. The gaining of the space by the immigrants is then analogous to the former British colonization; a small group of strangers came to an unfriendly land of many dangers which had been already inhabited by another race that only unwillingly lets go of some of its grounds.

12 Mother country seen as an old house

Considering the dimension of space and metaphors in *Small Island*, the key setting of the novel is England, which is in Andrea Levy's text symbolized as the old buildings in London. Levy builds up the metaphor of the houses which had been damaged by the war, representing the post-war bombed-out country, in contrast to the metaphors originated in the British educational system as taught to the children in the colonies and well-known among the generations of Jamaicans who were raised in the mid-twentieth century there.

While Britain has been already presented in the novel as an old wretched woman instead of a young beautiful lady, comparing the country to old rundown houses brings up again the notion of an ending life; it is implied that the time of being strong, authoritative and representative is gone now. The impact of the war on the United Kingdom is only a part of the reasons since the golden age of the British Empire comes to its end and the colossus is no longer maintainable by the weakened metropolis; and as Sofia Muñoz-Valdivieso states, "London's rundown houses are metaphors of the declining Empire"³⁷ and similarly to the houses, which can be reconstructed and perhaps brought back into their previous form only by an effort of people to re-establish the given space under new conditions, the post-colonial writers emphasize the role of

³⁷ Sofia Muñoz-Valdivieso, 'Metaphors of Belonging in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Jonathan P. A. Sell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 106.

colonies in the second half of the twentieth century and their indisputable part in British history.

In *Small Island*, the metaphor of an old rundown house stands not only for the decay of the Empire but also simultaneously for the hope; its potential is highly important for the immigrants in the novel since it shows a gap in the overall inhabited space of the United Kingdom. By taking care of a destroyed building, the characters gain a place to live and to relate their identity to. Hortense and Gilbert at the end of the novel eventually find a glimmer in all the gloom - they are promised to obtain living in a house which they would help to reconstruct and which they might adjust to their specific wants. By this, the characters create their own home - a place where they would belong for the first time as not only children but as independent individuals responsible for themselves.

By negotiating and gaining space through compromises, the Jamaican characters in Levy's novel possibly made their first step to settle down in the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, in the 1950s and later decades, this gained space is still a separated unit within the predominant Anglo-Saxon society.

13 Small islands

The title of Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* can be understood either literally or metaphorically, again. Jamaica and Britain are both real islands and as Murphy suggests, the "'small island' of the title might refer as easily to the narrow, bland and provincial England as to the sunny Caribbean island of Jamaica, but these islands prove to be significantly different,"³⁸ and of these two, Jamaica has been the inferior subject as a former colony of the United Kingdom; and although when compared to the surrounding islands in the Caribbean Sea, it is the third largest, from the European point of view, its size is measured in terms of importance.

The importance of a subjected country could be questioned but moreover, it is the independency of the nation and its potential which makes Jamaica of the half of the twentieth century a small island considering itself a child of a superior entity, the British Empire. Furthermore, Jamaica is viewed as a small island not only by the Europeans but also by the volunteering Jamaican soldiers who had left their homeland to serve in the

³⁸ Anne Murphy, 'Stranger in the Empire: Language and Identity in the 'Mother Country'' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 129.

Second World War - just like Gilbert in the novel - and after returning back from the war, they find their country to be rather small, compared to the rest of the world they had seen. This shrinking effect settles in their minds and it is one of the reasons why in 1948, when offered to travel back to the United Kingdom and help the 'Mother country' with its recovery, many of them did not hesitate to pay the tickets and leave the island, that was too small for them already.

Another option is to look at the 'small island' as Britain. From the point of view of the subject British colonies, the image of the United Kingdom was shaped by the propaganda and colonial campaigns, too. In the novel, the Jamaican characters would not talk of the metropolis in a bad light, nor would they consider it small simply because it has never been presented to them in such a manner. However, in analogy to the Jamaican volunteers who had left their country to travel overseas, a very similar effect can be seen in Bernard's narrative. He had willingly joined the army and spent the wartime in the frontier in India. Coming back to England several years later, he had to reconsider his memories of Britain since it seemed quite different, the buildings and the whole landscape somewhat smaller. This feeling of disillusion confuses Bernard and makes him feel strange in his own homeland.

Besides the actual islands presented in the novel, there are other implications of a small island as a metaphorical one; Sofia Muñoz-Valdivieso in her study mentions, that - based also on the readers' reactions - "'small island' is also the metropolis of a formerly great empire, now shrivelled and isolated in its rejection of peoples from other locations."³⁹ This metaphor together with the metaphor of the old rundown houses supports the image of Britain as an ageing colonial empire that has lost its former power over the subjects and struggles to keep its prestige in the eyes of the world. It is indeed obvious in the 1948, as depicted in the novel, that the British Empire has to reconsider its principles. Levy in *Small Island* reflects the era of British modern history in which the new sense of 'being English' started to develop. The long-time concept of the Empire with Britain in the center as an untouchable core is being challenged with the coming waves of immigrants who are not exactly strangers since officially, they belong to the United Kingdom just like any other Anglo-Saxon Englishman. Andrea Levy offers the readers an insight of how the 'small island' created by the former colonial empire transformed from a relatively monoethnic society into a polyethnic one. As

³⁹ Sofia Muñoz-Valdivieso, 'Metaphors of Belonging in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing*, ed. Jonathan P. A. Sell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 107.

Leusmann points out, Levy in her work "underlines the importance of balancing various histories and ethnicities and thus challenging attempts of keeping notions of Britishness defined in too narrow terms."⁴⁰

In my opinion, there is one more metaphorical meaning to the title; in terms of the Caribbean diaspora, in which its members had to live 'separated' from the major population, divided from the British people by an abstract barrier, this barrier might be also seen as an outline of a 'small island'. The community members would then be the constituting elements of this imagined 'island', lying within the rest of the British population. Such an 'island' stands on its own and keeps only little contact with the rest of the world and although spread into various places, it is easily recognizable at the first glance. Only by the process of communicating with the surrounding mass and leading a dialogue can the imagined small island eventually start blending; this is however a slow process of deals and compromises during which some metaphorical bridges can be built to reach the 'outer' world and become part of it once for good.

14 At the edge of the diaspora

Since Levy's *Small Island* takes place either in the past or in the present which is for the characters the year of the Empire Windrush, 1948, unlike in other Levy's previous works, there is not the question of the next generations of the Caribbean immigrants raised. However, the theme of descendents appears when the readers find out that Queenie is pregnant and the father of her child is a black man, a RAF soldier whom she had met during the war. Until the very last moment, Queenie is able to hide her pregnancy from the neighbours and the lodgers, too, but after her husband's return, she unexpectedly gives birth to a black baby. This comes as a great shock for all the other narrators, even more as it occurs to them at first that the father of the child is Gilbert.

This child represents one of the first offspring of both the British and Jamaican origin which does not belong to either of these two groups. It represents one of the earliest blending of the West Indians and the English; but, unfortunately, it is rejected by both the sides; the father, Michael Roberts, had left Queenie before he could find out she was expecting a baby. More importantly, Queenie herself, who has been portrayed

⁴⁰ Harald Leusmann, 'Diaspora Consciousness in Black British Literature' (Muncie: Ball State University, 2009), 144.

as an ideal maternal figure, the realization of 'Mother country' for the Jamaicans, refuses to take care of her own child and fails as a mother by asking Hortense and Gilbert to take the baby and raise it as their own. She fails to give the child an unquestioning love free of prejudices although she had been brave enough to be seen with the black lodgers in the streets and support them. The change of Queenie's and Bernard's attitudes is a shocking point in which Queenie desperately argues: "'He's coloured, Bernard.' I was crying. Drinking fat salty tears. 'And... and he's not your son.' That shut him up. Flung him back in his seat with the blow. 'You might think you can do it now,' I told him, 'while he's a little baby saying nothing. But what about when he grows up? A big, strapping coloured lad. And people snigger at you in the street and ask you all sorts of awkward questions. ... All those proper decent neighbours out in the suburbs, are you going to tell them to mind their own business?'"⁴¹ Although Queenie is offered the chance to raise her child, she strictly refuses this option and Michael, the baby, moves together with Hortense and Gilbert to their new home. It becomes a member of the Caribbean diaspora as if born to Jamaican parents. It would be only hardly imaginable that a British couple in 1948 would raise a coloured child; the atmosphere in England has not been free of prejudices yet and to keep the conclusion of her novel believable, Levy in fact had no other option. Still, Ellis argues that "the birth of the child, even if it must be given away for adoption in a society where colonial discourses still persist, heralds the birth of British multicultural identities in the postcolonial world. Queenie's child, just like her own childhood experiences described in the 'Prologue,' prompts the reader to consider moments of transition and transformation in culture."⁴² The novel is open-ended but with the perspective of a home for Hortense, Gilbert and Michael it offers hope for conciliation of the diaspora and its slow blending into the British society and gaining the status of 'Englishness' after all.

⁴¹ Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2004), 521.

⁴² Alicia E. Ellis, 'Cultural Production in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*' in *Special Issue on Andrea Levy*, (EnterText, 2012), 78.

Conclusion

Andrea Levy focuses throughout her work on the topic of Caribbean diaspora in the United Kingdom and in her novel *Small Island*, she presents the issue from two points of view; the immigrants' as well as the British. She uses various narrators to fully transmit the notion of the post-war situation and identifies with both sides authentically. Levy reconstructs the crucial event of the history of the West Indian minority, the arrival of the Empire Windrush, and provides a close insight into the characters' mentalities. In *Small Island*, there are metaphors as the key tools of the British Empire used to control the colonies but moreover, the metaphors are parts of the barrier which divides the immigrants and the major British population.

This barrier, based mainly on prejudices and cultural misunderstandings as well as racial hatred, includes various features of which some have been analysed in the thesis. One of the main features is the language difference, creating a gap between the characters as they are not able to communicate with each other and therefore their attempts to understand the motivations of the other party are predestined to fail. The next significant feature supporting the formation of diaspora is the contrast of upbringing in Britain and in Jamaica. The thesis focused mainly on the educational system in the British colonies and its negative impact on the mentality of the nation which is led to consider itself of a lower status and being permanently dependent on the guidance provided by the Empire. This subordination was achieved by a series of metaphors taught to the inhabitants of the colonies since their early age, of which the strongest was the filial bond of the 'Mother country' to its children symbolizing the relationship of the colonies towards the unquestionable authority. Another important topic, carrying a remarkable role in the constitution of a diaspora, is the dimension of space; it is a crucial condition for a nation to base its identity on a certain place where it would belong. However, the characters of immigrants in *Small Island* lack this sense of having a home. Instead of finding their space, they undergo the process of negotiation and gain themselves the opportunity to create a home. In my thesis, I have analyzed how Levy reflects the start of a still lasting dialogue between the United Kingdom and its colonies in which the concept of 'Englishness' had to be reconsidered and broadened to correspond to the actual reality.

Levy draws attention to the part of the British history which has not been articulated in the official narrative discourse until the 1990s and offers an authentic

view of the origins of ethnic diaspora in the United Kingdom and the transformation of Britain from a monoethnic society into a polyethnic one. She reminds us of the legacy and significance of the minorities within the major society; although the background of her novels is very specific, it can be generally understood and identified with by various ethnic groups in the world.

Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo analyzovat diasporické prvky v díle Andrey Levyové, konkrétně v románu *Small Island*, který byl vydán roku 2004. Levyová je dcerou imigrantů, kteří se přistěhovali do Spojeného království jako jedni z tzv. 'Windrush generation', tedy během první poválečné vlny imigrace z bývalých britských kolonií do Británie. Prvotním impulzem této imigrace byla výzva britské vlády, která po druhé světové válce potřebovala obsadit pracovní pozice v poničené zemi. Z nedostatku dělníků tedy zahájila kampaň motivující obyvatele kolonií k tomu, aby se za relativně finančně přijatelných podmínek vydali přes oceán pomoci své „Matce“ Anglii. Od roku 1948 získali navíc obyvatelé britských kolonií díky uvedení v platnost nového zákona status občanů Spojeného království spolu se stejnými cestovními pasy. Mnoho obyvatel Jamajky tedy pod vidinou stabilní práce, bydlení a možnosti strávit zbytek života v Británii spolu se svými rodinami skutečně podniklo cestu, zvláště pak muži, kteří během druhé světové války dobrovolně sloužili pro armádu Spojeného království.

V první části práce jsem se zabývala poválečnou situací v Británii tak, jak ji popisuje Levyová na základě zkušeností svých rodičů v románu *Small Island*. Ty se odrážejí v pohledu dvou vypravěčů jamajského původu, Hortense a Gilberta, jejichž očekávání spojená s příchodem do „Matky“ Anglie, jak byli obyvatelé kolonií zvyklí nazývat Spojené království, se výrazně liší od skutečnosti, s níž jsou konfrontováni. Británie konce čtyřicátých let dvacátého století byla zemí, v níž vládly rasové předsudky vůči odlišným etnikům, a místní většinová společnost nebyla ochotná přijmout karibské imigranty mezi sebe jakožto rovnocenné občany. Andrea Levyová ve svém románu využívá další dva vypravěče, konkrétně postavy Britů, Queenie a jejího manžela Bernarda. Tito nabízejí pohled na situaci, která bývá označována jako „zpětná kolonizace“, z pohledu Britů. Bernard reprezentuje tehdejší většinové rasistické názory, podle nichž byli přistěhovalci z bývalých kolonií primitivními vetřelci a škůdci. Jeho bezprostřední reakcí na změny nastávající v jeho vlasti je tedy šok a pohoršení. Opakem a také zjevnou výjimkou je postava Queenie, která jako jedna z mála přivítá imigranty bez předsudků, nabídne jim ubytování a sympatie, čímž si proti sobě popudí sousedství.

Dále jsem se ve své práci zabývala otázkou kulturní identity, která je základní problematikou všech etnických menšin a diaspor. Vycházela jsem z Hallovy koncepce, podle níž je kulturní identita ve svém širším smyslu nejen otázkou bytí, ale také postupného získávání. Takováto náležitost k určité národnosti, v našem případě tedy k

britské společnosti, se pak podle Halla zakládá nejen na historii, ale je to neustále se proměňující pojem. Ani diaspora samotná tedy není statický pevně ohraničený prvek, nýbrž je částečně prostupnou a její hranice se rozšiřují na základě dialogu s většinovou dominující společností. Levyová ve svém díle zobrazuje proces utváření etnické diaspor v jejích počátcích, rovněž však podobně jako Hall dokazuje, že vydělení menšin nemusí být trvalého charakteru.

Mezi základní prvky, jimiž je jamajská diaspora ve *Small Island* charakterizována, patří jazyk přistěhovalců. Ten se značně liší od mluvy Britů a postavy, které žily v domnění, že mluví stejnou angličtinou jako rodilí Britové, tak naráží na zdánlivě nepřekonatelnou jazykovou bariéru. Tato jim pak zcela brání v komunikaci a pouze prohlubuje mezirasovou propast.

Dalším neméně podstatným znakem diaspor se stává rovněž výchova obyvatel britských kolonií, kteří jsou od dětství skrze kolonizační vzdělávací systém vedeni prostřednictvím souboru metafor k podřízenosti a silné loajalitě vůči Británii. Základní metaforou, na níž je závislost kolonií stavěna, je mateřské pouto. Spojené království pak bylo představováno jakožto milující laskavá „Matka“, k níž mají její pomyslné děti vzhlízet, napodobovat ji, snažit se jí pomoci a potěšit ji. Británie se v očích mnoha Jamajčanů jevila téměř jako země zaslíbená, zároveň však nebyl v politice kolonizační velmoci prostor pro budování nezávislosti kolonií, což ještě umocnilo následný šok a vystřízlivění přistěhovalců po příchodu do Spojeného království.

Z pohledu etnických menšin je zcela zásadní také pojetí prostoru, který je nezbytným požadavkem pro identifikaci jedinců a vytvoření domova. Tento prostor však postavy přistěhovalců nezískávají snadno a musejí si ho vydobýt. Jejich hledání domova ve vysněné zemi, o níž smýšlely do svého příchodu jako o vzdálené vlasti, se pak stává vytvářením domova. Zosobněním „Matky“ se v románu stává postava Queenie, která se ujme role ochránkyně a poskytne imigrantům pokoje k pronájmu ve svém domě. Queenie, jejíž přezdívka odkazuje ke královně Viktorii a k urozené povaze, oživuje metaforu mateřské nekritické lásky tak, jak by měla vypadat.

Levyová pracuje nejen s tradičně známými metaforami, zakořeněnými v koloniální společnosti, ale vytváří i své vlastní. Válkou poničené opuštěné domy v okrajových čtvrtích Londýna tak symbolizují postupně probíhající rozklad kdysi mocného koloniálního impéria, jakým Británie byla. Její někdejší síla však není již v polovině dvacátého století udržitelná a velmoc nevyhnutelně chátrá.

V předposlední pojednává bakalářská práce o metafoře obsažené v názvu díla, tedy malém ostrově, který může mít několik možných výkladů. Prvním z nich je ostrov Jamajka, který se svou vzdáleností zdá být malý a rovněž nevýznamný ve své podřízené pozici pod silou koloniální velmoci. Stejně tak ovšem může být malým ostrovem i Británie, která se Bernardovi po návratu z války v Indii zdá být menší než když ji opouštěl. Kromě těchto dvou reálně existujících ostrovů však nalézáme v díle také odkaz na zmenšující se britské impérium, které ztrácí na síle, a vliv, jež mělo na svá území ve světě, se pomalu ale jistě vytrácí. Posledním ryze myšlenkovým ostrovem pak je také samotná diaspora, tedy izolovaná skupina jedinců, které spojuje společný původ, osud a cíle.

Závěrem se práce věnuje otázce prostupování hranic diaspory skrze postavu dítěte - míšence, potomka Queenie a jamajského vojáka. V roce 1948 však nemá ještě dítě dvojí etnické příslušnosti místo v britské společnosti a nevyhnutelně se tedy zařazuje ke karibské menšině a je vychováváno Jamajčany. V závěru románu tedy Levyová nastiňuje budoucí prolínání etnických skupin v Británii a jejich sbližování, které však trvá po zbytek dvacátého století a má své dopady dodnes. Andrea Levyová se zásadně podílí na zvýšení informovanosti většinové britské společnosti v otázce karibské menšiny a rovněž nabízí nový zpětný pohled na nedávné dějiny lidstva interpretované odlišně oproti predominantnímu diskurzu.

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Synopsis

The bachelor thesis deals with the topic of diaspora in the work of Andrea Levy, namely in her novel *Small Island*. It analyzes the background of the establishing ethnic minority coming from the West Indies into the United Kingdom in 1948, the development of the diaspora as described in the novel and reconstructs the process and features which constituted this phenomenon.

Anotace

Bakalářská práce se zabývá diasporickými prvky v díle Andrey Levyové, konkrétně v jejím románu *Small Island*. Analyzuje původ a vznik etnické menšiny pocházející z Karibské oblasti na území Spojeného království roku 1948, dále rozebírá vývoj diaspory, jak byl popsán v románu *Small Island* a rekonstruuje na základě tohoto textu proces a znaky, které utvářely tento fenomén.

Bibliographic entry

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