Reconstructing Identity in Velma Pollard's Creative Works: a Case Study of *Homestretch* and *Crown Point and other Poems*

By

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A project submitted to the Department of Literature, School of Humanities and Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts, Kenyatta University.

May, 2014
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or award in any other university.

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This work is dedicated to my ever supportive family and to my father and mother, my benefactors and mentors.
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the reconstruction of identity in Velma Pollard’s creative works with a particular focus on *Homestretch* and *Crown Point and other Poems*. The study primarily draws on the fact that the search for identity has been an issue of prime concern in the Caribbean. The question of identity prompted many creative writers from the region to try and reconstruct their identity as expressed in their writings. While focusing on Pollard’s *Homestretch* and *Crown Point and other Poems*, the study explores and shows how individual characters appear unsettled in their own homes, the experiences they undergo as emigrants and the factors that trigger remigration and their eventual appreciation of their own countries as a home. A postcolonial theoretical framework has been employed in this study as we sought to examine the reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism which entails destabilizing the western way of thinking thus creating space for the marginalized groups to speak and produce alternatives to dominant discourse. The study relies on textual analysis as its main method of data analysis. A close reading of Velma Pollard’s novel *Homestretch* and selected poems from *Crown Point and other Poems* was conducted to obtain primary data for analysis. Secondary sources such as critical works, literary commentaries and other relevant publications dealing with the question of identity in the Caribbean were consulted to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the subject of identity. For easier analyses, data obtained was structured into five chapters and analyzed through a thematic approach in line with the objectives of this study. This research has found out that the Caribbean characters feel haunted by unsettledness in their island territories. Many of them are forced to go out and look for their sense of belonging in the overseas nations. The unexpected challenges that confront them make them look back to their homeland and consider coming back to settle there and appreciate the island territories as home. Out of this study, it is recommended that a comprehensive study be conducted on Velma Pollard’s other works that were not subject to this analysis, while still under reconstruction of identity as a motif, a comparative analysis be conducted between the creative works of Velma Pollard and other creative writers from the region to establish the extent to which they share the same vision for the Caribbean people. It is also recommended that a similar analysis on Velma Pollard can be conducted using different theoretical and analytical methods.
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

These definitions are deployed in specific reference to the Caribbean region and its people.

**Identity:** This refers to a situation in which people of Jamaica and other Caribbean island territories want a sense of belonging and fulfillment in their homeland having gone through a series of humiliating experiences in overseas nations.

**Identity crisis:** It is a critical situation in which people of the Caribbean region who have migrated to overseas nations out of the experiences of disillusionment and loneliness feel a sense of loss, of not belonging and not knowing what to do.

**Diaspora:** This refers to people of Jamaica who have left the island and dispersed to North America, England and other parts of the world in search of education and better opportunities.

**Caribbean and West Indies:** These two terms are used interchangeably to refer to the same region or territory.

**Alienation:** It is a situation in which the West Indians who have migrated to England and America feel detached from their fellow men having lost their cultural base and are unable to fit into their setting.

**Remigration:** This is the process in which the Caribbean people who had left their original homeland in search of opportunities are coming back to live and appreciate the Caribbean region as a home.

**Reconstruction:** This is the development of a new and positive relationship with one’s native environment.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"Of all creations, the most universal is that of identity, being common to every being whose existence has any duration." (Humes 1739:5-6)

1.1 Background to the Study

David Humes quoted in Woodward’s *Identity and Difference* (1997), in the above quotation, explains why men and women including artists everywhere in the world have been engaged in a never ending pursuit of their personal or national identity. As we seek to comprehend identity, it is imperative to know that identities are shaped by dynamic relationships to our environments. The search for identity may take different forms and so identity that pervades Caribbean writings emanates from its disrupted history marked by slavery, colonization, indenture, displacement and emancipation.

It can be said that the people of the Caribbean region have had common historical experiences and that such experiences might have yielded similar attempts towards shaping their identities. Laughlin, N. (2006) in an article in *The Arts Journal* Vol.2, quotes Ian McDonald as stating that:

The older I get, the better I understand myself. The more I see territories through and around this body of water, the more I realize that I am a Caribbean person and the complicated divisions of ethnicity, language and island that run through these territories.
do not fundamentally threaten that notion of Caribbeaness that I share with the millions that I conceive as compatriots. (2)

However, it is important to recognize the fact that there are various historical experiences that are unique to each territory or cultural group in the Caribbean. Selwyn R. Cudjoe affirms this presupposition when he says:

Needless to say, each group did not experience the Caribbean in the same way or, for that matter did they respond in exactly the same way. So while one may speak of a Caribbean experience or a Caribbean identity, it is necessary to be aware of the nuances of each specific experience and how it played out in the region. (2001:2)

The question of identity has been such a recurrent concern in the Caribbean and has dominated West Indian writings; with various West Indian writers like George Lamming, Derek Walcott, Sam Selvon and Michael Anthony among others showing different perspectives to the issue. For instance, in his poetry, Derek Walcott sees the landscape of each territory as signifying the uniqueness of the people but believes that as they find their new selves, they are able to fit into the world at large. He says in his Nobel acceptance speech that, “Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary; our archipelago, becoming a synonym of pieces broken off from the original continent... and the process of poetry is one of excavation and self-discovery.” (261) Further, Walcott in one of his poems “The Train” questions his identity - the origin of his white grandfather and his blackness and comments on the despair of those who cannot trace their true history particularly with regard to colour. “The Train” symbolizes Walcott’s movement from one place to another in pursuit of his true identity. The long arduous journey in
the train makes him hate the condition he is in and visualize how hard it is for one to acquire their true identity.

Edward Braithwaite portrays the uniqueness of the Caribbean in his poetry as shown in his trilogy *The Arrivants*. In his poetry, Braithwaite attempts to link the Caribbean culture with the African culture by recreating and redefining the essence of his black colour and the West Indian experiences. He traces the attitudes and behaviours of people of the African diaspora through history in his poems such as “A return to Africa” and “In the Islands”. Gordon Rohlehr writes of Braithwaite’s trilogy that “there is constant attempt to reconcile the individual with society; the solo voice with the chorus; the alienated travelling consciousness with firm anchorage and harbour in acknowledged roots.” (1981:16) Ayo Kehinde also comments that one major thematic strand that runs through Braithwaite’s *The Arrivants* is a quest for identity; an attempt to come to terms with an overwhelming past in itself and still remain overwhelming in its undesirable intrusion into the present.

Novelists from the region have not been left behind in the identity discourse that characterizes the Caribbean. George Lamming (1953) in *In the Castle of my Skin* uses children as characters to foreground West Indian experiences. He emphasizes the maturing consciousness of his child hero, Boy G, and his friends like Trumper as they seek to understand themselves and their society amidst confining restraints of colonialism. Older characters such as Mr. Foster, the Shoemaker, are portrayed as being at the crossroads for they could neither inherit their cultural traditions nor feel one with their community, hence they had to leave. (In the same vein), Christopher Odhiambo (1991) in “Caribbean Definition: Its Effect on Vision and Form in George Lamming’s
Novels” argues that Lamming’s novels collectively “transcend the history of subjugation” and allow the colonized to “give face to the faceless and diminished personality.” (151)

V.S Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) is an archetypal novel that explores Caribbean identity. Mr. Biswas struggles in life for his identity, social position and material possessions. His life oscillates in a sense of unsettledness, homelessness, dependency, poverty and lack of recognition. He fights to anchor himself into his own house – a symbol for everything that life denied him and a sense of rootedness in his environment.

Velma Pollard’s novel, *Homestretch*, from a superficial reading gives prominence to several characters emigrating from Jamaica to America and England in search of a better life and opportunities. Later, these same characters remigrate to Jamaica and make it their home. The novel brings together experiences from different “worlds” and the choices that the characters have to make based on their varied experiences. This formed the basis of this study as we sought to interrogate the identity matrix that various characters are confronted with in line with their experiences in Jamaica and abroad as portrayed in Pollard’s *Homestretch* and *Crown Point and other Poems*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The question of identity has been a common concern among many creative writers especially in the Caribbean. Creative writers from this region have made various contributions towards the understanding of identity in a region that has a history of extermination, indenture, slavery and emigration. Many of these writers like Sam Selvon, George Lamming and Derek Walcott have
aptly articulated their vision of a united Caribbean amidst its cultural diversity. While focusing on Velma Pollard’s novel *Homestretch* and selected poems from her anthology *Crown Point and other Poems*, this study explored another dimension of the exploration of identity that is, how characters configure their own identity and cope with the various challenges regarding their place in their society after emigration and remigration. The study interrogated the characters’ perceptions and interpretations of the process of becoming actualized in their homeland.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study was based on the following objectives:

1. To critically identify and analyze ways in which Velma Pollard depicts the causes of emigration in the selected works.

2. To investigate ways in which characters are affected by emigration in the selected works.

3. To examine the various ways that Pollard reconstructs identity in her works.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does Velma Pollard depict the causes of emigration in her creative works?

2. How are characters affected by emigration in the selected works?

3. Which are the various ways that Velma Pollard reconstructs identity in her works?
1.5 Research Assumptions

This study is guided by the assumptions that:

1. Velma Pollard cites different reasons to depict the causes of emigration in her creative works.

2. The nature of characterization shows that emigrant characters are affected by emigration in the selected works.

3. Velma Pollard employs various ways to reconstruct identity in her works.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Identity is a crucial phenomenon in human life. It explains an individual’s worth and place in society besides the relationship between self and other. At a glance, the novel *Homestretch* in its treatment of identity conveys invaluable lessons on identity to both West Indian and non-West Indian scholars. This study sought to demonstrate that the novel contains a message of hope that though identity crisis is a catastrophe crippling development in the contemporary world, not all is lost when people look back and return to embrace their roots.

Defining Caribbean identity is problematic as this region is at a crossroads of cultures due to its disrupted history marked by experiences of colonization, importation of slaves, indenture, displacement and emancipation. As a result, identity has become a major preoccupation in creative works from the region. In highlighting the importance of the Caribbean identity, Adams Jama (1999) in “Psychosocial Themes around the Need for Identity” comments:
The Caribbean People have always been unsettled as the region is defined by the constant movements within islands, between islands and from islands to the metropoles in search of a civic place in which to develop and construct an authentic identity. (29)

The Caribbean space has for centuries been contested because of its location and productivity. It has been argued that land and to some extent location are powerful organizers of human behaviour. Therefore, the loss of the physical connection to a space among the Caribbean people is profoundly influential on why the Caribbean pre-occupation is with their identity. By examining how various characters struggle to readjust their lives in relation to place, this study sought to show that there is an intricate relationship that exists between place and the people’s identity.

Velma Pollard is an accomplished Jamaican poet, novelist and short story writer. In spite of her literary achievements both locally and internationally, Pollard’s works of art have attracted little critical attention and this partly forms the basis of this study. Hence this study focused on Velma Pollard’s conceptualization of identity in the Caribbean. Though other major Caribbean writers like Lamming and Walcott have addressed identity in different ways, Velma Pollard’s novel Homestretch is unique in its incorporation of young, middle-aged, old, learned and semi-learned characters and varying episodes that communicate identity from different perspectives. This study therefore sought to explore Pollard’s perspective of identity both in Homestretch and in her poetry and contribute to expanding the existing body of knowledge regarding identity in the Caribbean region.
Additionally, Pollard’s creative works have stretched the question of identity further through emigration and remigration which formed the basis of this study. Thus our critical focus on both *Homestretch* and *Crown Point and other Poems* was conducted to understand how Pollard tackles the question of identity.

### 1.7 Scope and Delimitations

In the present study, we focused on the treatment of identity in Velma Pollard’s creative works. However, since it was not possible to analyze all her works, this study delimited itself to her novel *Homestretch* and selected poems from her anthology *Crown Point and other Poems* such as “Kingston”, “Bitterland”, “Yaller/Yellow” and “Rouseau August ’79”. These selections of poems together with the novel *Homestretch* reinforce our understanding in discussing issues that trigger emigration of the Caribbean characters from their island territories, the experiences that these characters went through in the land of emigration and the process of remigration. The study further delimited itself to postcolonial theory and thematic approach as its methods of teasing out the manifestations of identity in the selected texts for this study.

### 1.8 Literature Review

In our review of literature relating to the question of identity, we have adopted a historical approach. In this, we have examined identity as a historical phenomenon in the Caribbean. In this regard, our analysis of literature shows how the theme of identity has been treated over time.
Additionally, in our examination of related literature, we also engaged a chronological stance based on the growing criticisms regarding identity in the Caribbean.

1.8.1 The Question of Identity in the Caribbean

Martin Carter in “The Question of Identity” (1971) argues that there are themes that are specifically Caribbean such as slavery and the quest for identity. Carter defines identity as a cultural concept that can only be explained in cultural terms and it inevitably takes on a historical dimension. He comments that even before the arrival of different people to the Caribbean setting, the essential structure of the society was already set up. Their entrance was only entry of newcomers into an already established social and psychological order. According to Carter, as a man makes himself so does he make his identity so are the West Indians, in constructing their identity after the disruption of their history and livelihood. He concludes that the quest for identity is a theme specific to the Caribbean settings.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o in Homecoming (1972) points out that George Lamming, a Caribbean novelist and critic, emphasizes the need for the Caribbean people to have a definition so as to live a settled life. He remarks:

What is the West Indian identity? It is the process in which the West Indians are and will continue to be involved as they choose their tasks and recreate their situations. There is no fixity of the location in this defining process. Identity is the location. The final product is a place where man is truly man and the world he lives in is a human place. (32-33)
It is evident from the above assertions that Lamming defines identity as all that encompasses one's livelihood. People can create, shape or change their identity depending on what they consider as suitable for them. Identity too is dynamic and is bound to change as per what people value or discard. Identity is said to have been achieved when one is at peace with who he is, what he does and where he is. This is why the Caribbean people are unsettled striving to know where they belong.

Kenneth Ramchand (1986) in *The West Indian Novel and its Background* elaborates historical conditions that have informed themes in West Indian novels. He highlights some key areas which the West Indian fictional writers have concerned themselves with as social and economic deprivations, pervasive consciousness of race and colour, cynicism and absence of traditional settled values. He observes that the West Indians' lack of a history to be proud of occasioned by invasion of the Caribbean society by different people led to virtual extermination of its original inhabitants – the Arawaks and the Caribs – and the subduing of their culture. Our study examined the causes of loss of identity, setbacks aligned to the loss and the reconstruction of identity through the return of the emigrants (remigration).

David Dabydeen and Nana Tagoe (1987) in *A Reader's Guide to West Indian and a Black British Literature* investigate the treatment of childhood and problems that Caribbean women undergo as they struggle to bring up their children with absent fathers. In relation to this, our study wishes to focus on lives of mature male and female characters that are striving to know their worth in changing environments and their coming back to terms with their identity. From their presentation
of history of the Caribbean setting, colonization and slavery, we get the basis of the Caribbean situation paramount to explaining the loss and the reconstruction of identity in the Caribbean region.

Christopher Odhiambo (1991) in “Caribbean Definition: Its Effect on Vision and Form in George Lamming’s Novels” attempts to define the Caribbean situation through characters that reflect experiences of the Caribbean people. He critiques George Lamming’s novels, giving an impression of the West Indians struggling to overcome colonial domination in political, psychological and cultural aspects, slavery, displacement and psychological damage, cultural and economic dependence. His dimension particularly on identity in *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953) portrays young innocent characters that grow to maturity and begin to get conscious of their identity. The texts under study, though similarly seeking to pursue this search for Caribbean definition, also move forward towards a reconstruction of identity.

1.8.2 The Construction of Caribbean Identity through Characters

Mbugua wa Mungai in an M.A. thesis (1997) entitled, “Conflict Between Self and Otherness in Selected Writings of Nadine Gordimer’s Works” argues that like their African-American counterparts, blacks in the Caribbean have had to ask themselves who they really are. They have sought to define themselves within the mire of their culture and historical experiences. He states that Black Caribbeans have responded to their situations by attempting to recreate a history that defines the Caribbean self. Mungai’s arguments set the ground with which the reconstruction of identity can be explored as a responsive advancement from his studies.
Wambua Kawive (2003) in "The Problematics of the Quest for Identity in Derek Walcott’s *Dream on Monkey Mountain*" makes an exploration on construction of Caribbean Identity by highlighting problems that characters encounter in their quest for identity. He further explains the distortion of West Indian consciousness as only realizable through a dream. His analysis is based on how the return 'home' gets a new construction every time a character appropriates it. Our study dealt with the reconstruction of identity and tried to highlight factors that compel the characters to return home and embrace and their homeland.

Jane Wakarindi in "A Study of the Journeying Motif and the Narrative Technique in Edward Kamau Braithwaite’s *The Arrivants*" (2006) gives an explanation of how the arrivants in *The Arrivants* travel from the Caribbean Islands to Africa and back without settling in any destination. *The Arrivants* has been used by the poet to appeal to the arrivants to settle in the Caribbean island as their possession. In this, fear, flight and alienation are some of the struggles that cause the arrivants not to settle in their lives. Velma Pollard’s characters also seem to make several journeys in pursuit of their identity. Whereas Braithwaite’s expression of identity is limited in the lyrical poetry, our study draws its examples from the wider development of the characters in the novel superseded by poetry.

John Mugubi in *The Child Character in Adult Literature: A Study of Six Selected Caribbean Novels* (2003) gives an invaluable treatment of identity crisis and growth of a child character in the Caribbean settings. Mugubi’s choices involve young, energetic, able-bodied and middle-class characters meant to unfold problems experienced by the children in the selected texts as governed by his set objectives. Our study though similarly settling on identity focused on problems that
characters of varying ages, different levels of education and varying pursuits encounter in their quest and the forces that consciously or unconsciously drive the characters towards the reconstruction of identity.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study relied on postcolonial theory to elucidate its concerns. Postcolonial theory consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism. It aspires to combat the residual effects of colonialism on cultures by destabilizing the western ways of thinking thus creating space for the subaltern groups to speak and produce alternatives to dominant discourse.

Gayatri Spivak in *The Post-colonial Critic* (1990) in her contribution to postcolonial theory defines the term subaltern as the marginalized or the minority group as opposed to the majority. Spivak criticizes those who ignore the subaltern and has offered constructive theories to allow the West to go beyond its current position of western methods and ideal of understanding and exploring the alternatives offered by post colonialism through self-criticism. (361) Postcoloniality is designed to avoid making sense of the current crisis and cover up the origins of postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries. In an interview, this is what she had to say:

If there is one thing I distrust in fact, despised and have contempt for it is a people looking for roots. Because anyone who can conceive of looking for roots should be growing turnips. (1990:93)
Lazarus (2004), in The Cambridge Companion to Post-colonial Structures notes that if human beings have tended to understand themselves as citizens of a nation or blood members of an ethnic groupings, migration exposes the insufficiency of these ways of identifying ourselves. Migrants become emblematic figures in postcolonial literary studies because they represent the removal from old foundations and from previous grounded ways of thinking about identity.

The European imperial enterprise ensured that the worst features of colonialism throughout the globe would all be combined in the Caribbean area. The history of the Caribbean is about 30 million people scattered across an arc of islands - Jamaica, Haiti, Barbados, Antigua, Martinique, Trinidad among others - separated by the languages and cultures of their colonizers, but joined together, nevertheless, by a common subaltern heritage.

Representation, meaning “something standing for something else” is an important aspect addressed in post colonialism. Representation explores the different ways through which “images” are implicated in power inequalities and the subordination of the subaltern. This study analyzed how representation installs and perpetuates notions of European superiority which affects ways though which individuals are perceived. It stresses on disparity that arises when a powerful nation annexes the land belonging to others and transforms the territory into a colony rendering its inhabitants as subaltern people who cannot speak for themselves since they do not hold power.

Postcolonial theory seeks to uncover the damaging effects on both the self identity of the colonized and the instability of the conceptual underpinnings of the colonizers. It examines the
impact and continuing legacy of European conquest, colonization and domination of non-
European lands, peoples and cultures. The need to get a definition or identity so as to be proud of
oneself is pre-occupying the Caribbean people as its indigenous people - Caribs and Arawaks -
were exterminated within a century of the European invasion leaving the entire contemporary
population to suffer displacement and exile to date.

Frantz Fanon (1963) another proponent of this theory, makes a critical analysis of the nature of
colonialism and those subjugated by it. He describes colonialism as a source of violence rather
than reacting violently against resistors which had been the common view. His portrayal of the
relationship between colonialism and its attempts to deny “all attributes of humanity” to those it
suppressed laid the groundwork for related critiques of colonial and postcolonial systems. (70)

Edward Said in Orientalism (1976) states that power and knowledge are inseparable. The claim of
the West to have knowledge of the East gave them the power to name and control. The concept is
essential to the understanding of the essence of colonialism and realization of post colonialism in
this study. The theory analyses the conflict and accommodation that unfold in the wake of
conquest and other cultural admixture. It encompasses literature written in colonized countries
and their citizens that have colonized people as its subject matter. The decolonization of the
countries that were under European colonization and the development of independent states focus
its shift to the role of representation in the construction of new postcolonial identities. The
European empire is said to have had a larger control of the rest of the globe and its disintegration
later has led to widespread interest in postcolonial literature and criticism. Orientalism is a
western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient. It involves
dealing with the orient, by making statements about it, authorizing views on it, describing it, teaching it and ruling over it. (10)

The dialectic of place and displacement is another issue in postcolonial studies. It concerns the development of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. With this, is location that deals with the analysis of social, cultural, religious and linguistic processes which make up a cultural identity. This also takes into account the migrations of diaspora communities and their interaction with other social groups be they indigenous people or other cultural diasporas. Bill Ashcroft et al (1989) in Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies as if referring to Homestretch justifies that migration, experiences of enslavement and active sense of self have been eroded by dislocation or destroyed by cultural denigration.

The early stages of this theory involve the reclamation culture and the construction of new cultural identities. The pattern of migration- both the movement of the colonizers into the colonized area and immigration from the “colonies” to the “colonial power”- result in national identity being much more hybrid. Hybridity is a situation in postcolonial societies through which there is conscious movement and cultural suppression as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler – invaders dispose indigenous people and force them to “assimilate” to new social patterns. While addressing culture that was affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day, this theory too explores the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule. It entails how writers articulate and celebrate identity, how the knowledge of the subordinated people has been generated and used to serve the interest of the colonizer via the portrayal of the colonized as
perpetually inferior people, society and culture. Hybridity entails not mixing of once separate and self-contained cultural traditions.

Homi Bhabha (1994) in *The Location of Culture* defines post colonialism as formulating critical revisions around the issues of cultural difference and social authority. He says culture is never essential or innate but always something that is performed and learnt and so it is possible to be aped, copied and appropriated in a fashion that disrupts the claim that it is the expression of a single community. He explains there is no necessary or external belongingness but rather our identities whether ethnic or national are thought of as stable facts of life. Homi Bhabha claims that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history - subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement - that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. Its applicability to our study stems out from the search for identity as a result from the cultural and social loss that characters in the text are grappling with. (179)

### 1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 1.10.1 Research method

This study has employed a descriptive method in highlighting the various incidents in Velma Pollard’s *Homestretch* and Crown Point and other Poems.
1.10.2 Sample Selection

The study is based on textual analysis of *Homestretch* and a selection of poems from Crown Point and other Poems. The two texts were selected on purposive sampling. The rationale behind the choice of the above texts is on their treatment of identity. Episodes in the novel together with the selected poems “Kingston” “Yellow/Yaller” “Bitterland” and “Rouseau August ‘79” that have a bearing on identity, that is, yearning for emigration owing to dissatisfaction at home, setbacks awaiting in the land of emigration and the process of remigration and satisfaction in their homeland. Other Caribbean texts, Journals, periodicals, essays, theses, dissertations and any published materials relating to the treatment of identity were examined to help us understand the Caribbean situation.

1.10.3 Data Elicitation, Analysis and Presentation

The study largely relied on library research of both the primary (selected) texts a well as the secondary texts. The data obtained was analyzed in tandem with the research objectives using the postcolonial theory. The summary, conclusion and recommendations were made on the basis of the finding of this study.

1.11 Chapter Conclusion

The entire chapter has dwelt on the general introduction to the study. The next chapter will look at forces that cause instability and departure of the Caribbean emigrants form their homeland.
CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERS’ INSTABILITY AND DEPARTURE FROM THE CARIBBEAN

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the interactions and relationships of the West Indian characters in their homeland and explore the extent to which they feel unsettled prompting them to depart from their homeland. In the texts under our study, we are going to look at factors that cause discontent, restlessness, instability and the departure of the Caribbean characters from their own homeland and what triggers their mass exodus to overseas countries. Many characters - young people and the middle classes - in these texts anticipate departure to England and USA with individual reasons behind this move.

To emphasize on the fact that the West Indian people are actually battling with the issue of identity, E.R Braithwaite, a Guyanese writer, in Ngugi’s \textit{Homecoming} (1972) makes these comments concerning his own personal identity and the choice he has taken pertaining identity:

\begin{quote}
I have no known point of origin. All Africa is therefore my original home and I am at liberty to make it my home. (18)
\end{quote}

2.2 Forces behind the Departure

The \textit{enmasse} departure of the characters in the texts from their homeland to England and America is not without reason. Some of the reasons such as promising opportunities, pursuit of quality
education, and treasure of adventure amongst other reasons stated below have served to prompt the Caribbean youngsters and middle aged to leave their island territories to the overseas nations. Each is explained in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.2.1 Attractive and Promising Opportunities

Opportunities David and Edith an elderly couple in the novel Homestretch had left Kingston their hometown thirty years before, anticipating a quality life in England. They did so with a feeling that England would provide them with other better opportunities with which to amass wealth. This couple was not badly off economically at home but was like other residents of the Woods. They then were never satisfied with what Kingston offered and had always yearned for an opportunity to go and make more fortune in England. Though they had lived a better life in their homeland, they were not content with that position and thought that working in overseas nations was more rewarding and had wanted to go and make a trial by leaving for England.

The beckoning and attractive opportunities that England availed for the West Indian people made this couple, David and Edith, restless and stirred them up for departure. The two had thought of coming back later and finally making a settlement in Kingston - their place of birth. The writer points out “They had never thought of England as anything but an opportunity to make some money. Certainly, not a place to settle in forever.” (46) Although established in Jamaica, the woods village, the desire and yearning for more wealth compelled David and Edith to emigrate. In the same vein, Pollard notes that there were other Jamaican people who had children but left them in the custody of their relatives in order to go and explore opportunities in the overseas nations.
and once they succeed, they were thinking of coming back for their children. Also, the city offered abundant employment opportunities in its expanding manufacturing and service industries. Mrs. Stewarts a business woman who ran a bakery, left Jamaica for America to run a progressive bakery that employed Brenda’s father.

2.2.2 Pursuit of Quality Education

In West Indian fiction, most characters are portrayed as estranged from their roots and are haunted by a sense of unsettledness. C.L.R James in *Black Jacobins* (1989) explains that the West Indies has never been a traditional colonial territory with clearly distinguished economic and political relations between two different cultures. It has no native culture after the original Amerindian civilization had been destroyed by colonization, cultural denigration, displacement, slavery, and indenture. Every succeeding year saw its population incorporating into itself more and more of the language, customs, aims and the outlook of its master. This justifies why the search for identity among the Caribbean youths has served as an outlet for them to go abroad.

Brenda, a fourteen year-old third form student, left Jamaica to further her studies in America. During her study in school, many of her colleagues had contemplated going to America to study and make merry. The young Caribbean students did not attach much value to education and job prospects in their West Indian background for they had a feeling that America offered a more superior and marketable education. That is why Brenda felt that her longing had finally been fulfilled when her visa came and everyone considered her as lucky and privileged to go and study in America. Except for Brenda and perhaps a few others, many of these West Indian youths did
2.2.3 Rise of Capitalism in Western Europe

Salkey ed. (1960) in justifying the departure of the West Indian people from their island territories had this to say with regard to the Caribbean people’s unsettledness in their homeland: “To West Indians with its scattered islands and its doubtful claims to nationhood and with its turgid colonial history, England has been a sort of necessary common denominator, a link holding its constituent parts together.” (101) These comments explain how such dominating cultures think of themselves as civilized and more advanced than their colonies. They have therefore used their own educational position as a yardstick on how other nations should be. They impose their own culture on those they deemed to be of lesser status - subalterns. This draws attention to the emigration of the young, ambitious and restless youth who prefer to pursue employment opportunities in the US and England other than what their home country could provide. They wanted just to attain recognition and satisfaction in European educational system. This is the case of the characters Sean from Trinidad, Jeff from Grand Cayman, Jenny from Jamaica and the girl from Guyana. It is therefore possible that the West Indians who possessed special skills and talents found it easier to leave their homeland. For instance, industrial expansion in England caused an outcry for skilled labour. (6)

The rise of capitalism in Europe saw a great desire by West Europeans to make profit out of their ventures at minimal costs. England started beckoning the children of the empire across the sea so as to work for her. David and Edith having equipped themselves with these skills took the advantage of this calling and left Jamaica. David used to work on his farm. Edith too, had a certificate in practical nursing. David had gone to England with a ticket to trade. However, to his
dismay, this could not work. He was given a job to work in factories having only been picked because of the general knowledge of the West Indies that he possessed. That is why it took long for David to secure himself a job and when he did, he got a job to work on the shop floor of a number of factories and retired as a foreman. These were so different from the carpentry apprenticeship he had taken and anticipated for in England. The couple came to discover later that they had left better jobs in Woods village for physical and emotionally draining jobs that England could offer.

One possible cause of emigration of the Caribbean people particularly those from Jamaica was the decline of the Sugar Industry in the British colonies. The British colonies found themselves unable to compete against cane sugar from Cuba and Brazil and sugar beets produced in Europe. This made the price of Jamaican sugar to drop and so the number of sugar estates on the island fell drastically reducing the number of workers employed in the industry. Though banana cultivation expanded rapidly, it could never make up for the shortfall created by the collapse of the sugar economy. A Jamaican emigrant retorts about their massive emigration:

> Part of the problem is poverty now that bananas have been virtually taken out of the hands of the poor. Only rich farmers grow the crop for export. The demand of the crop as well is too high now. (21)

### 2.2.4 Pursuit of Scholarships

Some of the Caribbean youths got an exit to overseas nations through scholarships. This explains the departure of Laura, David's niece, and Anthony, Laura's cousin. Laura had won a scholarship
to a university in England and was doing her postgraduate degree as she stayed with her uncle David and her aunt Edith in Birmingham. Anthony had been in America for ten years studying and had recently got a job with a factory of plastic containers. Anthony, in his introduction, told Brenda that he was on a big scholarship which he said was only what the British owed him for all the oil they had stolen from his country. Anthony had lived with his parents in the US and worked in a factory over there. Despite his long stay in the US, Anthony himself had to cling to his West Indian identity. The journey from the Caribbean, exciting as it, undoubtedly for many emigrants, had a series of hidden dislocating experiences.

2.2.5 Escape from Responsibilities

Some Middle-class Caribbean people had strong motivation to migrate primarily for economic reasons such as chronic unemployment and also to look for a way of establishing themselves. The increased economic hardship and disenchantment in the West Indies and the simultaneous expansion of the U.S. economy with its relatively high wages and growing employment opportunities opened the way for the massive exodus and desire for departure by the Caribbean people. For example, Ivan Smith, Brenda’s father, having impregnated Mama Joy, Brenda’s mother, left Jamaica with the ticket of a farm labourer to avoid responsibility of a father: raising her daughter Brenda. He then found a hiding place in America although when he had become economically secure, he started sending a few American dollars to Brenda, his daughter, in whose upbringing he did not play a great role. That is why it was hard for him to come close enough to her and satisfy both her physical and emotional needs when she left to stay with him in America.
While in America, Ivan Smith never enjoyed life as he thought he would. He got into an unstable marriage with Johnnie, an Afro-American woman, who made his life more difficult.

The play that David had once written back in Kingston about a father leaving his family to look for farm work in America and promising to bring plenty of clothes for his children only to abscond his duty and never write back to explain his situation, is symbolic of harsh realities that some of the Jamaican emigrants find themselves in. After failing to fulfill their obligations at home, they find a way out and promise to come back home with better things. This is reflected in Ivan’s lifestyle.

2.2.6 Treasure of Adventure and Enthusiasm

There had been nothing much that necessitated David and Edith’s departure to England: they just had a desire to go and see what life would offer them over there. They had left one morning embarking on something they could not begin to understand together with many others who left their children with various relatives till they could send for them. Besides this, David and Edith did not have many responsibilities that could fix them down at home. They did not have children of their own to raise. They had shortly brought up their niece Laura, as a grown-up daughter, after her mother’s demise. Shortly, Laura went to England for her studies and this gave them enough freedom. David and Edith had gone through the same procedure one morning. “They had left from Port Antonio one morning. It had been their morning: embarking on something that they could not begin to understand and they went with so many others who were going.” (19)
2.3 The Characters' Search for Identity

In depicting the causes of emigration among the Caribbean people in the novel *Homestretch*, Velma Pollard has made a remarkable contribution through her poetry. In one of her poems entitled “Kingston” in *Crown Point and other Poems*, she portrays the desire for departure among the Caribbean people particularly the Jamaicans to overseas nations. In this poem, the Jamaican people—young and old, do not see opportunities in Kingston and therefore are obliged to look for them elsewhere.

The persona in the poem “Kingston” laments the emptiness that is experienced in towns in the Caribbean as exemplified in the town of Kingston in Jamaica. The lines, “But here there are no children/ no mothers for moonshine/ no grannies warming loving cans” not only emphasize the emptiness but also paints a picture of a city deprived of its people, young and old, the determinants of growth and prosperity in any nation. What is left in the context of this poem are the withered or frustrated young and those who cannot work for much economic growth.

Hence the poem hints the conditions that could lead the productive youth of the islands out of their native land for better satisfying opportunities elsewhere leaving behind the helpless people and the beggars who themselves cannot develop the city. Instead, miserable street urchins and the poor endlessly comb every part of the streets and the beautiful buildings of Kingston begging for money. They are security hazards for they vandalize the street lights and pester drivers. This frustrated lot will continue bringing down development of Caribbean settings thus opening up an avenue for continuous mass exodus of the Caribbean people to find better lives outside their
territories. The poem therefore symbolizes the helpless situation of the Caribbean people after the mass exodus of its citizens to foreign nations.

The loss of mothers and grannies experienced in Kingston indicates the end of the sweet and hot foodstuff that these women used to cook. This mark of identity among the Caribbean women is no longer there. Women being the backbone of any society and in particular the Caribbean settings, have resorted to slums trying to look for cheap life where they are hopelessly wasting away in poverty and misery of life weighed down by countless troubles of life. The sorry state of the affairs of this city, the helplessness and hopelessness of its people has reduced Kingston and other Caribbean towns to a rotting stench as of garbage devoid of its identity. The lines “stark now /and stinking/ with the stench/ and dead hopes”, give a clue of a naked, plain and an unpleasant town after its mass exodus to overseas nations. The persona is appealing to the young, the mothers and grannies - to bring back the lost glory and other West Indian towns. He associates the early morning rising of the sun is with looking back at their homeland and working towards the restoration of life in the Caribbean environment.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the reasons that make various characters emigrate. However, even though promising opportunities, willingness to provide cheap labour, desire to pursue education and employment, easier social mobility and the spirit of adventure are some of the factors that caused emigration in the Caribbean region, it can be noted that most of these emigrants faced a lot of setbacks in their countries of emigration. These setbacks will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

HORNS OF DILEMMA: COMING TO TERMS WITH PAINFUL REALITY

3.1 Introduction

Velma Pollard’s characters in the novel Homestretch, are bedeviled by dilemma when they discover that their going to England and USA, though initially heaped with praises, did not give them what they were anticipating. The emigration brought about unexpected individual as well as family challenges as in the case of David and Edith. Many of them found it hard to cope with life in their original countries after returning.

3.2 The Painful Reality Abroad

Though most of the Caribbean emigrants left their homelands anticipating better life in overseas countries, their enthusiasm died down as soon as their expectations were met with disappointments. The emigrants lived in crisis since their stay in the foreign countries brought in a culture shock whose effects persisted for many years. Their most passionate desires were doomed to failure and sadness was the tone of everyday life. As a result, they had no choice but to endure a series of humiliating experiences. These experiences prompted their thoughts of coming back to their motherland.

The emigrants sailed in a mood that oscillates between regret and expectation, but largely, attitudes were hopeful and optimistic. While many of them saw the British Empire as oppressive,
their consolation lay in the fact that they had also grown up with colonial system and with time would cope with it. They wanted to maintain the status of being citizens of an international network, which linked them to the rest of the world and these kept them waiting for better days ahead.

Portes and Rumbaut (1990) Immigrant America comment that it is notable that not all nations welcome the arrival of new immigrants. Even though the West Indians were hardworking, sacrificed and determined to bring in revitalization in various fields of the economy in England and America, their influx was often treated with opposition and hostility. Distrust, suspicion and tension between them and US citizens grew. Other harsh reactions and disappointments too awaited them as they tried to establish themselves in the new lands. The experience of the day-to-day stresses and personal strains in ‘the other man’s country’ become their daily accompaniment (26). Rootlessness, hopelessness and disillusionment, alienation, racial prejudices and deep loneliness became the order of their stay. These experiences are discussed here below.

3.2.1 Physical and Emotional Agony

Emigrants consciously or unconsciously undergo a social, emotional, physical and psychological agony that is difficult to speak back of. The day to day stresses and strains that different individuals experience in another country brought them to silence. They impacted negatively on their settlement and impede their fast adjustment to the new life overseas. For instance, England looked well from far and everybody had been speaking about their longing to leave for England. Though it looked prestigious from afar, people who travel there never told the truth of the matter.
When some of the West Indians who had gone to England came back to Jamaica, they had little to say. Perhaps the experiences they had gone through had been unspeakable. The fact that these characters distanced themselves from unfolding what they underwent is a pointer to awaiting challenges in the land of emigration. Besides this, when David and Edith disembarked at the airport, the physical pain they were going through was unbearable. Though David tried to hide his embarrassment from the little girl, a passenger he had travelled with, nor to the man who pushed the wheel chair that he was confined to, it was clear that he was undergoing great physical and emotional agony “... and the grimace of pain that the little girl had noticed passed over his face every now and then creasing his eyes and twisting his jaw...” (3) David has been tired after serving so much time in such comfortless places. There had been the emotional turmoil too, tearing himself away from family and friends. As he came back to his homeland one evening, the sea seemed rougher mirroring the spirit of turmoil that he had picked up in Birmingham.

Most of the talented and productive emigrants who leave their homelands with an intention of improving their lives face exploitation, mistreatment and disappointments in their land of emigration. David had gone to England with a ticket to trade but this could not work while he was there. He was expected to work in factories as a result of industrial expansion. He was picked out for his general knowledge to work manually in factories before meeting his retirement as a foreman. He was amazed at how he was exploited and demoralized. David could not put his finger on what he had gained from all the years he had spent in England. It looked as though they had children to see through school for there was nothing that had been achieved. At home, David was the master of his family deciding on when to plant, what to plant and how to do it. In England, he had to relearn taking orders from his superiors: he had become a child again. It was a
difficult task yet he had no choice than to adjust. Brenda too did not escape this emotional torture from the way her step mother and daughter had conspired against her. In whatever she did however much she tried, there were no appreciation but instead, mockery was her constant companion. When she connected the blender parts wrongly, Johnnie could not stop accusing her in front of her daughter Lyn, “Yaawl don’t have this in your house in Jamaica?” (57)

In America, Brenda was overcome by emotions when she thought about her father as someone who had run away. He never grew with her nor was he any close enough to understand and love her despite having organized for her departure to America. Brenda’s mode of dressing was treated with criticisms. Johnnie and Lyn disapproved her dressing unjustifiably. Astonishingly, the clothes that Brenda took from Jamaica thinking that they were best received created great attacks stemming out of competition and opposition. Besides this, she was unaccustomed to fried foods with soda that formed the daily diet in her father’s household, the place she endured as a home. This was a painful ordeal. In addition, Ivan had to leave New York for England where his new wife worked. This tensed Brenda up on the kind of lady she would meet. She had to learn the British education through correspondence and be psychologically prepared for the new family and new environment.

3.2.2 Rootlessness, Hopelessness and Disillusionment

Dissociation and fragmentation in any social set up leads to a sense of rootlessness and results in dissociation of sensibility. This is represented in form of disillusionment that paralyses enthusiasm as emigrants try to adjust to their new environment. In postcolonial theories,
colonizers not only conquer territories but also practice cultural colonization by replacing the practices and beliefs of the native culture with their own values, governance, laws. The consequence is loss or modification of much of the pre-colonial culture and belief. It is in England (Birmingham) that David gets a stroke out of the unexpected news of his retirement. After the farewell, worry and depression had taken the better part of him when he tried to figure out the harsh treatment he had received in England with nothing much gained. In his place of work, he had mistakenly been perceived as a proud and ungrateful man for the assistance he had been awarded. This has quickened the faster aging of David than Charley, his age mate, who had chosen to remain in Jamaica. These miseries of life in England made David contemplate the years he had spent there as wasted years. When David felt free with Charley his close friend, he spoke out his mind on his predicaments of worry and depression that had rocked his once enjoyable life. Upon this emptying of his mind, David got relieved of troubles bedevilling him.

Brenda too was not exceptional to this rootlessness. When she received her visa, she considered herself fortunate and looked at it as a confirmation of a dream she had been yearning for. She left for America vibrant with great expectations. Nonetheless, the harsh treatment she receives in her first year in America remained imprinted in her mind. She was not sure of what she had expected and she knew it was not what she got. She considered everything as just dreams. Brenda’s limited knowledge of her father together with her encounter with Johnnie and her daughter Lyn caused her untold suffering. She could not come to terms with this kind of suffering that disillusioned her once enthusiastic dreams. Her hopes slowly died down.
Deep loneliness had become an accompaniment to the Caribbean emigrants in their land of emigration. Initially, David and Edith had been very close to each other and sharing every issue in their lives. In England, they used to share daily about their places of work. This helped them ease their pain and had made each of them a pillar for the other one to lean on as they wade through the struggles of life together. With time, they lost this virtue of sharing as everything had become unbearable to the point of not disclosing their pain to each other. David felt he was alone - inside. David’s wife Edith, was the most attentive woman and knew how and when to help however she too was affected by emigration in a different way. She was going through a different struggle due to the nature of her demanding job: tiredness and frustrations in the place of work. Whatever they were going through, none could read the mind of the other in their own eyes, “something had died down in each of them.” (77) Whatever it was, deep loneliness that resulted from frustration had put apart what used to tie them to each other. With the passage of time, the struggles could not be borne as each had to work out a solution singly.

Emigrants find it hard to cope with the time factor in the land of immigration. Time is a precious and highly valued commodity in the developed nations that developing world finds it difficult to adjust. Coping with it was a difficult task to Caribbean emigrants. Homi Bhabha (1994) claims that colonial subjects practice mimicry – imitation of dress, language, behaviour and even gestures of the colonizer instead of resistance. He points out that mimicry is never exact however it “is at once resemblance and menace.” (52) The colonizer assumes that the colonized will be like him because the imitation and at the same time undermines the “authoritative discourse of
colonialism.” (52) In Jamaica, David and Edith had a wonderful time together. They enjoyed their meals together especially breakfast and used to talk so much in the old days. There was hardly any time for such in Birmingham. David retorts that there was no time to read and there was little to be read to each other- a habit they had developed in the past. This made him lonely and forlorn in the company of his wife.

Though David was known for carpentry in Jamaica, he had lost that in England: he did not even make an attempt for it for time could not allow. This was further complicated by the unfavourably cold environment as another tragedy that kept them further away from watching cinema in England and they fell away from communal reading habit. David and Edith could not schedule the recreational time so as to go to the baths in England: they were operating under a tight schedule. This explains why when he came back to Jamaica, everything took a relaxed manner. Going to the Jamaican baths that he claimed were nine times stronger than the baths in England became his main pre-occupation. The old couple had time neither for rest nor even for recreation.

When David came back to Jamaica, he was constantly pre-occupied by the depression of having left to gather nothing abroad. He kept regretting that he would have lived a better life than even Maas Ben who by then was thriving in Jamaica far from David’s expectations. This range of thoughts gave way to stroke. Ivan Smith faces a painful family breakage when he and Johnnie parted. To that effect, Johnnie took all the money in the joint account and cleared all the furniture from the house before leaving.
Ironically, Brenda felt the loneliness of being in a foreign country instead of being at home in Homeroom with her Caribbean counterparts. The Caribbean students in the states never drew Brenda any closer - she was distant. For instance, in the home room, Brenda was given the task of helping Jenny, a Jamaican student whose learning was retarded. Every time Jenny rose up to speak, teachers often smiled as she could not communicate. Another girl from Guyana who was older than Brenda found it hard to learn or communicate in English. She kept uttering the word “Kamgee” which was never known as the name of a thing, place or animal.

As the relationship between Brenda and her stepmother and sister was never good, she too felt affected just as her father Ivan. She had to adjust to living in Stewarts’ quarters after staying with her dad for some time. Ivan Smith worked at Stewarts’ bakery that produced all sorts of Jamaican foods that Brenda wished to have had like potato pudding, Gizadas, coconut drops and patties. However, Smith never took these things home. He only took hard dough every Saturday trying in vain to please the Afro-American woman at the expense of Brenda, his own blood.

3.2.4 Alienation and Racial Prejudices

Bill Ashcroft in Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies (1989) points out that one of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial educational system installs a standard fashion of metropolitan language as a norm and marginalizes the variants as impurities. Racial prejudice and discrimination are some of the effects of this imperial oppression that West Indian individuals go through as emigrants. In expressing the daily prejudice that he encountered, David comments out of his harsh experience that it is not easy to deal with them:
"You have a hell of time to live with them and still remember you are a person. You should not even look hard on them if you want to keep your sanity..." (20)

Each generation of Caribbean immigrants has expressed shock at encountering American racism. And it frequently led to their radicalization. Many have figured prominently in radical and dissenting movements. One of the challenges is the perception of the emigrants, because of their skin colour, as black first and foremost. This placed them in the same category as African Americans and made them subject to the same disadvantages: racial discrimination and violence. But their nationality, especially in the South, brought special negative attention to Caribbean emigrants.

Everyday racism is one assessment of the black new immigrants experience in today’s metropolis. Racism towards the blacks by the whites is expressed through economic, social and cultural subjugation of the black person. This explains racial discrimination that the Jamaicans were forced to endure in England. Racism bred oppression; an impression in which the Caribbean people were considered unable to measure up in their intellectual abilities. Brenda had great trouble trying to get accustomed to things for so long. Initially, she with other students first had problems of understanding the people’s twang and neither could they be understood. They went through a lot of suffering and discrimination in class. The Jamaicans were then called King Georges blacks - a term that denotes racism. Brenda found it a challenge to adjust to school in the states unlike when she was at home where she was always in the forefront in class work. In class in the US, she was placed in Grade nine where she missed many classes going to the home room to socialize which turned out as a bother to Brenda.
Jean from Trinidad and Jeff from Cayman were always up for mischief and Brenda never got along with any of these. Despite the fact that there were college students who occasionally came to their aid, Brenda was least passionate about them from her earlier frustrating encounters. Learning in America was further crippled by the teacher from Haiti who had Caribbean children at heart yet could not help them much though Brenda could at least understand her for she had been exposed to the teachers from all over the Caribbean region.

Prejudice in America was more rampant than that of England and this changed Brenda’s social life. Georgia who studied in America tells terrible things about the division of the black people she witnessed while she studied there and how the black people had assumed and lived helplessly with it. She laments how the whites have used this division to threaten the union of the black people.

In the college in New York, Brenda had no comfort. Besides being black, her American accent distanced her more and the teachers who were also prejudiced. Though she talked patwa like other Jamaican students, she was socially far from them. There was no church to attend and she felt lonely, isolated and she comforted herself by getting buried in books. Brenda also narrates her tough ordeal in Britain. This further seeks to confirm Anthony’s mother’s observations that white people beat most of the African knowledge out of them by mixing up their brain so as to prevent them from knowing where they were going.
Contrary to popular legend, no one expected the streets to be paved with gold, and almost every migrant had heard travellers’ tales about how cold the climate was, and how difficult the conditions could be. In Birmingham, the weather was a great trial to Brenda: it was cold and raining throughout and the bathroom posed a great test in mixing up the water. With all these, Brenda remained suppressed, withdrawn and lonely. She found it impossible to enjoy life at all. She could not as well enjoy the cold weather in America and the fact that her clothing was treated with contempt made things worse.

Matters of identity, racism, challenges of developing a post-colonial national identity and how a colonized people’s knowledge was used against them in service of the colonizer’s interest are some of the pertinent issues that postcolonial theory addresses. The emigrants behaved in a different manner from what they were before they left their homeland. Upon alighting at the airport, Montego Bay, with Laura and Gerald, Brenda was quick to register her dissatisfaction with the dirty streets of Jamaica that could not match up what she had seen in England, America and the Scandinavian cities that they had come through as Stockholm. Brenda lamented that she would never drive in Jamaica when she could not understand how the driver could not allow people to cut in ahead of him after passing him on the wrong side. With this, Laura remembered how long ago, one of her cousins remarked that the entry to Kingston was always dirty and unwelcoming. These criticisms of their homeland emanated out of alienation that these emigrants had gone through.

Most characters in the novel *Homestretch* have undergone social, economic, emotional, cultural, and educational situations that expose them to alienation. The relationships between the
Caribbean students and their teachers in the US are strained. The relationships are depersonalized and estranged that makes the teacher-student interaction distanced and this hampers learning. Though education is a tool that is expected to prepare man for living in his society and his world, the kind of education that the young Caribbean acquired in the US and England alienated them from their environments and from themselves by inferiorizing the Caribbean education system and superiorizing that of the western people. This form of education inhibited self discovery in that it befogged the minds of the young Caribbean people to devalue their education system which is responsible for the massive departure of the West Indians to England and USA. Velma Pollard in this novel *Homestretch*, satirizes young Caribbean students who became products of brainwashing through education in the overseas nations.

Religion too contributes to alienation. In *Homestretch*, the novelist seeks to rectify the emergence of an alienated group, the Caribbean emigrants. The emigrants cannot fit back easily into their social system. When Edith and David went to the church in Jamaica, they could not keep up the observable changes in the church in comparison with what they had observed during their time before leaving for England. Edith was upset to discover that the rector and the entire congregation could not keep the same words that she heard in England where the church was born. The change was deeper than that as she could not stomach the pace at which the church was evolving contrary to evolution of the church in England. That there has been jigging and speaking in unknown tongues were some of the strange modifications that their church had undergone and this made the old couple feel out of place with this new mode of worship.
Similarly, after the party at their home, David commented to Edith how everybody looked at them as though they did a terrible thing by leaving England for home. They had drained much of their productive energy in their motherland. It is as if their homecoming was not totally appreciated by their Jamaican counterparts. That is why those who came back from overseas never fitted back quickly into the Caribbean system. Avis, Miss Betty’s daughter who had gone to study in England after passing her third year, came back mad together with her brother. Miss Gerald’s son too is a victim of this emotional turmoil. They never told any story about England neither could they think of going back there.

Ian McDonald’s *The Humming-Bird Tree* (1969) expresses racial discrimination that young dark skin Caribbean children are innocently made to grow through. Out of innocence, Jaillin and Kaiser are compelled to do menial jobs in their employer’s house. Their great friendship with Allan, a white child of their age, is treated with contempt by Master Allan’s white parents. When they spent time playing together, Allan is jeered and discouraged from associating with the poor black children. As these kids grew up, their innocence is tampered with by an erection of a barrier not to be broken by their free association. At their maturity, their differences have been made so pronounced that they can’t converge again. They are already segregated by their skin colour and disengaged from their once sweet company of innocence.

Gayatri Spivak (1995) in *Post Colonial Studies Reader* argues that the term representation is important when then subaltern is involved. The Subaltern makes an attempt at self-representation perhaps, a representation that falls outside the “the lines laid down by the official institutional structures of representation.” (67) This relates to Brenda’s possession of little knowledge of her
father which became an impediment to her enjoyment of America. Her father’s rare visits to Jamaica had been the most exciting moments but turned out to be different in America. She found it very difficult to adjust to meet Johnnie, her stepmother, and Lyn, her step-sister who appeared as total strangers. Adjusting to this kind of unwelcoming treatment in the midst of strangers was painful. Brenda was seen as a competition to Johnnie and her daughter. They competed for attention, pocket money and clothes. She was an extra burden to feed on her father’s never increasing salary.

The day-to-day antagonisms that stared on Brenda’s face were unbearable at such a tender age. Her father never provided any support nor created time for her other than the physical needs. A conspiracy that existed between Ivan Smith and his family against Brenda’s mother was exaggeratedly posed on Brenda as a way of mocking her mother. Brenda’s father, like Johnnie his wife, never made a home in America for her. When Brenda alighted at the JFK airport, her first encounter with her father indicated discrimination and ill treatment. Though her father was waiting for her at the exit door of the airport, his welcoming was very reserved and short-lived. He had not said anything to his family about his coming to meet her and even when she won the prize, her father had congratulated her least: he took it as though nothing had taken place. These are signs of someone who lives in oblivion - everything seemed to have turned against Ivan Smith and this spilled over to the young Brenda.
3.3 The Struggle to Adjust to the New Culture

Frantz Fanon in “The Wretched of the Earth” (1963) argues that racial mythology built on differences in skin colour and physical features were indeed among the prime tools of power used in the era of western empire. Fanon defines racism as rather a carefully drawn out plan by the racist to ensure the total annihilation of a people’s confidence in themselves and inculcating in them such a strong sense of inferiority as to render their oppressors naturally superior. A further evidence of racial discrimination against the Caribbean people by the Europeans is illustrated in the poem “Yaller/Yellow.”

The poem “Yellow” shows the plight of the black as expressed through the Negro children. The black skin is a significance of racial prejudice that will stand as the object of condemnation and ridicule by the white people. “Yellow” mirrors the white children’s consciousness of their own identity as a superior class and dismisses the black people as those of lesser importance. These class distinctions created out of the differences in the skin colour sidelines and condemn the Negro child to congenital inferiority that translates to their living in constant fear, suffering and brutality. “Yellow” seeks to dehumanize the Negro child as rootless and lacking in true identity thus cannot trace their true history particularly with regard to colour. “Black stands back?” is a reminder to the oppressed blacks that they are backward and so are intimidated into imitating the oppressor in terms of dressing, mode of speech and embraces all kinds of mannerisms as a yardstick for measuring true identity.
The situation intensifies racial discrimination against the black and the coloured children by the white children who feel superior. The baseless criticism that is made on the nothingness in a dark skin to a young innocent generation that has been brought up by a black woman elevates the position that a white child has over the black child. The persona makes a scathing attack at the dark skin as despicable, contemptible and bleached in an attempt to make it white. Black in this context symbolizes the underprivileged and the disadvantaged. Black may mean lower in rank and less dignity. The lines, “Their negro lips/ saucer eyes/ mango skin/ and /mango hair/ depict the young innocent kids as bleached and lacking in colour hence are objects of mockery by the white children. This highlights the sense of backwardness that is attached to a black skin. “Go weh (away) you black” illustrates the unsightly appearance of the black skin. The poem raises concern on the future of the black children both from Africa and the Caribbean islands.

The poem “Bitter land” further seeks to elucidate the extent in which this discrimination has impacted on the black people creating despair. The poem symbolizes the bitter experiences that the African woman in the diaspora faces. The line “Hanging in the galleys of USA” depicts the unsettledness of the black girls in trying to fit into the western lifestyle so as to avoid discrimination. The black women attempt in futility to come to terms with their new world by trying to make themselves white in every possible way. The black woman has forcibly been handicapped through bleaching her black skin so as to look pale and find acceptance. It is a rejection, on one hand, of their African culture and on the other hand, a show of their inability to fully fit into the colonial setup oscillating in lack of belonging, rootlessness and isolation culminating into identity crisis. The poem has served to create a hierarchal social stratum that breeds racial discrimination hence suffering. The personality of the black person tends to be
abnormal and that is why the dehumanized black woman in the diaspora through successive
generations has made a vain attempt to look white which eventually has left indelible scars on her
skin.

“Bitterland” justifies the brutalities that the blacks go through to drive a wedge deeper into the
inherent inferiority of their Caribbean race that appeared to be the white people’s burden.
Unfortunately, this meant that whatever the white women would do, would be regarded in any
way as ‘civilized’; and whatever the blacks would do, would be represented as ‘savagery’. That is
why black girls in the USA are struggling with wigs and face powder in an effort to look like
white girls. The scars in the poem depict marks that are left behind in a bid to look white. These
are marks that make a deep infliction beyond the physical appearance into the soul. In this case,
the black disown their identity and identify partially with the USA. In this attempt, they grow
rootless as each new generation creates new roots in the air or barely touching the ground. Much
as they identify with America, they still cannot fully fit in there neither do they have a firm
establishment of their own hence are rootless.

It is painful and disappointing that overseas, the young Caribbean scholars form short-lived yet
unfaithful social relationships. Milton, a young West Indian student, cheated Brenda, her then
fiancée that his mother had died. When he got shipped back to Africa to attend the funeral, he
never returned to her nor helped her to adjust to life alone.
3.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the experiences and crises that the West Indian people undergo as a result of emigration and remigration. Issues such as inner turmoil, rootlessness, restlessness, alienation, malaise, instability, loneliness, social, mental and emotional stress, compelling distress and marginality constitute some of the painful and harsh realities that spurred up the Caribbean emigrants to look back at home with fresh eyes. Consequently, this gave way to the process of remigration that we shall look at in the next chapter.
4.1 Introduction

Caribbean writers dealing with the issue of identity in their literary works have gone a step further in resolving identity crises that haunt the Caribbean people in the diaspora by prescribing imagined solutions through their creative works.

In giving emphasis to the fact that one can soul search or introspect, as a way of helping oneself to come out of a seemingly challenging situation, Dunde Bewaji (1996) in his paper entitled, “Their self as the focus of self-identity,” notes a Yoruba saying that, "There are periods in one’s life when one will be unable to go forward and the only option is to retreat.” This seeks to explain the fact that knowing the past, knowing what worked and what did not is important for any meaningful progress. In England and America, David and Edith, Brenda and other emigrants who had gone to look for better prospects found it hard to cope with life for a long time. David and Edith had left for England for Thirty years. For all those years, they have been trying in vain to adjust to the present situation in England. Out of this, each of the character in their own way has resolved to come back to Jamaica and make it their home.
4.2 Reconstruction of Identity

Velma Pollard, in her novel and selected poems, gives a sense of hope and pride of home particularly in the issue of the reconstruction of identity. It seems that in her urge and search for rootedness, Velma Pollard emerges as such a Caribbean spokeswoman. The inability of many of her characters to get fulfillment in the diaspora triggers their thinking of coming back home leading to a moment of self-search and each individual’s resolution to come back and see what they could do back at home. This explains the symbolic element that is embedded in the title *Homestretch*.

Reconstruction of identity in this context is the practice in which the West Indians who had left their island territories have acquired new meanings in the history of their region and have sought to create new relationships. They have developed a new way of looking back at their territories with fresh start and are seeking to recreate new relationships as a way of adjusting to and attaching new meanings to life in their islands.

In this chapter, we are going to look at how different characters are driven by different forces into going back to their homeland. Brenda, Laura, Anthony, David and Edith amongst other Caribbean emigrants, have considered coming back to Jamaica as their place of settlement. Each of these characters has had their own perspectives and reasons as to their departure back to their motherland. Some of the common reasons that make them look back to their homeland include: homeliness of home, individual character introspection, reconnection with home and through the
taste of music and culture at home. With different reasons discussed here below, the Caribbean emigrants come back home and make it their place of settlement.

4.2.1 Reconstruction of Identity through Homeliness

Homestretch in the context of the novel *Homestretch* is a situation in which characters in this text having wandered away from their homeland have made personal choices to come and celebrate home. They therefore place themselves on a path (stretch) towards home and celebrate the homeliness of home. Initially, they yearn for opportunities overseas and take a move to seize these opportunities. Harsh realities override the hitherto beckoning opportunities and this brings them back home. The friendliness of the people of the motherland, the welcoming environmental atmosphere, the recreational sceneries, the beautiful buildings and the plenty of the Jamaican foodstuffs has impacted differently in different emigrant individuals bringing them back home. For Pollard, the process of redefinition has enabled her characters to comb through issues so as to repair their psychological damages and regenerate their minds into thinking of remigration. Every character involved is trying to develop a positive sense of self as a new way to meaningful search for identity.

When David alights at the Airport, he appears sickly as someone at the verge of death. He is confined to a wheelchair and feels humiliated. Charley his friend seeing him in this humiliating position suggests they visit the Milk river for a few baths. David strongly believes that when he comes out of this river, he would be cured. Milk river is a symbolic element of healing. The river has therapeutic power and many of the Jamaican people believe that they will get better after a
few baths in the river. That is why when this couple comes out of the water, there are other people waiting on benches to get to the baths.

In the water, David feels the warm water caressing his body inch by inch. He feels as though something is infusing his body: the tiredness he had carried over after thirty years of work immediately gives him a relief. He keeps swallowing some of the water. He had enjoyed himself in the Milk river contrary to the baths in England that he never thought of using. He said, “The water in Jamaica is nine times as active as bath in England.” (16) This justifies that in comparison to what he got in England the place of emigration, the water baths at home were more welcoming and more therapeutic. David reassures himself “The water like it moving in my bones taking out the tiredness. I had said I have enough tiredness after thirty years work there I thought it might take thirty years rest to undo it. I feel this going to shorten the time.” (17)

David had thought that had he stayed in England, his health would have worsened. He had come home sickly and was confined to a wheelchair. Things started changing when he got back to the woods. The Milk river and the physiotherapy sessions at home environment had completely changed his life. “And when he walked, he only dragged one leg ever so slightly. Between the Milk river and the physiotherapy Edith didn’t know which one to praise more.” (29) David had desired that upon his death, he would wish to be buried back at home. He had indeed kept aside some money to cater for the funeral expenses. Coming back home alive gave him excitement and the revitalization he had once lost in Birmingham.
On reaching their home in the Woods, David and Edith had several visitors trickling in one by one to chat with them and have a drink. The hospitality of the neighbours creates a conducive home environment for their adjustments once in their motherland. In fact, David’s retirement in Birmingham was meant to stop him from active work owing to his age but when he came to Jamaica, this was never to be. They both became more invaluable in their homeland with David training boys on woodwork and Edith teaching bigger girls domestic science. “David virtually became the woodwork teacher for the school. And the boys were only too glad to be doing something that took them off the school premises.” (35)

The inviting homely environment that David and Edith found themselves in after going back home can largely be contrasted with the uninviting atmosphere in Birmingham. Edith said that there was no time for breakfast in Birmingham but brief moments to sip scalding coffee and the tea and scones that was hastily taken at nine-thirty appeared as a king’s meal for by then, their hunger was insatiable. Besides, each went apart and fights their own personal struggles. In Jamaica, they had time to spend together and make meals that they could enjoy. “They would sit down and enjoy boiled banana and mackerel, or ackee and saltfish or calaloo and fried dumpling or hominy corn porridge which was a great favourite with both of them.” (41) Out of the stressful situations this couple had come through, David tells Edith that he would surely be dead if they had not come to their homeland. They had an unwritten rule that before they went to bed, they took hot cocoa and nutmeg. They never had time to enjoy all this in Birmingham.

The novelist presents Charley and Myrtle as facilitators of the process of remigration. The old couple, David and Edith, had spent thirty years in England – Birmingham undergoing stress and
depression. Charley and Myrtle assist them to have a smooth transition into their home environment. After willingly taking them to the Milk river so as to attempt its curative powers, Myrtle prepares Jamaican foodstuff for them. Such foodstuffs include chocolate, tea, bammie, ackee, ginger, mint tea and salt fish to the relish of the emigrant couple. In taking their breakfast that Myrtle has made, David keeps clearing his cup of mint tea “Capital” where others are just starting up. He felt a kind of hitting the particular point in his stomach. This symbolizes the emigrant’s excitement of being back to their homeland. This new relationship gives room to David to unconsciously open up on the predicaments that befell them while they were away and this eases his process of physical, psychological and emotional healing. It also helps them to adjust to their new environment and see their usefulness as citizens unlike England where they were living in physical and psychological seclusion which gave birth to David’s stroke and other complications.

David and Edith were able to find back their place in Jamaica despite their long period of separation from it. Edith immediately switched back to preparing Jamaican meals at their home. At her mention of the sprat, Brenda could not forget how her grandmother used to prepare such Jamaican stuff. When Edith was preparing these meals, Brenda smelled and enjoyed flavours from her childhood memories. The smell of dukunoo, gizadas and puddings for their party reminded Brenda of the holidays that she had had in Birthright. The party that was held in David’s house indicates their willingness to join their colleagues and work together as one people.

The growing relationship between Anthony and his fiancée Brenda drew her closer to her home, Jamaica. In the course of building their relationship, the Jamaican food they ate in different places
they visited made Brenda develop a liking of home as Anthony. Anthony knew places where the best Jamaican dishes were prepared and he took her through them. He told her, "They sell dry fish and a particularly soft kind of Bammie there. I don’t know how they get it like that but I swear it is the best in Jamaica." (136) He knew that in the Middle quarters was peppered shrimps and the best conch soup was found in Negril and Cosmos. In Port Royal they took coconut water, bammie, curried lobster, fried fish and boiled bananas. Anthony kept deliberately stopping at such positions to get Brenda appreciate the Jamaican foodstuffs that he himself relished a lot. In their travelling, Anthony bought such food for their journey across the country. When taking breakfast in Mandeville, with great delight, Anthony remarked after a mouthful of Mackerel, banana and the Avocado, "I can’t tell you what you are missing. Real home cooking." (152) Such exposure to the Jamaican foodstuffs changed Brenda’s negative perspective of Jamaica and appreciated it as a home. After eating naseberries, Brenda too for once was able to comment positively, "This is the sweetest fruit in the world." (153) Like Laura, Anthony knew almost every eating place in the Jamaican places.

While it was purely coincidental that Anthony and Brenda, managed to get time to spend together, their travelling exposed her to various places she had never been to. Anthony, a wide travelled man knew the Jamaican roads and towns very well so were the streets. He had liked them and enjoyed travelling with Brenda so as to show her these places. In the course of their journey, they stopped to appreciate the buildings, towns, streets and places and could momentarily explain what each feature they came across meant. This totally painted a different approach on Brenda’s view of home. Brenda later commented that the London I lived could not compete Port Royal. They toured Port Royal, St. Ann’s Bay, Negril, the North coast, Westmore, St. Elizabeth amongst other 53
places. In this travelling, they both enjoyed the geographical scenery of the places they went through.

Velma Pollard through the novel *Homestretch* manages to paint attractive geographical scenery of the Jamaican environment. While travelling with Anthony, Brenda who totally had a negative attribute towards Jamaica could appreciate its beautiful environment. They could see the beautiful hills in which strawberries grow. (146) Laura herself unlike Brenda appreciated the Jamaican environmental beauty. Laura herself had enjoyed the mountains expecting them to have altered a bit or deteriorated. (52) Laura’s cousin, like Brenda, hated the condition of the roads and the streets in Kingston unlike Laura who appreciated the homeland as it is. They went through the beautiful buildings as Trelawny Beach Hotel and Garvey statue and Lawrence Park. These several journeys they make and Anthony’s firm attachment to his homeland changed Brenda’s perspective of home.

### 4.2.2 Reconstruction of Identity through Character Introspection

By exploring the life of the Caribbean people in the European Diaspora, Velma Pollard creates a new way of understanding one’s society, coming to terms with past traumas through creating new relationships, visualizing and redefining oneself and being proud of home.

These adjustments then become the positive aspects of focus in Pollard’s work. Re-adjustments to life lead to new meanings and reliving back the old world and the continuity to the new world and developing a positive sense of self. In the novel *Homestretch*, all the characters have a symbolic
relevance when each decides to come back home. It is in this fourth chapter that we find Pollard as one among the many major West Indian writers set to go an extra mile in bringing back the West Indian people to celebrate their identity after going through a personal introspection. Pollard exposes her characters to varying situations that eventually lead to a cumulative yearning; a yearning to go back home and sort of become responsible for the development of that home.

David and Edith were closer to each other before they left for England. Owing to the challenge of time in Birmingham, each of them went through some personal struggles and felt that in one way or the other, the partner had contributed to these challenges. Thoughts have crossed each character’s mind and they felt that Birmingham had not been a good place to them and had thought of coming back. “They hadn’t discussed it with each other but secretly, each of them felt sort of responsible almost as if they should not have left as if they had abandoned something....” (36)

Velma Pollard in the novel *Homestretch*, creates a scene of some West Indians who had settled in Birmingham and like David and Edith were feeling unsettled there notwithstanding the length of their stay overseas. They thought of Jamaica as their final destination of burial. This is illustrated when Laura having brought back her aunt and uncle to Jamaica, had gone to pursue a short course in London. When she managed to visit some of the Caribbean folks that were in Birmingham, many of them were eager to get news about home. It is like they had taken David and Edith as their role models or pilot projects. They had a longing for home and they belonged to a generation that was yearning to return home. “To be buried under their own vine and fig tree.” (44)
Brenda had gone to America with great optimism and expectations. She had longed for something she could not exactly tell at the same time she was not sure if she had got it. She had gone through intense suffering save for Mrs Stewarts and Mrs. Saul who tried to ease her suffering. The several resentments that she went through made her introspect and think that after all, the Jamaica she knew was much better than what she went through overseas. "...I resent America and England. Especially England where I was most conscious." (88) She could not explain how things were going on and she wondered how she could sought herself out. The situations she went through in America were more heart rending than what she saw in England. She tells Laura in her discussion on how they find life in the overseas nations, "I went to America to a father I didn't know and a stepmother who hated me. By the time I became comfortable there with the help of a good fairy, I had to go to England." (89) Such suffering made her think much about home and changed her feelings over it.

With time and constant interaction with the Caribbean students in America and more so in England drew Brenda close to changing her views about her homeland. All along she had got disturbed by the dirt in the streets in Kingston, reckless driving along its roads and everything she mentions about Jamaica seemed to have stirred an irritation in her. After an exchange with Laura, she found herself talking positively about the Caribbean islands. "Alone now, she congratulated herself for having been able to make positive comments about the African brothers and say they had been nice to her." (103)

Anthony is also an individual who went through self-introspection. He had been in the States for ten years but even so had a conviction of finally making a settlement in Jamaica. "Every chance I
get, I have been toying with the idea of coming to live here. My parents would like nothing better.” (101) Unlike Brenda who had had quite some rough time in England and America, Anthony was quite different. To Brenda’s surprise, he knew of almost all the eating places, and the streets in several towns in Jamaica. Besides he was very much conversant with the roads they travelled in and knew them by their names. Although he had a good job and a scholarship in the European nations, that did not deny him the thoughts of coming to Jamaica and making it his home. The several trips he made with Brenda across the many towns in Jamaica was meant to draw Brenda close to him and close to her Jamaican self.

The return of the emigrants is however in most cases made difficult by lack of familiarity with the language and cultural norms and lack of access to social networks. Support from family and friends often determine how smooth transition is. David and Edith with other returnees are coming back to their nations of birth with skills and taste that impact significantly on the regions that receive them. They return with orientation towards life that has been profoundly shaped by their experiences in the US. The dilemma of the old couple, David and Edith, when they reach Woods village from England, clearly shows the dilemma of the islands in the wake and search for identity. Further, the change of the church in the Woods village symbolizes surrendered independence by the Caribbean people and their disloyalty to the colonizer. The people of Woods village however take a short moment to adjust to the changes of their arrival and they not only accept them but they also forge ahead together.
4.2.3 Reconstruction of Identity through Reconnection

The journey of homecoming at the end of the novel *Homestretch* symbolizes the end of hopeless striving, ceaseless pain and endless succession of disappointments. Velma Pollard through the two artistic works highlights the dilemma and tension arising from the desire of the West Indian person to search for roots, the yearning to escape the feeling of alienation and its consequences, loneliness and a sense of being exiles and outsiders in European countries. When the emigrant characters leave their island territories for home, they get a chance to reconnect with the islanders that they had left behind. This re-union brings about the joy of homecoming and stability in their homeland. This reconnection brings about the reconstruction of identity.

The remigration of David and Edith to Jamaica is packaged with other new privileges that inject life to Woods village. The roads that had long been abandoned because the area was not much productive are re-constructed and minibuses start plying that route and shops that had long been dormant too start gaining life. This opens up the rural areas such as the Woods village so that the young people who worked far from home started coming home frequently drawn. The church also is not left behind in celebrating the remigration of David and Edith. When Rector is told about the coming back of these emigrants, he is so thrilled. He believes that their coming home to resettle may inject something new to get the district back to how it used to be and indeed it was. Edith used her time to train the young girls on how to dress the church on Sundays and David on the other hand with enthusiasm trained young schoolboys on woodwork and carpentry.
When David and Edith went back to their place of birth, they first place they had landed in was Laura’s house. Edith just felt at home in that environment: she is glad to be “Back at the Yard” (35) as a singer sang drinking coconut water on a Sunday morning. She loved Jamaica and felt complete whenever she was back there. David too had a relief from stroke because of the homeliness of the Jamaican environment. His health was slowly beginning to come back; he could unpack their things contrary to his handicapped condition in Birmingham. He even started walking though dragging one leg ever so slightly as the Milk river and the physiotherapy sessions had improved him. Within a short time after being in the Woods village, had started enjoying full life contrary to the death that kept David gnawing his mind in England.

The remigrating old couple - David and Edith – was welcomed back in their homeland by their fellow neighbours. This is marked by constant visitors that kept trickling in one by one just to greet them. David became agile again after a long time and both of them looked well and relaxed far from the stress they had had when they disembarked at Norman Manley airport. David then restarted his past time hobby - carpentry -and Edith began a small vegetable garden. Everyone was willing to assist them and they felt they were lucky to get a second chance to live in their land. They recalled with guilt, the weeping and general sadness that they had witnessed upon their once enthusiastic departure to England. The two recognized that they were valuable to the Woods community “…… each felt sort of responsible for the decline in Kingston almost as if they should not have left.” (36)

After remigrating to the Woods village, David and Edith became invaluable to the school and the church. Edith did not intend to sit there and watch things happen anyhow where she could help.
As a result, she started a girls’ group whose duty was to dress the church on Sundays. Besides this, she trained bigger girls on Domestic Science like setting a table, eating with a fork, and making a bed among other several chores. On the other hand, David became the woodwork teacher at school and the boys so much enjoyed his practical work. From time to time, David and Edith too would be interviewed as emigrants over their experiences in the foreign land so as to be put in a local journal.

Unlike other emigrants who had sold the little that they had so as to secure themselves opportunities abroad, David and Edith had mainly gone there with an intention of coming back after making their fortune. They never thought of England as a place to settle in forever. They knew their identity and did not wish to part forever with it. It is a pity however, that during this excursion, David becomes ill and is occupied with the thought of ever making for home alive. In fact, the celebration that they decided to host over the National Heroes Weekend was an expression of their joy of remigrating to their homeland while still breathing.

In the beginning of her journey of self search and the recovery of identity, Brenda narrates how she went through problems both in England and America while trying to adjust to life. She explains how her American accent gave her hell even in presence of her black people. Her accent was one of the chief causes of distance and loneliness that were her common companion. She realized that the disintegration and humiliation of the blacks of which she was a victim, had resulted from their inability to unite and work together as a team. Moreover, Brenda’s stay with the Jamaican nurse in England who took pride in cooking the Jamaican food that she and her father enjoyed slowly brought her back to her Jamaican self. Unlike in America where they took
fried meals with soda, her father kept bringing home Patties and Gizadas from time to time and Coco bread that they loved and this eased her psychological feeling of being home. When Brenda and Laura met for the first time for a meal in England; Brenda who had initially developed a negative attitude towards everything Jamaican, began taking the coconut water first before they settled on other Jamaican foodstuffs as ackee, quiche with salt fish and ripe pears. Their enjoyment of these meals indicate Brenda’s beginning of embracing and coming to terms with her true Jamaican worth that she had for long discarded.

Although Brenda and Anthony through their constant interaction had looked very close, the two are totally different in their upbringing. Anthony represents the pillar and the foundations of a strong man whose continuous wrapping with issues that try to rob him of his identity fail contrary to his girlfriend Brenda. Though he had spent much of his youthful stage working for the Europeans, he does not embody the conflicting situations all around him that make him lose his identity. In his relationship with Brenda, he is curious to know the psychological damage which Brenda has been exposed to and he purposefully takes her through a number of places, towns, situations and foodstuffs that enabled Brenda to accept and meaningfully accommodate her Jamaican worth. Throughout their constant interaction, we see change and transition in Brenda’s life. Brenda’s transition heavily lies on her relationship with Anthony.

Brenda works for the Jamaican journal that calls itself Yard. Yard is a symbolic element of rejuvenation or re-adjustment to identity. Through it, the West Indians are trying to educate themselves and the community around them on life in the islands. It is through this work that Brenda is compelled to come back to Jamaica and carry out a research about heritage on Jamaican
identity and this encourages her to like, desire to learn more and draw closer to her country of birth that she had disowned. A performance that was staged by Brenda’s friends amazed her at how passionately she felt for Jamaican island – St Anne. Initially she had resented the appearance of Jamaica claiming that it is disorganized but later, she comes to realize that England and America are the places she should resent more and appreciate Jamaica as a home. This changed her perception and attitude towards her home country.

Unlike Brenda, Laura knew almost all the eating places in Jamaica; she knew of every town and every street. Laura’s first meeting with Brenda at the FE College when she was winding her last term, gave Brenda a boost up from her past disappointments. Brenda had then been so lonely in England because whenever she tried to talk in class, the Jamaicans laughed at her (on her) American accent. They in turn never talked to her to understand that like them, she could talk Patwa. She had been keeping all this pain to herself till Laura came to her. Laura kept inviting her for the Saturday soup in her uncle’s house in Birmingham and when she felt free with Laura; Brenda opened up and shared her views on her experiences in England and America. Laura helped Brenda widen her perception of how she viewed things.

4.2.4 Reconstruction of Identity through Music and Culture

Jamaica is known for reggae music. Popular musicians such as Bob Marley, dreadlocked face, have become icons of Contemporary Black Self – recognition. Reggae music has a history both social and musical that extends deep into their souls. Music knits together different aspects of Jamaican life that is the internal life of the person and the communal life of the group. Music and
dance were inseparable. Social music and dance were known as Mento sprang up quickly across the country created stage shows for talent competitions which became the nurseries for entertainers.

The young African men who met Brenda swimming with Anthony had a music presentation in Jamaica. They had then invited Anthony and Brenda to go and watch their item at a hotel in Mandeville. Anthony and Brenda among other people who have gone to watch the performance are bound together in unity. In watching this performance, fifty percent of the people watching it were black and they kept applauding their music. At the performance of these diaspora Thespians - an amateur dramatic group – Brenda identifies with the team when she tells Anthony of her involvement with the group and how she likes operating as a behind -the -scenes person. At the presentation, one of the presenters addressing the crowd invited them to the loveliest island in the world and the loveliest stretch of beach on that Island that is Jamaica. Besides, the bass guitarist in the performance, a woman, sang a song about Bob Marley, a Jamaican outstanding personality "to celebrate an everlasting power of the king" and they found the crowd joining in, then came "Mack the Knife" the American tunes preceding the old -fashioned love songs and Jamaican folk songs and this drove the crowd wild.

Laura, an agent of Brenda’s remigration, is comfortable with who she is overseas as she is in Jamaica, her homeland. This is evidenced in her involvement in the Jamaican folksongs where she played the piano at the Mento jazz that Anthony and Brenda had gone to watch. She becomes part of the Jamaican band. Brenda and Laura met at the African Studies get-together where most black students had turned up for it. Ghanaian and Nigerian music were tuned in to their enjoyment
in addition to the delicious meals that were near enough to be West Indian. Though Brenda does not have any positive word to mention about England or America in giving her experiences, she too has nothing commendable about the Caribbean countries. Her coming closer and further associations with Laura drew Brenda towards acceptance of the Caribbean self. However, in her last year in the university, Brenda’s walls of confinement break down. She starts intermingling with West Indians of other territories in England and started adopting their lifestyles. Like her fellow Caribbean students, she allows her hair to go dread, gets dressed in full African regalia and gets involved in whatever they were doing. With this, she finds a niche and they discuss much and this makes her life more bearable to her enjoyment of it. This is a psychological move towards remigration.

Laura symbolizes someone truly attached to their identity. Despite the duration of her stay abroad, she remains a true crusader of the Caribbean self. Her discussion with Brenda opens up Brenda’s eyes on what Brenda and her other Caribbean counterparts had missed as a result of attachment to another culture. Brenda contemplates her resentment of America and the new dimension she assumed at the university that eased her loneliness. This is confirmed by the statement she makes “Things started looking better at the university. I was mixing with the Africans and with the West Indians from different islands. I had sort of given up on Jamaicans by then.” (90)

Jamaicans have first of August as emancipation day where there is real enjoyment. Other festivities such as Dinkimini were staged as a warm send off to the dead and a welcoming toll to the birth and continuity in life. David, Edith and Laura had attended a culture feast at Mento Yard; the heart of the heritage events. In this festivity, they had been able to watch several
presentations as Dinkimini, the Ninth Night festivity, the Nigerian dance troupe and other different dances. In watching these items, David had been able to stand unsupported for long; his stroke had left him.

Additionally, the presence of African men among the Jamaican crowd and the use of instruments like calabash and guitar placed them at their proper social settings. This is expressed as so “.... a performance at Mento Yard had a special touch in it. They all were struck by the melodrama of putting motherland and diaspora rhythm and movement side by side.” (122) At the end of this festivity, David, a man once confined to the wheelchair out of a stroke, drove the family back home. This proves a complete healing from stroke and several unpleasant moments that had confronted him in England.

Film, jazz and carnival are some of the Jamaican festivities that drew Brenda to embrace her identity. There is a celebration by the Garifuna people from Belize and Brenda attaches herself to it. They enjoy themselves so much in these celebrations that they could never compare these happenings in Mento Yard to those they witnessed in England. In her final moments in London, Brenda uses her spare time to chat with a group of youngsters of West Indian background and is thinking of bringing them to perform in Jamaica the next festive.

Jamaica as a nation values its identity. This is indicated by their appreciation of Marcus Garvey statue. Marcus Garvey being the champion of the Negro race who had felt the vile wrath of the white man for his just and wise teachings and as the black Moses who is really the embodiment of the spirit of Haile Selassie. The presence of Marcus Garvey and Nethesole’s statues as part of the
Jamaican historical issues are a constant reminder to the Jamaican people to preserve their heritage.

When Brenda and David’s family had traveled to Mento Yard to watch what Edith called a culture feast, Brenda’s perspective of Jamaica had long changed. She identifies with it when she says that she would personally make a special visit to the place alone. There were several dances ranging from Dinkimini, a dance for the Ninth night festivities – a send off for the dead, children’s dances, Mento Band and the Nigerian dance troupe communicating different meanings. Though David and Edith had watched some African dances in London, Edith comments that the performance at Mento Yard had a special touch. The Jamaican Rasta man who was sitting keeping watch over a dark substance labeled “Roots Wine” may symbolically stand for something meant to make the Jamaicans stick to their roots. In this regard, Homestretch is a resource of acceptance of identity, with which to confront and reform the West Indian representations in the Diaspora. This seeks to elucidate on the modern Caribbean students in the diaspora having a feeling of their island territories as a home: a place with which to invest.

Velma Pollard also set out to explore the theme of rediscovery of the black race in the poem “Rouseau August ‘79” after the departure of the colonialists. The nature of the poem has a geo-poetic effect; a show of the way the black people are scattered all over the world. “Roseau August ‘79” is a poem of protest in which Pollard tries to recreate and redefine the past and examine it to build a better tomorrow for her people. In the lines, “But today I watch your city/clean and fresh. The persona is able to see the new dimension of the towns after the departure of the colonialists. Velma Pollard tries to express a new notion of the West Indian consciousness
when the colonialists had left. The poem is a protest in which Pollard tries to recreate the past through the two cities and examine it to build a better tomorrow for its people. It expresses the cultural concern and celebrates the life in the two cities of Africa. We find that the journey back made by the colonialists is the source of assertion to ancestral roots by the African cities. In this poem, Pollard seeks to give a signal of exploitation that bare the African cities during the colonial period.

The persona compares two cities that had been confronted by chaos. These chaos include: colonial invasion, domination, emigration and alienation. The persona appeals for water to purify, clean, cleanse and restore the cities back to their glory. The cities that were thought of as pure and clean after the chaos did not show any noticeable changes; their ‘cleaning’ did not guarantee the cities a promising future. The persona’s acceptance of his city the way it is symbolizes acceptance of their identity and his willingness to share his agony with the other man whose city has remained clean indicates unity that the Caribbean people have had to go through in the process of coming to liberation.

4.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Pollard, through her works, reconstructs the Caribbean identity. In our analysis, we have shown how characters can regain their identity through homeliness of home, individual introspection, reconnection with the home, music and culture. In this way, the author seems to suggest that the best way to reconstruct one’s identity is by going back to the basics and the roots. In our next chapter, we give a summary and conclusion of the entire
research study. What makes the tone of Pollard’s meditation on identity different from other West Indian writers is the sense of homeliness that gives rise to reconstruction of identity. Velma Pollard in *Homestretch* tries to resolve identity crisis by making her characters develop the pride of coming back home. It is the ability of her characters in their quest to understand their past as a way of seeking a new redefinition through the reconstruction of their identity. Her characters come out of the confinement abroad and look back to home as land of refuge.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

In this study, we had set out to examine how Velma Pollard reconstructs identity in her works of art. In this final chapter, we present the major arguments that we have been making in this study and isolate areas that can be further examined.

In the course of our analysis, we argued that Velma Pollard captures the life and experiences of characters both in the Caribbean and diaspora. Through this, she has shown that there is an identity crisis haunting the Caribbean blacks in the Caribbean diaspora. Velma Pollard paints pictures of the blacks joyfully leaving their homelands to follow the colonizer with a promise of having a better life abroad. Ironically, the better life they had hoped for never was as many of got disillusioned, disenchanted and were forced to endure untold misery and suffering. In this regard, Pollard has shown exploits of racism, alienation, loneliness and exploitations as harsh unforeseen realities that the West Indian people find themselves in while abroad.

In her works, Homestretch and Crown Point and other Poems, Pollard not only presents us figuratively with the reasons as to why various characters in her text had to emigrate and remigrate but also explores the various ways that the characters engage to reconstruct their identity. In this, she presents a personalized vision not only for the Caribbean people but also for humanity through the joyous homecoming of her characters. When the characters return home,
they are welcomed by members of the society and the neighbours help them to resettle. This gesture is a show of a clear sense of humanity that Pollard prescribes to society as part of her social vision. Further, Pollard underscores the idea that identity is an essential recipe to anyone who has been rendered rootless by situations of life and that irrespective of the geographical distances we cover across the globe, it is at home where we find physical, social and psychological rest, our sense of worth and our usefulness, our voices and our acceptance. At home, we neither struggle to be who we are nor do we struggle to please but we please as we are.

5.2 Chapter Conclusion

From the issues raised in this study, it is clear that Homestretch is presented as a symbolic novel that unfolds situations in which many young and restless youths and productive citizens feel compelled to leave their homeland so as to look for fortune and better lives outside their homes. Contrary to their expectations, the land of emigration presents several life challenging experiences that force them to soul search and make up their minds. Each of the characters is able to recollect what has been shattered in the land of emigration and strong feelings of coming home keeps gnawing their minds. The course of emigration of these characters, the saddening experiences that they undergo in the process of remigration completes the term homestretch.

Pollard views the issue of emigration as not limited to the Caribbean people. This is a phenomenon that cuts across many developing nations even at the moment. The en masse departure of emigrants from their homelands often causes underdevelopment of their regions. It is sad to note that these emigrants rarely come back home. When they manage to come back home,
most of these returnees will have lived most of their productive lives outside their homeland and their familiarity in countries of their birth is quite limited. Nevertheless, this does not hinder them from making smooth transitions to their places of birth.

Through her writing, Pollard lashes at other world nations especially the European nations for betraying their colonies and making their nations yardsticks with which other developing nations should measure up. This is a major factor that gives birth to identity crisis that she seeks to acknowledge through the process of reconstruction. Therefore, Pollard has tried to deconstruct or decentralize this canonical position by bringing in the issue of remigration of her characters to developing a unified Caribbean setting - people who are proud of who they are proving her commitment to her land and the West Indian people. The novel *Homestretch* and *Crown Point and other Poems* are written on the basis of imagination and experience on the Caribbean settings. They represent the critical issues like the Caribbean pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial situations leading to the mass exodus of the island people to the overseas nations. Velma Pollard’s vision of the future Caribbean people through the process of reconstruction of identity as a people who are proud of their worth is a manipulation of the present West Indian people’s position and their worldwide impacts. In that sense, the novel *Homestretch* emerges as Velma Pollard’s revisioning and rewriting the Caribbean post-colonial history and sense of belonging from a post-colonial perspective.

Indeed, Velma Pollard communicates not only the consciousness of the Caribbean identity but also the value of individual, societal and national identities that rock the stability of many third world nations. Therefore, as a West Indian writer, besides focusing on her personal experiences,
she also (re)tells the ethnic and social position of her nation and other island territories as sharing the same predicaments that befell Jamaica. From this perspective, Velma Pollard emerges as a Caribbean voice to reconstruct the common Caribbean view of themselves as inferior dependants devoid of constructive identity through her exploration, restoration and rewriting positively about them. Her artistic works try to dismantle or expose the fouls of the British colonial ideologies that the West Indians have aped.

### 5.3 Recommendations

In this study, we have delimited ourselves to how Velma Pollard reconstructs Caribbean identity in her creative works. We therefore recommend that:

a. A comprehensive study be conducted on Velma Pollard's other works that were not subject to this analysis such as, *Karl and other Stories* (1994), *Dread talk: The Language of the Rastafari* (1994) and *Shame Trees don't Grow Here* (1992) in order to establish whether she continues with the reconstruction motif that we have examined herein.

b. We recommend that while still under reconstruction of identity as a motif, a comparative analysis be conducted between the creative works of Velma Pollard and other creative writers from the region to establish the extent to which they share the same vision for the Caribbean people and especially the issue of reconstruction.

c. We also recommend that a similar analysis on Velma Pollard can be conducted using different theoretical and analytical methods and also be restricted to genre.
Works Cited


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