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Andrea Levy: Immigration Experience in Postwar Britain

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Předmětem práce bude román *Small Island* od britské autorky *Andrey Levy*, který detailně popisuje osudy jamajského manželského páru v poválečné Británii. Autorka se v úvodní části krátce zamyslí nad otázkami imigrace v Británii během Druhé světové války a po roce 1945. Jádrem práce bude detailní analýza vybraného textu s cílem charakterizovat konkrétní zkušenost těchto imigrantů s důrazem na téma integrace, asimilace a recepce do britské společnosti. Pro svůj rozbor autorka využije relevantní sekundární literaturu. Práci uzavře kapitola shrnující předchozí zjištění.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis is based on thematic analysis of the novel by Andrea Levy *Small Island* which is about Caribbean immigration into postwar Britain. The thesis mainly focuses on assimilation, integration and reception of West Indian immigrants into British society. The paper also depicts racial discrimination against Afro-Caribbeans in Britain after the Second World War.

KEYWORDS

Immigration; postwar Great Britain; Levy, Andrea; *Small Island*; assimilation; West Indies; racial discrimination

NÁZEV

Andrea Levy: Zkušenosti s přistěhovalectvím v poválečné Británii

SOUHRN

Tato bakalářská práce je založena na tematickém rozboru románu *Small Island* od britské autorky Andrey Levy, který se týká karibské imigrace do poválečné Británie. Práce se zaměřuje především na asimilaci, integraci a přijetí těchto přistěhovalců do britské společnosti. Prostor v této bakalářské práci je věnován také rasové diskriminaci černochů z Karibiku v Británii po druhé světové válce.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Imigrace; poválečná Velká Británie; Levy, Andrea; *Small Island*; asimilace; karibské ostrovy; rasová diskriminace

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0. INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis is based on the novel *Small Island* by Andrea Levy. The central theme of the novel is post-war immigration from the British West Indies into Britain from the perspective of two couples: newly arrived young Jamaicans Gilbert and Hortense and the native British Bernard and Queenie. All four characters are also narrators of the story set in 1948 with abundant retrospectives mainly into World War II. The main topics raised in *Small Island* are various forms of racism, discrimination, hostility and ignorance of the native British towards the Caribbean immigrants and from them stemming difficulties which Hortense and Gilbert have to face. This paper focuses on specific immigration experiences of the Jamaican couple with emphasis on integration, assimilation and reception into British society. Detailed analysis of relevant sections of the novel is accompanied by socio-historical and political background mentioning life in the West Indies, colonized people's attitude towards the British Empire, the mutual impact of Afro-Caribbean immigration on the receiving country as well as on the immigrants themselves and so forth. The bachelor paper consists of three main parts which are further divided into subchapters.

At first the paper briefly describes changes in immigration policy designed by the British government after the war and later on in response to high numbers of continuing colonial immigration. Then it focuses on the main reasons which led to immigration of West Indians into the centre of the British Empire. Further influence of black people's presence on British society and impact of hostile and ignorant attitude of the British on West Indian immigrant community are examined.

Secondly, strong influence of colonizing Britain on hierarchy, life and values of Caribbean society together with colonized people's loyalty, strong sense of Britishness and pride of being part of the Empire are shown. The other half of the section analyses prevailing reasons for volunteering of many West Indian men in the British army during the Second World War and their reception by British civilians. Attention is also focused on the US Army segregation of Afro-American servicemen and its impact on life of black British soldiers.

Thirdly, differences between mainly grateful reception of West Indian servicemen by the British during World War II and hostile, prejudiced treatment of former black soldiers in post-war Britain are highlighted. Feelings of disillusion among West Indian immigrants are also taken into consideration. Next two subsections discuss the most urging problems of new black arrivals: discrimination in housing and racism at work. Finally, the last subchapter discusses British war-time phenomenon of local white women going out with black either Afro-American or colonial soldiers and its consequences.

Andrea Levy won Orange Prize for Fiction for this novel which was also named the Whitbread Book of the Year. When released this entertaining story was praised by literary critics as well as media. Later on the book the book was transcribed into BBC TV drama. The author's parents emigrated from Jamaica in 1948 and Levy was born and lives in England.

1. FEATURES OF CARIBBEAN IMMIGRATION INTO POSTWAR BRITAIN

1.1 British Postwar Immigration Policy

Year 1948 was significant for the future of British society as a new immigration law and the first wave of Caribbean immigrants to Great Britain opened a door for thousands of other colonial subjects to start new life in Great Britain. Since 1948 predominantly white British society slowly begun to change into multiethnic.

As Sewel says the British Nationality Act enabled all Commonwealth and Colonies people to live and work in Great Britain (38). “Until 1948 West Indians, although technically British subjects, were restricted in their entry to Britain” (Sewel 38). Hampshire points out that “In 1948 there were just a few thousand non-white people living in the country, mostly concentrated in sea ports, but by 1968 there were over a million”(10). And he further reminds that “Today’s ethnic minority communities (...) are largely the descendants of these immigrants” (Hampshire 10). The British Nationality Act was passed without much public attention by Labourist Government in 1948 “in response to Canadian fears about the lack of free migration around the Empire” (Marr 41). This bill “established a single Citizenship of the UK and Colonies (CUKC) for all British subjects whether born in the UK, colonies or Commonwealth”. Between 600- 800 million people across the globe (Hansen and Marr differ at estimations) received British citizenship which guaranteed them the right to entry the UK (Hansen 262; Marr 41) “The Act had a constitutional purpose and was not expected to facilitate immigration from the Empire or Commonwealth” (Hampshire 19).

Hampshire continues that during 1950s when colonial migration developed, the successive governments tried to use with little or no success administrative ways to limit the entrance of immigrants into Britain (21). This period of imperial citizenship lasted from 1948 until 1961 (Hampshire 18). Hampshire further states that British society was sceptical, even hostile towards colonial (Commonwealth) immigration and the prevailing opinions were against open door immigration policy (77). Governments in this period tried to restrict immigration waves to Britain but kept discussions about this problem behind closed doors because colonial

immigration coincided with decolonization and Britain tried to keep “a sphere of influence” over former colonies (Hampshire 22-23). It was officially repeated that restriction of immigration from Commonwealth countries “would undermine Commonwealth unity” (Hampshire 22). However, British post-1948 governments perceived colonial immigration as a problem and set up various committees which were supposed to report on the “issue” in the UK as well as lead “the policy of obstruction” in targeted Commonwealth countries where information campaigns were to inform about crude ways of life in Great Britain (Hampshire 21-22). In spite of these attempts a law which would restrict influx of immigrants from former colonies was not passed until a year 1962 (Hampshire 22).

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act started a period of British immigration policy which Hampshire calls “the period of exclusion” and which lasted until 1981 when The 1981 British Nationality Act was passed (18). This Bill from 1962 divided citizens of the UK into two groups: “belonging” and “non-belonging”. Belonging was a category used for native British (Hampshire 30). Quoting Hampshire “Immigration controls were applied to all Commonwealth citizens except those born in the United Kingdom, those holding a UK passport issued under the authority of the UK Government, or those included in the passport of the above (...)” (29). The Government established special work permits system divided into three categories which was going to enable certain number of people interested in work to enter Great Britain. “An annual quota for each category was set by the government (...)” (Hampshire 29). Especially this article of the Act gave the British Government control over the number and composition of the immigrants entering the country. The right to enter Britain had also dependants- “wives and children under the age of 16 of primary immigrants” (Hampshire 29). The Commonwealth Immigrants Act was highly controversial and there were difficulties to find support for it in the parliament. The most discussed part of the Bill was an exception of the Irish from the Act which in fact meant “privileging (...) Irish citizens over colonial CUKCs” (Hampshire 27). Hampshire points out that the Irish and British governments negotiated that Irish citizens entering Great Britain from the Republic of Ireland will not in practice be subjects of immigration controls (27). The British government defended this agreement by set of various historical and practical reasons- one of them was a difficulty of patrolling frontier of Northern Ireland and the Republic and also the fact that British economy profited from Irish labour immigrants “who were [also] seen to be relatively unproblematic” (Hampshire 26).

It is evident from numbers in a table included in Hampshire that The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was surprisingly passed at the time when colonial immigration to Britain in fact declined during the past years. However, when rumours spread about the preparation of immigration law numbers of immigrants to Britain significantly raised (Hampshire 66-67).

The fact that the British government wants to on one hand restrict immigration but on the other hand allows annual influx of about 50.000 Irish to the country led to claims about racist aim of the Bill by opposing MPs (Hampshire 28). It was obvious for those who disagreed with the law that it was mainly aimed at “‘Asiatic’ and Caribbean immigration” (Hampshire 27). In the following years there were passed another laws restricting even more colonial immigration to Great Britain.

1.2 Major Reasons for Immigration from the Caribbean to Britain

Before describing characteristic features for West Indian immigration to Britain, it is important to explain the prevailing reasons which led to the immigration. Bad economic situation of the Caribbean islands was one of the important facts which triggered work immigration from West Indies and therefore this chapter will briefly mention socio-economic and historical situation of these British colonies.

The economy of British West Indies was almost solely based on agricultural production of sugar cane, tobacco, cotton etc. and industry processing this crop (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 15). Although slavery was abolished in 1834 (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 11), Sewel reminds us that Caribbean society structure and lifestyle were still very similar to the life during slavery as majority of people worked on plantations (12). Class division was defined by shades of skin colour and the colonies were dependent on the Empire (M. Phillips & T. Phillips, 15- 16).

According to Sewel there were three major factors which led to Caribbean immigration to Britain. The first one was an urgent post-war demand for workers at vital services such as London Transport and National Health Service. Secondly, British West Indies were stricken by poverty, economic recession and high unemployment. Moreover, in 1944 Jamaica was hit by a disastrous hurricane which totally destroyed crop, left people homeless and weakened island's economy. Sewel claims that the third important reason for leaving British Caribbean was that the USA newly prohibited foreigners from seasonal work in their country (7).

The following quotation from Sewel illustrates bad economic situation of West Indies during the Second World War. "These islands were devastated by the war and the interruption in world trade. In Jamaica unemployment rose to more than 25 per cent of the workforce. The average income was £50 per year compared to Britain's £200" (10).

Both Sewel and Hampshire add that another reason for Caribbean diaspora was "imperial propaganda" (Hampshire, 86) when Britain was portrayed as the "Mother Country" at the top of the civilized world with abundance of jobs and life chances. The attractive image of life in England was supported by direct recruitment and advertisements (Sewel, 8). Enchantment with England is visible from Hortense's description of college studies in Jamaica. Her teacher training college is led by British teachers and students learn about British history, geography, literature much more than about Jamaican. They practise received pronunciation and learn to be proud of being part of the British Empire which brought civilization to their island. Thus, Britain becomes

a dream destination in the eyes of students who try to become as much British- meaning civilized- as possible. Hortense's college friend Celia wants to live in England one day. This is how she envisions her life in England:

(...) locking her arm through mine, she leaned in close to whisper, "Hortense, let me give you a secret. When I am older, I will be leaving Jamaica and I will be going to live in England. I will have a big house with a bell at the front door and I will ring the bell, ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling." Her black hair caught by the sun shimmered golden strands in the light. "I will ring the bell in this house when I am in England. That is what will happen to me when I am older" (Levy 72).

The above passage reflects very naïve, simple ideas of some Jamaicans about English life. Celia went out with Gilbert before jealous Hortense snatched him from her. Celia enjoyed listening to Gilbert's stories about life in England and truly admired him because he knew so much about it. Celia hopes that she will come to England with Gilbert who wants to return there.

Hampshire further mentions that especially early West Indian migration was smoothened for many immigrants' because of their wartime experience of Britain as colonial soldiers (86). Also Small Island's character Gilbert decides to return back to England where he was stationed during the war. Gilbert returns back to Jamaica at the end of the war. Instead of being happy that he is back home, Gilbert is depressed there, he feels that Jamaica doesn't offer him any opportunity for the future:

But instead of being joyous at this demob I looked around me quizzical as a jilted lover. So, that was it. Now what? With alarm I became aware that the island of Jamaica was no universe: it ran only a few miles before it fell into the sea. In that moment, standing tall on Kingston harbor, I was shocked by the awful realization that, man, we Jamaicans are all small islanders too! (Levy, 196).

This excerpt expresses Gilbert's sudden finding that although Jamaica is the biggest island of West Indies and their inhabitants often proud themselves on it, it is also small just like the surrounding islands compared to British Isles. However, Gilbert is not only concerned about the size of Jamaica but he metaphorically means that it is too small for his life expectations, dreams and ambitions. Some years spent in England enabled Gilbert to see his home from a different perspective.

Many people leave the island because of unemployment and seek opportunity abroad e.g. in the USA. Gilbert's relatives are scattered over American continent, they left Jamaica in search for work and better living conditions during or before the war. Gilbert finds out about the damaging hurricane and other disasters Jamaica had gone through while he was away. His cousin, farmer Elwood, lost his crop in the hurricane and the remaining rest died of disease. In order to make ends meet he did whatever job was available. But Elwood still hopes in his island's bright future without colonizing Britain. Elwood is involved in a movement for Jamaica's independence as he believes that it is a solution to Jamaican poverty and other problems. Gilbert doesn't share his cousin's hopes and beliefs. Leaving his home island is a logical step for him. Hampshire mentions that "migration itself was facilitated by the decreasing cost of international travel" (86) but as Dingley says £28.10s was still "awful lot of money" (qtd. in M. Phillips & T. Phillips 78). Moreover, Gilbert lost all his savings because he invested his money into a small business with Elwood. Therefore when Gilbert meets Hortense and she offers to lend him money for the oversea's journey in exchange for the opportunity to come to England with him, Gilbert agrees. Although, he is somewhat humiliated by Hortense's offer, he feels to be bought by her money but he also knows that this is his chance for a better life allowing him to fulfill his dreams.

There is a tragicomic moment in the novel. Queenie's neighbor, Mr. Todd, is very disturbed by the presence of black people in the street and thinks that their manners and behaviour are completely different from those of the white people. He tells Queenie that the Afro-Caribbeans keep coming to England because of health and other new benefits recently introduced by the Government.

For the teeth and glasses. That was the reason so many coloured people were coming to this country, according to my next-door neighbor Mr Todd. "That National Health Service- it's pulling them in, Mrs Bligh. Giving things away at our expense will keep them coming," he said. He might have had a point except, according to him, they were all cross-eyed and goofy before they got here.

"I don't think so," I said.

"Oh, yes," he assured me. "But now, of course, they've got spectacles and perfect grins." (Levy 111)

This conversation refers to the claims of immigration opponents that Caribbean work immigrants were lured to Britain by social welfare. Furthermore, they argued that unemployed immigrants become "a burden on the public purse through dependence on welfare benefits, especially

National Assistance” (Hampshire 86). This idea about unemployed immigrants living on National Assistance clashes with another popular myth at that time claiming that immigrants take jobs from the British (Hampshire 86- 87). Hampshire shows that from the beginning there was inconsistency between available data and assumptions about immigrants attracted by social security (98). “Nevertheless, it was not until the mid-1950s that allegations of welfare parasitism began to be properly scrutinized and substantial data collected” (Hampshire 98- 99).

In conclusion especially poor living conditions and high unemployment were the main push factors which led to Caribbean diaspora in the second half of the twentieth century. The main pull was the availability of jobs in Britain together with a distorted image of colonizing Britain as the “Mother Country”. In addition to these “push” and “pull” factors, those British people who detested Caribbean work immigration jumped into conclusion and tried to prove that black immigrants were attracted by social benefits.

1.3 Symbolic Meaning of the SS Empire Windrush

In 1948 the vessel SS Windrush carried 492 passengers from the Caribbean who were determined to find work and better living conditions in Britain. Arrival of this ship with mostly male work immigrants marks the symbolic outset of the twentieth century Caribbean diaspora as well as beginning change of British society towards multiethnic (Sewell 1). Most passengers were Jamaicans and about one hundred of the total number came from other Caribbean islands (Sewell 39). Sam King points out that approximately one third of work immigrants on the ship were RAF ex-servicemen who were familiar with life in Britain (qtd. in Sewell 18) and were those on which the migrants on board relied on with true information about life and conditions in Britain (M. & T. Phillips 83). It is important to say that small communities of black people already lived in different parts of Britain before and after slavery (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 6) but significance of the Windrush lies in a great number of West Indian immigrants who started arriving into Britain.

Both Sewell and Phillips write about turmoil which late information about the ship bringing Afro-Caribbeans seeking employment in Britain caused among some British politicians and the Civil Service. Series of telegrams was exchanged between Colonial Offices, the Acting Governor in Jamaica, Ministry of Labour and others until they reached an agreement that the West Indians aboard are British subjects and therefore they must be allowed to dock in the UK (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 67-70; Sewell 18-19). The following quotations reveal that neither the Prime Minister nor the Colonial Secretary considered the arrival of almost five hundred colonial immigrants significant and undermined work immigrants' determination to endure British conditions and cold weather. The then Prime Minister Clement Attlee added in his letter in which he expressed necessity to allow the passengers into Britain: "(...) I think it would be a great mistake to take the emigration of this Jamaican party to the United Kingdom too seriously" (qtd. in M. Phillips & T. Phillips 70). Creech Jones, the Colonial Secretary mentioned: "There's nothing to worry about because they won't last one winter in England" (qtd. in Sewell 19). High numbers of Caribbean immigrants in Britain during the following decade proved both politicians wrong. Fryer explains that in the following years only a small number of Afro-Caribbeans followed the Windrush example in spite of employers' interest in colonial labour. However,

numbers of West Indian workers coming into Britain significantly rose in the 1950s. By 1958 there were circa 125.000 people from Caribbean region in Britain (qtd. in Sewell 27).

Gilbert, Jamaican character in *Small Island*, arrives to Britain on the *Empire Windrush*, too. The author does not mention Gilbert's journey and life on the ship but she describes first impressions of newcomers to London. Ex-RAF soldier Gilbert spent couple of years in Britain during WWII but those who landed in Britain for the first time experience cultural shock.

The overall impact of West Indian immigration on British society could be divided among immediately visible changes and long term ones which were developing for decades and have influence even on nowadays British nation. Since *Small Island* is set in 1948, year of the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush*, with flashbacks reflecting war and pre-war memories, it does not mirror those changes in British society which occurred later on. Work immigration from West Indies to Britain impacted both sides- British nation as well as colonial immigrants. Levy mostly pays attention to how Caribbean immigrants struggled to assimilate into British society, in other words influence of majority over minority rather than changes within Britain caused by colonial immigration. Thus description of unfolding marks left on British society by West Indian immigrants is based mainly on secondary resources by Sewell and M. & T. Phillips.

It is possible to deduct that growing influx of West Indians to Britain led to first encounters of British society with colonized black people on daily basis. Together with raising numbers of Caribbean immigrants in the 1950s were intensifying tensions in British society where many opposed Government's lenient immigration policy (Sewell 190; Hampshire 68). The negative public perception of the immigrants was supported by newspaper articles which portrayed immigration as a threat (M.& T. Phillips 163). Right wing extremists were from time to time voted into British Parliament and profited from temporary growth of nationalism and racism (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 163). Caribbean immigrants who were born British subjects, considered themselves British but soon they bitterly realized that their Britishness was questioned by the politicians and people in the heart of the Empire. Perception of West Indians as aliens by majority society left many immigrants with feelings of disillusion such as Jamaican characters Gilbert and Hortense in *Small Island* and "a sense of betrayal by the colonial 'Mother Country'" (Sewell 13). In this atmosphere of anger and social disapproval of black immigrants arriving into Britain, radicals gathered in racist organizations such as *Keep Britain White* (Sewell 50) and young working class rebels inspired by Hollywood movies such as *Rebel Without A Cause* about

reckless juveniles terrorized their neighborhoods and looked for fights with another groups of so called “Teddy Boys” from different parts of the city. As M. & T. Phillips further add that “the worst Teds were proud to be mad, bad and dangerous to know” (161-162).

At this time of tension between the blacks and the rest of the nation Britain experienced racial riots: conflict at Midwest Nottingham was followed by London’s Notting Hill on larger scale. In 1958 Nottingham was going through economic recession accompanied by unemployment. Caribbean immigrants lived mostly in slummy, run-down downtown situated close to St Ann’s Well Road and the area was no longer meeting basic living standards (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 165- 167). Fights in Nottingham broke out and on 23rd August “a mostly white crowd estimated at about 1,500 had gathered and started attacking black people at random” (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 168- 169). Authors of both resource point out that although race was underlying issue which sparked the clashes, the causes were much more complex and included “economic frustrations and housing problems” together with “antipathy towards interracial sexual relations” as Hampshire argues (135; M. Phillips & T. Phillips 169-170). Local gangs of youth who were inspired by clashes in Nottingham were drawn in to Notting Hill the last weekend of August. Notting Hill was a melting pot where many immigrants settled down and lived in overcrowded houses with hostile English families in similarly bad conditions as West Indians in Nottingham city centre, in addition the area had many clubs and was stricken by poverty and other negative social phenomena (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 171, 175). Hampshire describes the situation: “... violence broke out throughout the area and Notting Hill became a hotbed of unrest. White youths, mostly male, roamed the streets attacking black people, sometimes besieging their homes. When the police moved in to quell the disturbances they too were attacked, ...” (135). M. & T. Phillips say that violence worsened next week and continued for three days at this strong intensity, attackers were throwing Molotov cocktails. The authors summarized the atmosphere as full of “corner agitation [of right wing political activists], incredible rumour, sexual hysteria, random violence and holiday anarchy” (175- 176). The white residents started to be worried about attacks’ randomness and after Tuesday riots lessened. M. & T. Phillips explain that white majority agreement on necessity to directly deal with presence of the blacks was one of the factors which contributed to the strength of disturbances (177, 179).

One of the unexpected outcomes of violence against black ethnic groups in England was a new sense of togetherness among West Indians from different parts of Caribbean region as well

as people from Africa. Their need for protection and defense tightened their community (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 179). However, it could have also led to their resentment, feelings of exclusion from white British society, disappointment and series of other negative feeling. Bitter estrangement from an idea of Britain as the patronizing “Mother Country” is obvious from B. Baker’s speech: “Before the riots I was British – I was born under the Union Jack. But the race riots made me realise who I am. They turned me into a staunch Jamaican. To think any other way would not have been kidding anyone else more than myself” (qtd. in Sewel 52). In this quote Baker also expresses his new pride of being Jamaican, self-perception of his roots and nationality as well as acknowledgement of the “Mother Country” as a myth created by the colonizing kingdom.

Media focused on racial aspect of the clashes which led to public debate about restricting West Indian immigration while the other problems which contributed to the riots were overlooked (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 165- 166). As M.& T. Phillips point out: “The disturbances were equally about the conditions of white working-class lives and their desperate sense of exclusion.” (180). These serious problems which the disturbances highlighted were not analyzed or dealt with and resurfaced “in the industrial struggles of the early seventies” (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 180).

During the 1960s problems of race and immigration were main political issues in Britain (M. Phillips & T. Phillips 218). In 1962 was introduced Commonwealth Immigration Act restricting immigration to the country and opponents argued that the law was mainly aimed at black and Asian citizens of New Commonwealth countries. In the following years a couple of more bills limiting arrival of immigrants were enacted (Hampshire 70- 72, 74). Assuming that a wave of immigration from distant parts of the former British Empire to its centre was partially a result of British colonial politics then British post-war authorities had to deal with consequences of the nation’s past.

The Caribbean immigrants struggled for equality at various aspects of life and some of these problems are shown in the novel *Small Island*, specifically discrimination in housing, racism at work- these two areas are further explored in other chapters of this research paper. Unfortunately at that time laws prohibiting discrimination on basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, gender and so on did not exist as C. Mark points out (qtd. in M. Phillips & T. Phillips 136). Thus, introduction of Race Relations Act in 1965 which prohibited racial discrimination at work had to

be at least partial satisfaction for the wrongs the West Indian immigrants endured in Britain. At the same time Asian colonial subjects started immigrating to the country. In spite of restrictions on immigration, Britain did not completely manage to stop immigrants of different races from arriving on her soil (M. & T. Phillips 218-219). Hampshire argues that development of British society into multiracial was undesirable “because it was believed to threaten Britain’s ‘fully established society’” (78). 1970s was a decade which symbolizes mainly struggle and misunderstanding between the white British population and British black community. It began by passing Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1971 which according to Sewel “virtually ended all primary immigration. Enormous power was put in the hands of police and immigration officers: they could arrest suspected illegal immigrants without a warrant” (99-100).

Even if creation of a polyethnic society might have not been welcomed by the authorities and Britain’s natives, it seems that the country was on its path towards racially diverse population. This time it did not happen via direct immigration but due to children born to black colonial immigrants living in Britain. Fryer says: “By the mid-1970s, two out of every five black people in Britain were born here” (387). It is important to note that by blacks born in Britain are not meant only offsprings of West Indians but also black Asians. Although they were born in Great Britain and hence unquestionably British citizens, they faced similar problems as their parents. Golbourn states that unemployment was a big issue among young blacks especially during economic crises in the 1970s (qtd. in Fryer 388). British born black youths were resistant, rebellious and ready to defend themselves and fight for their rights. Fryer acknowledges that the young British blacks did not have any other choice (395-397). These frustrations led to outburst of violence and riots in the first half of the 1980s. This time, in contrast to Notting Hill Riots in 1958, it was black people who protested against their bad treatment by the authorities, social exclusion, media indifference and most importantly about the white policemen attitude towards black communities. Another factor was very high unemployment of young blacks which in some parts of the country reached 55 percent in 1980 (Sewell 93). Rebellion of young, frustrated British born blacks seems to show that they run out of patience concerning their social status in the country they were born in but which treated them as second class citizens because of their different physical appearance. This is an opposite approach than their parents’ generation of the Windrush immigrants who were more passive and hoped that hard work and orderly life will overcome racial prejudice of the white British society and earn their respect. The above described

problems which young, angry minority of black people was facing point out to difficulties with assimilation and integration of different ethnic groups into British major society persisting for more than thirty years from the arrival of the Empire Windrush into England. The fact that white British youths also took part in the clashes with the police points out to young generation alienation from the authorities such as the government, politicians etc. in general which might have been caused by long-term unemployment problems.

As M. & T. Phillips explain 1980s decade is important because of the shift in the British public regarding attitudes towards the black community. The first black MPs were voted into the British Parliament which symbolizes a milestone for majority society that started to look at a role of the British black minority in the nation from a different angle. The media started to look at the Notting Hill Carnival in a positive light and dubbed it “Europe’s biggest street festival”. Sportsmen of Afro-Caribbean origin, especially athletes and football players proudly represented the UK at the Olympics and other sport events (393). Images of black people started to appear in magazines, on TV, in advertisements etc., they became part of popular culture (M. & T. Phillips 392- 3).

However, there is the other side of the coin. “After four decades of living in Britain the Afro Caribbeans were among the most economically vulnerable groups in the population, easily outstripped by almost all the immigrants who had arrived later” (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 393).

Sewell quotes the survey of Voice newspaper from 1990 which focused on British born blacks of West Indian origin regarding their integration, assimilation into the British major society and their identity. Many respondents admitted struggles with identity and belonging, they did not feel to properly fit in into the nation and were influenced by their families’ Caribbean roots and culture (112). On the other hand M.& T. Phillips mention that “the number of people in Britain who describe themselves as Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean are declining” (397). The authors conclude that this could be the result of either dying Windrush generation and their return back to the Caribbean or that their offsprings regard themselves as “English”, “mixed race” or “black other” instead of stating their West Indian roots on the official forms (M. Phillips and M. Phillips 397). Claims of Sewell and M.& T. Phillips are contradictory. The first one would mean that Afro-Caribbean struggle with assimilation to British society still continues while the other claim would on the contrary suggest detachment from the West Indian origin and integration into the major society by concerning themselves to be “English”.

The arrival of the Empire Windrush into England meant for the Caribbean immigrants just the beginning of the long path paved with obstacles to equality, assimilation and integration into the major society. As M. & T. Phillips mention this journey still continues (395). “In the post-war days when the Windrush sailed into Tilbury, the linkage between race, nationality and the rights of citizenship in Britain seemed firm and indissoluble” (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 389). The same authors further explain that these firmly established opinions in Great Britain stemmed from the idea of racial hierarchy in other words “a belief in the racial supremacy of whites born in Britain” (74) which underpinned and should have justified existence of the British Empire and its policies (164). Immigration wave of black West Indians who regarded themselves British as portrayed in the novel by Levy therefore stirred debates about British identity as M. & T. Phillips point out and many years later its redefinition (75, 77, 79, 387). Britain has become a diverse polyethnic, multicultural society and in the 1990s it started to be celebrated and accepted by the politicians. On the other hand: “It is clear that during the last fifty years the Caribbeans have become an integral part of British society and have fundamentally altered Britain’s image of itself, but the existence of the black British remains conditional” (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 390).

In conclusion it is obvious from the information included in this chapter that influence of the 20th century Caribbean diaspora was mutual. It was not only British society which underwent transformation but also West Indian immigrants whose expectations and images of Britain were modified. The novel *Small Island* shows how the newly arrived immigrants were discovering real life in England in contrast with very distant, imperial image of the “Mother Country” supported by imperial propaganda. Moreover, they realized vastness of the Empire and Caribbean islands’ small role in it. British majority’s ignorant and hostile attitude towards the colonies was revealed in a way how they treated the colonial subjects regarding them inferior and primitive. Sewell describes Afro-Caribbean immigration into Britain and its consequences by these words: “ (...) it has not only been a physical journey but a psychological and creative one, in which each generation has had to ask searching questions about identity, racism and ethnicity. It has also dramatically changed the landscape of Britain (...)” (2). The quotation encapsulates the impact of the 20th century movement of the Caribbeans on their community as well as on the receiving country and its population.

2. GREAT BRITAIN AS THE “MOTHER COUNTRY”

2.1 Attitude of West Indians towards Great Britain

Britain owned most of the Caribbean territory from the Napoleonic Wars (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 10-11). Together with exploitation of people and islands' resources, Britain also imposed cultural dominance over the colonized subjects. Baldwin and Quinn explain Britain's overall influence over its colonies in the following quotation:

By the late nineteenth century, then, Britain's colonizing impulse (based on trade and economic exploitation) had transformed into an imperial (ideologically motivated) one. In addition to its goal of conquering and exploiting other peoples, Britain added an attempt to “civilize” them, using education, Christian missionary work, technical and infrastructure improvements (...), and even political and social reforms to do so. The idea (...) was to bring to conquered peoples the advantages of “progress” (Baldwin, Quinn 3).

The same authors further stress Britain's strong emphasis on promoting the nation's culture within its Empire as a part of their official approach: “To an extent unmatched by any of its nineteenth-century competitors, Great Britain's colonial enterprise involved cultural as well as military conquests. (...) Britain made cultural domination an integral part of its colonial policy” (3).

The influence of British culture in Jamaica and other West Indies islands is evident from Gilbert's monologue in the novel *Small Island* regarding his and other colonial people's feelings towards the “Mother Country”:

Let me ask you to imagine this. Living far from you is a beloved relation whom you have never met. Yet this relation is so dear a kin she is known as Mother. Your own mummy talks of Mother all the time. “Oh, Mother is a beautiful woman – refined, mannerly and cultured.” Your daddy tells you, “Mother thinks of you as her children; like the Lord above she takes care of you from afar.” (...) Your finest, your best, everything you have that is worthy is sent to Mother as gifts. And on her birthday you sing-song and party. (Levy 139)

In the above passage, Britain is compared to caring, protective mother who takes care of its colonies as of its children. From the quotation is obvious admiration for Britain's culture and knowledge of material benefits which the "Mother Country" receives from Jamaica. The last sentence of the excerpt relates to a celebration of important "Empire Day on 24 May" (Sewell 8).

G. Spence describes how they used to celebrate it in Jamaica: "I waved my little Union Jack with one hand, took a bite from the chocolates in the other, and naturally enough we became convinced that the Union Jack and good things went together" (qtd. in Sewell 10). Spence's memories point out an elaborated idea behind Empire Day commemorations which were supposed to make colonized people proud of being part of a grand Empire since their childhood. Furthermore, it taught them appreciate the "Mother Country's" kindness and respect its dominance.

Another part of Gilbert's monologue shows colonial subjects' geographical, historical and economic knowledge of Britain in comparison with the British Isles natives' blatant ignorance of the Empire. Moreover, it reveals the important role of an education system in the colonies in focusing attention on Britain as the cultural centre and in maintaining its influence over the territories:

I am standing up in my classroom; the bright sunlight through the shutters draws lines across the room. My classmates, my teacher all look to me, waiting. My chest is puffed like a major on parade, chin high, arms low. Hear me now – a loud clear voice that pronounces every p and q and all the letters in between. I begin to recite the canals of England: the Bridgewater canal, the Manchester-to-Liverpool canal, the Grand Trunk canal used by the china firms of Stoke-on-Trent. I could have been telling you of the railways, the roadways, the ports or the docks. I might have been exclaiming on the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster – her two chambers, (...) If I was given a date I could stand even taller to tell you some of the greatest laws that were debated and passed there. And not just me. Ask any of us West Indian (...) Ask. Then sit back and learn your lesson. (Levy 141)

Sewell and Caribbean immigrants who grew up in the British West Indies mention as well as Levy in the novel school education as an important tool for British culture reinforcement over the colonized people: "(...) they studied Shakespeare and Milton and were made to do Latin grammar; and at the end of the year they took exams set by the school boards of Oxford and Cambridge" (Sewell 8).

Regarding the following words of former Caribbean students, colonial education did not teach pupils anything about history, geography etc. of the Caribbean region. The reasons for it might be British fear of the rise of national identity, patriotism and relationship towards their islands. Moreover, history lessons about the West Indies would only stress European powers' and in general white people's crimes against the black population. This could lead to riots and efforts for independence in colonies. V. Reid recalls his school memories:

I knew more about England than I did about Jamaica. I mean, I knew absolutely nothing about Jamaica. (...) I was also taught that the person who freed the slaves was a white man called Wilberforce, so that one was always encouraged to believe that one must be beholden to white people for whatever happened. Whatever you became, it was due to the benevolence and goodwill of white people. (...) the whole imperialistic thing was drilled into you. Life might have been hard and tough, but you were grateful. You didn't complain about it. You certainly didn't blame white people for it. (...) you're seduced into believing in their benevolence, in their goodwill. You're seduced into respecting them, never questioning what they did or why they did it. I didn't feel particularly Jamaican because you had no sense of what Jamaica was. I knew I was born in Jamaica, but in terms of having an identity called Jamaican, I didn't – no, I didn't have that. (qtd. in M. Phillips and T. Phillips 13-14)

Reid's words mirror white people's superior status in colonial Jamaica which was supported by school education.

Caribbean society was not racially divided only among Caucasian people and Afro-Caribbeans but there was also racism within Afro-Caribbean community which distinguished among skin tones of the black people. Lighter skin and less negroid features meant better chances in life and higher class status as portrayed in *Small Island*. In the chapter where Hortense recalls her life since being born till her departure from Jamaica to London, she mentions to be lucky to inherit her father's golden hue of skin. She was born into poor conditions as her mother was a young, poor girl but Hortense's father was an important, wealthy man well-known in Jamaica. It was agreed that Hortense will be brought up by her father's relatives. Hortense grew up with her cousin Michael Roberts in a wealthy, well established family. She was taught good manners and behavior. Hortense felt privileged not only because she belonged to upper class but also because of her lighter, golden skin which determined social status on the island: "I grew to look as my father did. My complexion was as light as his; the colour of warm honey. It was not the bitter chocolate hue of Alberta and her mother. With such a countenance there was a chance of a

golden life for I” (Levy 38). By mentioning the name “Alberta and her mother”, Hortense refers to her own biological mother Alberta and grandmother. It is obvious that a class division and skin colour were one of the main indicators of West Indian society stratification and that these two attributes were interrelated. As M.& T. Phillips mention this type of society division was inherited from the times of slavery (15).

Caribbean immigrants recall the interwoven system of class and race too. B. Bousquet says: “The white people were on top, then there were the mulattos and the quatrains and the quintrains – you know, a quarter blood of white and black, or fifth blood of black and white – and so on, right down to the pure black African” (qtd. in M. Phillips and T. Phillips 15-16). V. Reid interviewed by M.& T. Phillips explains:

In Jamaica, you had this kind of caste, because at the very top of the tree, as it were, you had white people. And as you came down, down to the bottom, you had the progressive grades of colour, so you’d have the white people at the top and then you’d have the sort of fair skinned people, and then, right down the bottom, you had black people. The more light skinned you were, you got some kind of kudos for that. Any opportunities going were given to you. (...) When you saw people doing hard work, it was black people. You never saw white people or light skinned people doing hard work. The lighter skinned people did less menial work and, of course, the white people did no menial work whatsoever. I never saw a white man work. (...) And I didn’t regard myself as Jamaican, I simply regarded myself as a black person, even from as a child. (qtd. in M. Phillips and T. Phillips 16)

In the above passage Reid talks about hierarchical structure of population in the British West Indies which as visible from the interviewee’s words was influenced by the white British colonizers opinions about white racial supremacy. However, these distinctions between skin tones probably existed only in the colonies. Jamaican character Hortense who is proud of her light complexion is considered in Britain as simply black. British people in the novel do not treat Hortense differently from her darker skinned husband. This assumption confirms mixed race C. Grant when he tells M.& T. Phillips about how differently he was perceived in the Caribbean and in Britain: “So we definitely had privileges over the people of purely black descent. It’s only when I came to England that I realized, fortunately, that I was, in fact, black. And people referred to me as black, you know. It seemed strange when I came to England” (16).

Connection between wheatish skin and better social status from childhood onwards is revealed in Hortense’s monologue:

There were sixty pupils in the first class I had to teach. (...) Sixty black faces. Some staring on me, gaping as idiots do. (...)

I was used to children from good homes. In Mr and Mrs Ryder's school wealthy, fair-skinned and high-class children sat ruly waiting for my instruction before lowering their heads to complete the task satisfactorily. In that school no child ever wiped their running nose across their sleeve before raising their hand high into the air and waving it around like semaphore. (...) And no child ever subtracted five from ten and made the answer fifty-one. (Levy 68)

The abstract shows Hortense's contempt for lower class, dark pupils and implies that she does not consider them as intelligent as children at private school where she used to teach.

Rush writes about "strong links between Christianity and British imperialism" (110). When Hortense recalls her childhood memories of growing up in an upper-class family of her father's cousin, she describes how her uncle preached and made everybody pray before dinner. Prayer was inevitable part of this daily routine and none of the family members dared to interrupt Mr. Philip who took it very seriously:

"Principle," he bellowed at every meal. "We must all have principle. Each one of us will stand accountable – puny and small in front of the magnificent throne of the Almighty." After he had blessed the food with a grace that sometimes went on long enough for my neck to get stiff with the prayer, Mr Philip started his sermon: "Life is preparation for the day when we finally look upon the face of the Lord, our Maker." He rose from his seat clutching his Bible like a weapon. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Sometimes he banged the table – Miss Ma looking nervous, seizing a vibrating bowl or wobbling water jug. "It is only through the Lord thy God that we will reach the kingdom of heaven." (Levy 41)

Rush states that: "Most white Britons living in the British Isles at the turn of the century, and indeed well into the mid-twentieth century, were profoundly ignorant of and apathetic about their colonial counterparts. What they did know (or thought they knew) was tinged with racism, (...)" (104). Jamaican character Gilbert in the novel criticizes white people's unawareness of the colonies which came as a bitter surprise to soldiers from the West Indies. Although they use products from the Caribbean which became domesticated in Britain, they have no clue where these come from, Gilbert also points out to popular misconceptions about the colonies typical throughout all classes of British society:

An English soldier, a Tommy called Tommy Atkins. Skin as pale as soap, hair slicked with oil and shinier than his boots. See him sitting in a pub sipping a glass of warming rum and rolling a cigarette from a tin. Ask him, "Tommy, tell me nah, where is Jamaica?"

And hear him reply, "Well, dunno. Africa, ain't it?"

See that woman (...) standing by her kitchen table with two children looking up at her with lip-licking anticipation. Look how carefully she spoons the rationed sugar into the cups of chocolate drink. Ask her what she knows of Jamaica. "Jam— where? What did you say it was called again. Jam— what?"

And here is Lady Havealot, living in her big house with her ancestors' pictures crowding the walls. See her having a coffee morning with her friends. Ask her to tell you about the people of Jamaica. Does she see that small boy standing tall in a classroom (...) speaking of England? Or might she (...) tell you of savages, jungles and swinging through trees?

(...) Give me a map, let me see if Tommy Atkins or Lady Havealot can point to Jamaica. (...) But give me that map, blindfold me (...) would still place my finger squarely on the Mother Country. (Levy 141-2)

The British natives' lack of knowledge about colonies is revealed in *Small Island* when the colony troops encounter a couple who wants to hear that they really speak English. The following abstract also shows white people's curiosity about exotic looking soldiers in Great Britain during WW II:

An elderly couple tapping on James's shoulder asked, "Would you mind, duck – would you mind saying something? Only my husband here says it's not English you're speaking."

When James replied, "Certainly, madam, but please tell me what you require me to say," her husband shouted, "Bloody hell, Norma, you're right."

As Norma concluded: "There, I told you. They speak it just like us, only funnier. Ta, ducks, sorry to bother ya." (Levy 138)

The last sentence of the above quotation refers to a different Caribbean dialect. The idea of imposing English language on the British colonies as means of civilizing aboriginal people is echoed in the words of Queenie's father. As a girl Queenie visited the British Empire Exhibition with her parents and for the first time in her life she met face to face with a black man from Africa. Queenie's companions were persuading her to kiss the savage and he shocked them by politely suggesting in proper English to shake hands instead. Queenie's father later explained to mesmerized Queenie: "Evidently, when they speak English you know that they have learned to be civilized – taught English by the white man, missionaries probably. So Father told me not to

worry about having shaken his hand because the African man was most likely a potentate” (Levy 7). Newly arrived Hortense is determined to speak proper English without Caribbean accent as she tries to become as much English as possible. In order to minimize her Jamaican accent she listens to the BBC radio where she tries to pick up received pronunciation typical for educated English people and then she practices it in shops. She feels superior to Gilbert as she thinks that her behavior and speech are more English than her husband’s. According to Hortense Gilbert uses Jamaican dialect, sucks on his teeth and walks in rough Jamaican manner:

Anyone hearing Gilbert Joseph speak would know without hesitation that this man was not English. (...) Whereas I, since arriving in this country, had determined to speak in an English manner. (...) To speak English properly as the high-class, I resolved to listen to the language at its finest. Every day my wireless was tuned to the most exemplary English in the known world. The BBC. (...) I listened. I repeated. And I listened once more. To prove practice makes perfect, on two occasions a shopkeeper had brought me the item requested without repetition from me. (Levy 450)

The West Indian people’s admiration for everything British which they see as the best is mirrored by Hortense’s above described attitude and effort for assimilation. Sewell explains this characteristic feature of the colonies in the following passage: “A colony means you live the values of your parent country. This meant that everything that was good, beautiful, intelligent and decent was white and English. Life becomes a sanitised version of British society” (8).

In conclusion, people in the British West Indies were strongly influenced by their colonizer’s propaganda. Most of them internalized Britain’s values and culture. The myth of the “Mother Country” was especially supported by education institutions. Caribbean society also adopted British class system which was however strongly linked to race and ethnicity. Moreover, people were distinguished according to skin tones which determined person’s status in the society. English language and Christianity were often understood as tools for civilizing primitive colonial people. As the Caribbean Islands accepted British dominance, they saw themselves as British subjects and expected Britain’s white population to be knowledgeable about their colonies and their inhabitants.

2.2 Black West Indian Colonial Troop in WW II Britain

M. & T. Phillips and other writers point out that World War 2 emphasized the process of emigration from the British West Indies (19). Also the plot of the novel *Small Island* is set in 1948 with abundant retrospective mainly into the times of the Second World War. For these reasons it is necessary to analyse the four main characters' wartime experience in historical context.

Active service of around 8.000 black West Indian soldiers (Fryer 362) was not for a long time officially recognized as M. & T. Phillips say, it was a part of WW 2 history which was suppressed in Britain (5). Afro-Caribbean soldiers came to Britain in two waves. The first wave consisted of fighters from middle or upper-class background, who before or in 1940 travelled to Britain in order to enlist in the RAF. Besides patriotic reasons they were motivated by self-improvement and career growth and possibilities (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 26-34). Also Hortense's relative Michael volunteers in the RAF to help the "Mother Country" and escape a scandal when deeply hurt Hortense reveals his affair with an older, white wife of an American headmaster of a private school where she helps out. Many of these exceptionally educated volunteers were planning to go abroad or England anyway. These elite recruits were well accepted by the British public as the RAF reputation was so prestigious that they were viewed as heroes regardless of their ethnicity. Ironically most of them returned back to West Indies after the war to participate in an independence movement. The second wave of black recruits arrived in Britain during 1943 and 1944 when there was a high demand for ground crews which would function as support staff for fighting soldiers on the front line. This large group of servicemen came from more diverse social background than upper-class aircrews and their war time experience was negatively impacted by racism which American soldiers brought with them to Britain. The US Army remained strictly divided along color line even when stationed overseas (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 34-38). Life of the colony troops in Britain is portrayed in detail in the novel *Small Island* where Jamaican Gilbert becomes one of the RAF ground crew members.

Levy pictures rise of British patriotism, loyalty towards the Empire and war effort in Jamaica during the Second World War. Many Jamaican men are trained and sent overseas to help

the struggling “Mother Country”. Parades of men leaving abroad to fight an enemy alongside white British soldiers are held in towns attracting crowds of onlookers:

Marching in disciplined rows through the streets that afternoon, these men, dressed entirely in thick blue cloth, looked as uniform and steely as machinery. On their heads every one of them wore a strange triangular hat that was tipped at an impossible angle. (...) Wives, mothers, sisters, aunts lining the street. Some were there just to see the spectacle, while others strained anxiously for a glimpse of a man they loved. (...) Fresh young boys who had only just stopped larking in trees. Men with skin as coarse as tanned leather, whose hands were accustomed to breaking soil. Big-bellied men who would miss their plantain and bammy. Straight-backed men whose shoes would shine even through battle..
(Levy 71)

Also Hortense and her college friend Celia help war effort by knitting socks and hats for the soldiers and donating money. The war has a personal impact on Hortense’s life when one day a college headmaster informs her that her friend Michael Roberts with whom she grew up went missing in action.

Gilbert volunteered for military service to fight Hitler as his father is a Jew and also because he felt responsibility towards the colonizing “Mother Country”. Rush states: (...) West Indians (in Britain, at the fighting fronts, and in the Caribbean) voluntarily and actively supported the mother country in both the First and Second World Wars. (...) Many Caribbean Britons joined the war effort, at least in part, out of a feeling of loyalty to an idealized British Empire – their Empire – which (...) they considered as the best hope for justice in a world threatened by tyranny” (117). At first the Colony Troops spent some time training at US Military Camp in the States where they observed racial segregation in the army. Although they as British subjects were not segregated, were well fed and could use all the provided amenities they were relieved to finally leave for Britain. However, many things in Britain surprised them or shocked. They were constantly cold, missed spicy food and exotic fruit. Furthermore, they had not expected Britain to be in such a bad shape due to the war. Britain’s drabness shocks the soldiers from the West Indies:

The filthy tramp that eventually greets you is she. Ragged, old and dusty as the long dead. Mother has a blackened eye, bad breath and one lone tooth that waves in her head when she speaks. Can this be that fabled relation you heard so

much of? This twisted-crooked wary woman. This stinking cantankerous hag. She offers you no comfort after your journey. (...)

(...) You know I am talking of England – you know I am speaking of the Mother Country. But Britain was at war, you might want to tell me, of course she would not be at her best.

Some of the boys shook their heads, sucking their teeth with their first long look at England. Not disappointment – it was the squalid shambles that made them frown so. There was a pained gasp at every broken-down scene they encountered. The wreckage of this bombed and ruined place stumbled along streets like a devil's windfall. Other boys looking to the gloomy, sunless sky, their teeth chattering uncontrolled, gooseflesh rising on their naked arms, questioned if this was the only warmth to be felt from an English summer. Small islanders gaped like simpletons at white women who worked hard on the railway swinging their hammers and picks like the strongest man. (...) A college-educated Lenval wanted to know how so many white people come to speak so bad – low class and coarse as cane cutters. (Levy 139-140)

In the above passage A. Levy reflects the colony troops' first impressions of Britain. She expressed puzzlement of Caribbean soldiers stemming from an idealized picture of Britain in their minds and encounter with wartime British reality.

Gilbert and his comrades were assigned maintenance, manual jobs instead of those promised when being recruited in Caribbean. Gilbert hoped to become an air gunner but shortly after his arrival became a truck driver in spite of his objections. Authors of the secondary sources, Sewel and M. & T. Phillips, differ in an opinion whether any overt racism towards the black Colony troops existed in Britain, particularly in the British Army (Sewel 13; M. Phillips and T. Phillips 29-30,33). However if there was any racial discrimination, Fryer mentions that its British form was much more subtle in comparison to institutional, overt racism in the US Army (363).

The Colony Troops soldiers cause sensation wherever they appear because of their dark skin. People want to touch them, make sure that the soldiers really speak English and get to know where they come from. For majority of the white British it is their first meeting with a person of an African descent, they are kind and grateful to them for helping war effort:

(...) a trickle of villagers approached us. Most merely nodded as they passed. An old man with a face as a dry riverbed shook us all hearty by the hand in turn saying, "We're all in this together, lad. We're glad to have you here – glad to have ya." (Levy 138)

On the other hand soldiers from colonies are shocked that most of the British have never heard about their islands and do not know where on a map they would find their countries. While Gilbert and his comrades had been constantly learning about the “Mother Country”, its history, culture and geography at school, they feel disappointment and realize hostility of the British towards the Colonies. This theme is further analysed in the previous chapter.

Small Island’s author focuses on racial discrimination and segregation in the US Army and abuse of black GIs by their white counterparts. This topic is revealed through a couple of Gilbert’s encounters with Afro-American soldiers as well as white American soldiers who despise also black British military subjects and try to impose colour bar on them. Smith mentions that “over two million” American soldiers were stationed in Britain during the Second World War, including “over 100.000 black” GIs (217). Many white British disagreed with the American Army segregation policy towards Afro-American soldiers, regarding it “undemocratic and unfair” (Smith 218). Smith notes: “For peoples unaccustomed to institutionalized colour prejudice, this dimension of war-time America was surprising, not to say disappointing (...)” (219). The racial problem was puzzling for Britons. While majority of the white British welcomed war effort of black GIs, attitude of the British government towards the US Army segregation rules was careful as they did not want to come into conflict with their US ally (Smith 105,118; Fryer 360-362). Gilbert experiences US white soldiers’ attitude towards the blacks when he is assigned to drive all the way to a US military base for spare parts and overhears conversation between an American sergeant and an army officer. The problem is that Gilbert is Afro-Caribbean and therefore they send him back to his military camp with an empty lorry without the things he arrived for. On his way back to the camp Gilbert gives a ride to two hitchhiking black US soldiers. While driving through English countryside coloured GIs explain to Gilbert that they are on the way to meet some British girls but this day they can not visit a nearby town as it is white GIs’ turn to go out there. Gilbert still can not understand the whole segregation issue while the two blacks seem to be accepting the rules. One of them is especially shy as before he joined the US Army he had never talked with a white person and was only used to listening orders from them. At the end of the conversation it is him who says that things regarding the segregation will have to change after the war when they come back to the States. Gilbert pities the servicemen and is puzzled:

“You mean,” I asked, “you are going all the way to Nottingham so you don’t mix with white GIs?”

“Like I say, the military got it all figured out – Notting Ham is a black town.”

I did not ask whether the good people of Nottingham knew their town was black or whether the quiet folk of Lincoln realized their town was only for whites. It was too ridiculous! No, what I asked instead was “Don’t you mind being treated like that?”

“What do you mean there, Joe [in fact addressing Gilbert]?”

“Treated bad.”

“How’s that?”

“Segregated.”

“Well, Joe [in fact addressing Gilbert], I know you British do things different, but where we come from it’s the way of things ...” (Levy 160)

During his time in Lincolnshire Gilbert comes across his future landlady Queenie and her father-in-law Arthur who are taking refuge at her parents’ farm from heavily bombed London. Gilbert feels racial hatred of white US soldiers personally when he and Queenie visit a coffee shop together. Nearby sitting white GIs are outraged by the black soldier happily chatting with the white woman at one table. The situation is becoming more dangerous and a conflict seems to be unavoidable. However, Gilbert is lucky when American soldiers decide to follow him outside, they are asked by a waitress to stay and eat their food they had ordered as groceries are rationed in Britain and cannot be wasted.

Another time Gilbert, Queenie and Arthur are going to the cinema where Gilbert experiences a huge shock. When led to their seats by an usherette, she does not allow Gilbert to sit next to Queenie and Arthur because he is coloured. Gilbert can not believe to what he has just heard and he tries to explain to the woman that he is not an American soldier and therefore he does not have to follow U.S. Army segregation rules. The usherette insists on Gilbert taking a seat at the back of the movie theatre with other blacks or leaving the cinema. Excited conversation draws attention of both groups of U.S. soldiers. While white GIs threaten Gilbert and call him names, Afro-Americans support him. In the end the movie is turned off and all the visitors are asked to leave the cinema. Outside break out fights between black and white American soldiers. American Military Police is called which causes panic among civilians as well as GIs. Suddenly, there is heard a shot and cry for help. A military policeman accidentally shot an older man who fell to a ground. When Gilbert comes closer to a circle of people he sees Queenie and Arthur lying dead on the ground. He tries comforting Queenie but is forced back by a military policeman

calling him a nigger. Gilbert asks himself whether he fights against German Nazis or racial prejudice and segregation among war allies. The author tries to illustrate racial segregation in the U.S. Army as well as differences between treatment of black soldiers by the British army and American, two years after the tragic accident which killed Arthur. Even after two years since the tragic accident which killed Arthur, Gilbert has been keeping a small newspaper article about the event. On this story Levy shows how racial animosity led to an outbreak of violence. The unjustifiable situation worsened by American Military Police crackdown on particularly black soldiers ended up by death of an innocent witness.

The author of the novel also portrays the Second World War from different angles through the eyes of a civilian Queenie and her husband, the RAF volunteer Bernard, stationed on a base in an exotic British Colony India.

To sum up, just like Gilbert many West Indian men volunteered in the British Army out of patriotism and a sense of responsibility towards the suffering “Mother Country”. World War II also significantly impacted lives of Gilbert, Queenie, Bernard and literary also Arthur’s. Gilbert has been influenced by his British wartime experience, he discovered life opportunities waiting in the “Mother Country” which symbolizes the big world for him in comparison to provincial, underdeveloped Jamaica. His home island is suddenly too small for his ambitions. Stay in Britain helped Gilbert realize his life objectives and thus leads to his decision to immigrate there.

3. RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND DISILLUSION

3.1 Disillusion of Post-War Caribbean Immigrants

Besides discrimination at housing, racism at work and racism, prejudice and hostility in general of a majority of British society towards black immigrants there were also other reasons which led to disillusion of West Indian arrivals in post-war Britain. Levy portrays in detail problems which Caribbean immigrants were facing. She especially focuses on such obstacles as tough living conditions in war destroyed Britain namely austerity and food rationing, cold, rainy weather as well as open racism. Moreover, the novel shows the difference between the attitudes of white Britons towards Gilbert as the RAF soldier during WWII and as a post-war immigrant.

Smith says that “After 1947 (...) many of the West Indians who had been in Britain during the war came back” (227). However, he notes that experience and acquaintance with people of African descent during the war surprisingly did not have much influence on the British population in terms of reception of the new colonial immigrants into major society (229). Smith further explains: “(...) race was no longer a temporary American problem – it was now a fully fledged British problem. (...) Now the black people were buying houses next door to ‘us’, were queuing for ‘our’ jobs, and were dating ‘our’ sisters. It was no longer an academic debate” (227-228). Former colony servicemen were the only one who could inform other immigrants on the ship about specifics of real life in Britain (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 83). But what they “couldn’t tell them, and what they wouldn’t find out for themselves until they left the army or the Air Force, was what it was like to live (...) in amongst the civilian British. (...) Accommodation and getting on with people was going to be something altogether different” (M. Phillips and T. Phillips 83-84). Gilbert soon after his return finds out that the country is different from wartime Britain where the RAF uniform was more important than skin colour and even colonial soldiers were respected and received with gratitude. He experiences racism and prejudice while looking for work.

The following passage from the novel shows immigrants first impressions of England, specifically London, after disembarking the Windrush and stepping on the English soil for the first time.:

You see, most of the boys were looking upwards. ... but it was wonder that lifted their eyes. They finally arrive in London Town. And, let me tell you, the Mother Country – this thought-I-knew-you place – was bewildering these Jamaican boys. See them pointing at the train that rumbles across a bridge. They looked shocked when billowing black smoke puffed its way round the white washing hung on drying lines (...). Come, they had never seen houses so tall, all the same. And what is that? A chimney? They have fire in their house in England? No! And why everything look so dowdy? Even the sunshine can find no colour but grey. Staring on people who were staring on them.... Look, you see a white man driving a bus? And over there, can you believe what the eye is telling? A white man sweeping the road. (Levy 212)

Even though they learnt about London at schools in the Caribbean and therefore had images of the capital embedded in their minds, reality is breath taking. The last two sentences express shock of the blacks from colonies who are used to people of Caucasian origin to be at managerial positions suddenly spotting a white Englishman doing such a low-level job as cleaning the streets.

Hortense is expecting her life to get only better by moving to the “Mother Country” which she is idealizing. However, one disappointment after disappointment follows upon her arrival. First her husband Gilbert whom she married in order to be allowed into Britain doesn’t wait for her at the docks, weather in London is cold and the sky grey and rented accommodation is deplorable. Moreover people don’t understand Hortense’s carefully trained British accent, for example a cab driver finds the address only after being written on a piece of paper. Gilbert is looking forward to seeing Hortense again but becomes aware of his wife’s unrealistic expectations immediately after their reunion. While he was waiting for her to come over, he has been struggling through everyday post-war British reality- austerity, poverty and hard, demanding job. At the same time Gilbert worries about his wife because of her naivety, unawareness of racism and ignorance of the British towards people from colonies.

Hortense is annoyed by her landlady’s nosiness. Additionally Hortense’s different dialect and accent cause even more misunderstanding between them. When Queenie offers Hortense to show her around the area and adds that she doesn’t mind being seen with darkies, Hortense doesn’t understand. As an educated teacher she feels superior to Queenie whose fashion sense and run down house despises. Hortense is concerned with a class division while Queenie with racial aspects. Queenie also shows her ignorance and prejudice by asking Hortense whether they have a cinema at a place where she comes from.

Queenie insists on showing Hortense around shops but she is not prepared for any post-war austerity. Hortense is amazed seeing other women besides Queenie dressed in scruffy coats. Clothes the English people are wearing seems to be gray in comparison to bright colors of Jamaican's garments. Hortense used to colored people can not keep her eyes off from Caucasian faces, she is surprised by different skin tones, varieties of hair colors and other features. Queenie tells Hortense names of the usual shops and explains what they sell as she thinks that they do not exist in the Caribbean. On the way home Hortense and Queenie pass by young men who shout racial insults on Hortense. She barely believes that it is her whom they address and does not fully realize it. Queenie accompanying Hortense is also verbally attacked. Later Queenie advises Hortense that she as a foreigner should step off the pavement if there is not enough room and let the English people pass by first.

Depressed Gilbert even doubts whether he should have come back to England. Also other West Indians experience the Mother Country's hostility and discrimination. Gilbert's former RAF comrade who is a devoted Christian was asked by church community not to come to services anymore because of his ethnicity. Another one was arrested when he tried to help an older lady who fell on the ground because the police thought that Gilbert's friend attacked her.

Although Levy deals with serious topic and her Jamaican characters' experiences are often sad and painful, she sometimes enriches her stories with humour particularly when depicting Jamaican's unawareness of British cultural habits. Hortense for example does not know how to prepare chips Gilbert asked for dinner. She cuts up potatoes and cooks them in water instead of frying them. Other stories in the novel especially those related to the native British xenophobia and racism are tragi-comic.

White British character Queenie describes her neighbours' and acquaintances' negative attitude towards her when after the war she rents her house to black immigrants. Especially one of Queenie's neighbors is very disturbed by presence of black people. These stories show how differently the British perceived people from the colonies during the war when they were grateful for their military help but later on thought that they should all go back home again and thus the postwar Britain would be the same usually meaning decent and peaceful as before the war.

After his return back to England Bernard notices that England and its people have changed. Conservative Bernard wants the things to be the same like before the war. He is very unhappy about his more permissive wife's choice of tenants. He discusses the matters with

xenophobic neighbor Mr. Todd who decides to move away. The following excerpt is a conversation between Bernard and Queenie:

*“Well, they’ll have to go now I’m back. (...) Mr Todd is moving, you know,” Bernard went on.
“Is he?” I said. It wasn’t a surprise to me and would be no loss either. (...)
“Says the street has gone to the dogs. What with all these coloureds swamping the place. Hardly like our own country any more.” (Levy 436)*

The above passage shows Bernard’s identification with racist and hostile opinions and views of Mr Todd about Afro-Caribbean immigrants. According to Mr Todd and Bernard the neighbourhood becomes disreputable because of arrival of the black people whose mindset they both consider very different from the whites.

Bernard looks down on Gilbert and Hortense because in his opinion they do not try to assimilate into English society, according to him even their clothes highlights how much they do not belong here. Bernard thinks that Hortense is overdressed and Gilbert tries to look elegant in his not fitting suit. Bernard is disappointed as he thinks he fought the war so people of different ethnic origin could live among their own kind but black people from colonies keep coming to England instead of staying where they belong to.

All these little episodes about racism and prejudice and from this behavior stemming difficulties which Hortense and Gilbert have to deal with lead to their feelings of alienation from the major population as well as regrets and self-pity. Similar experience as Small Island’s characters recalls in an interview with Sewel R. Moseley originally from Barbados: “I cried like a baby the first week I was here. (...) There was always the fear of being dismissed. And (...) if you weren’t working you couldn’t pay for your lodgings. You had to keep your dignity. A lot of boys came here and had mental breakdowns because of that stress” (24-25). On the other hand the problems help Hortense to appreciate her husband’s kindness and integrity and make their relationship stronger.

3.2 Discrimination in Housing

Not enough housing as well as its unsuitability belonged among the major problems the West Indian immigrants had to deal with. It did not concern only early immigrants from 1948 but the problem persisted well into 1960s. T. Sewel, the author of the book *Keep on Moving: The Windrush Legacy* mentions that the Colonial Office at insistence of Baron Baker decided at last minute to open the Clapham Common Air Raid Shelter as a temporary accommodation for the first Caribbean immigrants disembarking from the ship the SS Empire Windrush in 1948 (44). However, it was only short term solution. One of the characters of Levy's book, Jamaican immigrant Gilbert spends first weeks after his arrival to England living in an overcrowded room of the shelter with other Jamaican men. As some of them work shifts they swap the beds with the other person they share a bed with after his return from work. Gilbert tries hard to rent a room but he faces series of refusals from landlords who have tons of excuses for not taking Gilbert in because of the colour of his skin. Connie Mark explains that "(...) the average white person didn't want to rent a room because they didn't want their neighbours to see a coloured person coming out of their house, 'cos their white neighbours look down on them. (...) they were afraid, because you would be an embarrassment to the white neighbours." (qtd. in M. Phillips & T. Phillips) These landlords and landladies are typically polite as expected from the British and never directly say to Gilbert that it is them who have a problem with accepting a coloured lodger. Instead they come up with all kinds of excuses such as complaining neighbours, other lodgers etc. However, Vince Reid (92) and Connie Mark (136) remember that some landlords were not polite at all and publicly expressed their animosity towards the West Indians by putting up signs on the door saying "No Blacks" or even using racial slur "No Niggers" in addition to usual already hanging on notices such as "No Irish", "No Children" and "No Dogs" (qtd. in M. Phillips & T. Phillips). Levy shows a big housing discrimination that Caribbean immigrants were dealing with in Britain after WWII as well as in the 1950s. It seems that a whole group of immigrants from British colonies was deprived of basic human need to have a place to live because of the colour of their skin. "The accommodation situation was so bad that many people ended up in hostels" (Sewel 38). Hopeless Gilbert in the end recalls London address of a wartime acquaintance Queenie Bligh and tries to ask her for a room. He is lucky as she is struggling with money while

living in a big house on her own because her husband still did not come back from the war. Queenie rents him a small, shabby room which becomes Gilbert's and later also his wife's Hortense living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom all together. Queenie charges each tenant £3 per week. In addition to paying high rent Gilbert also helps her maintain the house and its garden. It is possible to conclude that high demand of West Indians for housing allowed landlords to charge more money from these immigrants than was usual. House owners willing to put black lodgers up might have therefor very well profited from the situation. This assumption confirms Alford Gardner who says that rich people including West Indians used to acquire cheap houses in order to make profit. They used to fit as many people as possible into one room and charged them per person. Gardner considers this landlords' behaviour towards Caribbean immigrants as exploitation (Sewell 45-46). Sewell further mentions one of the unscrupulous house owners who were not ashamed to cash on unfortunate circumstances of Caribbean immigrants:

Notting Hill was the centre of the empire of the notorious landlord, Peter Rachman. (...) West Indians formed a large proportion of Rachman's tenants. They could be charged extortionate rents, as they had nowhere else to live; they could be forced into multi-occupation and charged per head. By 1958 he owned around 100 houses in the West London area. To Rachman West Indians were a friend in need of his terrible hospitality. (Sewell 65- 66)

Unfortunately, it was not only white landlords but also West Indians who were making money out of this unethical business. As well as Alford Gardner also Connie Mark says that even Afro-Caribbean landlords were not ashamed to charge extra ordinary rents from their fellow citizens: "I never had an English landlord. But the West Indian, we were our worst enemies. We used to exploit our own people," (qtd. in M. Phillips & T. Phillips, 136).

Hortense is after her arrival to Britain appalled by Gilbert's living conditions at Queenie's house where her husband brought her to. She keeps asking Gilbert if this is the way how the English live. He tries to explain to her that there was a war in Britain and he adds that they are lucky because "places [like this are] hard to come by" (Levy 29). This is one of the first disillusion Hortense experiences in Britain. She thought that Gilbert will own or rent a nice big house with a doorbell and a fireplace, "real English" house of her dreams. This moment shows her very unrealistic, high expectations of Mother Country as well as other Caribbean immigrants who did not expect prejudice and racism from the English. They were part of the Empire and

therefor considered themselves British in contrast to how they were viewed by English majority which judgment was based on more visible aspect- an ethnicity. When Gilbert and Hortense were away, Bernard unlocked their room to look round. This used to be his mother`s room where she used to saw, read and so on, as a kid Bernard liked to be around his mom in this room. Bernard is surprised how poor and shabby the room looks like. He thinks about how low standard of living people from colonies have, despising both Indians as well as Afro-Caribbeans. He does not realize that Gilbert and Hortense did not have any other choice than renting a room in his run down house, mainly because of racist, ignorant people like him. They were actually lucky being acquainted with Queenie because of housing discrimination towards black people. Later on when Bernard threatens the lodgers that he is going to sell the house Gilbert worries that Hortense and him will have to soon leave and start searching for new accommodation. But they are lucky. One of the other Queenie`s tenants, Gilbert`s Jamaican friend Winston, inherited some money and decided to buy a bit run- down house in London. He is planning to rent it to other Caribbean immigrants for reasonable price. He offers Gilbert an apartment in his house in exchange for help with refurbishment. Even though the building really needs to be fixed, Gilbert is not afraid of hard work in exchange for decent living. He is grateful to Winston for his offer of more than one room apartment. Levy shows how some Caribbean work immigrants solved the housing problems. Sewel mentions this way of partial solution to housing discrimination as quite common practice: “Most people wanted to escape the trap of having their families living in single rooms. Many of the unmarried men on the Windrush would pool together with friend and buy a house as a group venture” (46). Gilbert and his fellow countrymen learned a lesson that here in unwelcoming, hostile Mother Country the West Indians need to help each other. And it was their community cohesion that helped many of them overcome obstacles such as housing discrimination in this case.

3.3 Racism at Work

Although another factors besides work opportunities also played role at triggering West Indians' immigration into Britain, Britain's desperate need for employees was a major reason for it. Britain destroyed by the war gave Caribbean work force chance to help with post-war recovery. S. King says: "We from the ex-colonies have contributed a lot to the improvement of the British way of life. In 1948 nearly a third of the inner cities were destroyed by bombing- we helped to rebuild it" (qtd. in Sewell, 19). Various country's industries and services did not have enough employees. British Rail was recruiting, newly established National Health Service was seeking mainly nurses, London Transport was especially looking for staff which would fill not very well paid positions ranging from drivers to canteen workers (Sewell 21, 24, 54). Desperate need for labour is evident from Sewell's information about London Transport which started searching for employees directly in the Caribbean as the first company in 1956, later another above mentioned organisations followed LT's example (21). However, as Sewell states by 1958 Britain was in economic crisis, unemployment rose to 500.000 and LT's recruiting policy temporarily changed. London Transport started laying off their employees and West Indian workers were blamed for taking jobs from the English. In those times racism against black people increased (38). It is evident from the following statement of a London Transport recruiting officer that West Indian workers did not have the same rights as British whites and were not considered equal to them. "We are much more selective now, although there was a time when we were glad to take anybody. LT. used to be called Jamaica Inn. But not now" (Sewell 38). From the above quotation is possible to derive that Caribbean employees were convenient, temporary solution to post-war lack of employees. If the recruiting officer's words were expressing organization's attitude towards the problem, then it shows that black employees sacrifices such as leaving home and coming to a different cultural, geographical environment were not appreciated. What's more it is possible to claim that Afro-Caribbean workers were second class citizens who when needed had to accept British white person's "right" of priority job placement. In spite of this temporary lack of interest in hiring or keeping black employees, "London Transport's direct recruitment continued until 1970" (Sewell 21).

While looking for jobs ex-RAF soldier Gilbert faces many refusals because of racism and prejudice. He is turned down at a factory because there are also employed English women.

According to its director Gilbert might speak with them which would cause disapproval of their husbands and other white male factory workers. The other employers also find according to them many obvious reasons not to employ Gilbert. In their words giving job to a colored person especially a male means trouble. At the end Gilbert is lucky to become a postman driver for the Post Office. However, he is bullied, humiliated, his skills are underestimated, he is ridiculed and mocked just because of his race from co-workers as well as bosses. Even if some colleagues refuse to work with Gilbert, it is his fault instead of theirs. In order to keep his job Gilbert knows he has to ignore this injustice and not make any mistake:

“Which ones are post?” I ask a group of workers- four men- who were standing watching me. (...)

How many sacks I pick up and with all they jeer that I am wrong?

“Can you please help me?” I have to ask them. “Speak English,” one of them say. “It is English I am speaking,” I tell him.

“Anyone understand what this coloured gentleman is after?” More laughing.

But, man, I could not afford to get into trouble. “Could you please tell me what I am to take?”

“All right,” one of them say. (...) But this cross-eye man just say, “I’ll tell you, if you answer something for me.” His friends start chuckling again in anticipation of a nice piece of humiliation.

But I answer him civilly, “What?”

“When are you going back to the jungle?” Oh, man, this is the best joke these four men had heard today. They all laugh at this. (...) I pick up another sack. “Oi, darkie, you ain’t answered me. When are you going back to where you belong?” (...)

Then this man grabs a handful of my Post Office uniform to pull me to him. “Go on, hit him,” his chums encourage. But this is one fool man. (...) His grip was not strong. This man was skinny from rationing. Come, let us face it, I could have just blown on him to push him to the ground. But if I was even to friendly tweak this man’s cheek, or matey pat his back, I knew I would lose my job. Three white men looking on would have the story - the day the darkie, unprovoked, attacked this nice gentleman. Savages, they would say. And all would agree, we must never employ any more of these coons: they are trouble – more trouble than they are worth. What else could this Jamaican man do? I dropped my head.

(...)

I stood pitiful as a whipped dog while this man said, “There’s decent Englishmen that should be doing your job.” I kept my eyes at his feet while he indicated with his chin, “Over there, that trolley. Now get packed up and fuck off.” And I went about my business with a gunfire of cuss words popping and pinging around me, while the postal sacks and an aching shame stooped me double. (Levy 316- 318)

The above quotation vividly shows mental and even physical abuse which Gilbert experienced at his job. Workers humiliating this Jamaican man openly express their hatred towards blacks in general and try to show their superiority. Their disagreement with employment of West Indians comes from a popular myth that work immigrants take jobs away from white British. Gilbert is distressed not only because of his bullies' simple-mindedness, ignorance and prejudice but mainly because he can not defend himself without being laid off. He has no choice if he wants to stay in Britain than to accept the treatment. Moreover, Gilbert knows that if he physically attacked his bullies he would only assure them in their popular stereotypes and myths.

Gilbert coming back from work, where he is ridiculed by white majority, pleads Hortense who is scrubbing the floor on her knees to stand up. Seeing his wife kneeling is painful for Gilbert as it symbolizes the way how Jamaicans are treated in England.

Just like Gilbert in Levy's novel, West Indians often had to accept jobs which were beneath their education or skills because of racism. Therefore it might have seemed that many of them were unskilled. In spite of this spread myth, statistics show different facts: " (...), 24 per cent of the West Indians coming to Britain had professional or managerial experience, 46 per cent were skilled workers, 5 per cent semi-skilled and only 13 per cent unskilled manual workers" (Sewel 35). As Sewel notes especially many former RAF soldiers who were among Windrush pioneers had valuable technical skills (27).

Gilbert's Jamaican wife Hortense also experiences bitter encounter with work discrimination. Hortense decides to apply for a teaching job at a school in Islington. She has no doubts that she will be accepted because she has outstanding references from a headmaster of the college where she studied as well as from school where she taught in Jamaica. Gilbert insists on accompanying Hortense because he is worried that she would not find her way and he knows that things in England do not work the way Hortense imagines. She is a bit annoyed by her companion as well as embarrassed because she considers Gilbert simple and uneducated. Hortense is afraid that people at school might not give her a job because of lower class Gilbert.

He was trying my patience. So I told him politely that perchance the education authority would want to show me the school at which I would be working. (...) The man look on me for a long while. Then, quietly, he said, "Hortense, this is not the way England work." I then informed him that a teacher such as I was not someone to be treated in the same way as a person in a low-class job. He just shake his

head on me and say, "You won't listen to me, will you? I wait for you." (Levy 450- 451)

In this excerpt is shown Hortense's naivety and self-confidence coming from unfamiliarity with for her new British environment and British attitudes towards especially black people from colonies. It is also obvious how superior she feels to Gilbert whom she considers lower class. Hortense's superiority is based on her high quality education and it is a reason why she thinks about herself as upper-middle class. While her husband whom has been to England for longer and experienced racism and prejudice not only at work tries to spare her from bitter disappointment. Gilbert is worried about Hortense as he is aware of racial division in British society.

School's headmistress is polite until Hortense tells her that she trained as a teacher in Jamaica. Seriously looking woman does not even want to see Hortense's recommendation letters and briefly explains to her that she is not allowed to teach in England because her qualification from Jamaica is not valid there. Hortense is shocked and can not believe to what she has just heard. She thinks it is a misunderstanding and tries to explain that she was taught by British teachers at the college and tries to persuade the headmistress to read her references so she might change her opinion. However, the headmistress is rude to Hortense, she is not interested in any further conversation and goes back to her office work. It takes Hortense some time to pull herself together. On the way out she is even more humiliated when she walks into a wrong door and ends up at a broom cupboard, women in the office laugh at her. Gilbert waiting for Hortense in front of the school, tries to catch up with his wife running away. She looks confused and lost. Hortense's dream of successful life in England is shattered. She gave up her life and job in Jamaica and even married a man whom she does not love in order to come to Mother Country. Usually composed Hortense is crying when Gilbert persuades her to speak with him.

*But her breath rose in desperate gasps as she mumbling repeated over,
"They say I can't teach."*

Come, no pitiful cry from a child awoken rude from a dream could have melted a hard heart any surer.

I guided her to a seat in a little square, she followed me obedient. (...) Softly delivered in my ear, Hortense informed me that she was required to train all over again to teach English children. (...) Hortense should have yelled in righteous pain not whimper in my ear. And still the goofy boy was staring on us. "Shoo," I told him. He poked out his tongue and wiggled his big ear at me, than ran away. But other eyes soon took his place. (...) Come, let me tell you, I wanted to tempt these busybodies closer. Beckon them to step forward and take a better

look. For then I might catch my hand around one of their scrawny white necks and squeeze. No one will watch us weep in this country. (Levy 458- 459)

The above passage shows Hortense's disillusion- disappointment and despair as well as Gilbert's anger towards Mother Country and its people and at the same time determination to fulfill their dreams, prove to white British that black people are not inferior and keep their dignity in spite of difficult obstacles. By mentioning passer-by's stares the author illustrates what an unusual sight were black people in postwar Britain.

Although Gilbert could tell proud Hortense that she deserved what happened to her because of looking down on him, he tries to calm her down. He even manages to make her smile for the first time in their marriage. Gilbert takes Hortense for a double-decker ride through the centre of London. She is so excited as she finally sees London landmarks about which she had only read in books in real. For the first time of her relationship with Gilbert Hortense is grateful to him for his kindness and care. Such things as education which Hortense proud herself on and as result of it considered herself middle class, better than her English landlady Queenie or husband Gilbert suddenly do not matter in England and she loses part of her identity. Her desperation partially consists of self-pity.

Caribbean women who came to post-war Britain to work as nurses for newly established National Health Service recall racism from colleagues and patients at work (Sewell, 57).

Small Island is about struggling and problems of West Indians to be accepted as equal citizens by British society but the author does not write only about negative experiences of colonial subjects in England and she also shows that not all the English people were the same. When desperate Gilbert roams London streets in cold weather, kind Englishwoman picks up Gilbert's lost glove and gives it back to him, when she notices that he is sad and cold, she offers him cough candy to cheer and warm him up. This event in the novel expresses Levy's attitude towards the situation of immigrants from Caribbean colonies which was not easy and at the same time shows that British racism, prejudice and hostility towards Afro-Caribbeans should not be considered collective guilt.

3.4 Mixed Race Couples and “Coffee-coloured” Children

The Second World War turns Queenie’s and Bernard’s lives and relationship upside down. War-time everyday abnormality influences also sexual behaviour of the characters. Queenie engages in extra-marital affair with a black RAF officer Michael while Bernard visits a young Indian prostitute. Their sexual encounters have consequences for both of them. While Queenie gets pregnant, Bernard thinks he contracted syphilis.

War-time presence of black soldiers, mainly US GIs in Britain resulted in intimate relationships between Englishwomen and coloured servicemen (Leder 119; Hampshire 116; Sewel 15). Sewel claims that “During the war White women and Black men found love, sex and friendships” (15). The author further adds that “Englishwomen and men from the Caribbean continued their close relations after the war. In many cases (...) settling down and having children” (Sewel 15). However as Hampshire notes attitude towards mixed race relationships was different during and after the war. Comparative tolerance of the white British towards interracial couples changed into strong disapproval after 1945 (117).

The fact that post-war colonial immigrants arriving into Britain were primarily men led to mixed race relationships (Sewel 65). Besides sexual attraction another reason for befriending white women was that they were more approachable than the rest of hostile British and had empathy with coloured males. Women dating West Indian immigrants came from “all classes and backgrounds” (Sewel 66). However, mixed race couples had to overcome “a lot of prejudice” (Sewel 67). Hampshire explains that black colonial people were stereotyped as “hypersexual, immoral or exotically alluring” by Europeans for a long time. Sexual stereotyping and gender imbalance of Afro-Caribbean immigrants led to newspaper stories portraying black men as “sexual predators” posing risk for native white women and reports warning before hybrid relationships (Hampshire 113).

After Bernard’s departure to India, Queenie’s colleague persuades her to accommodate three RAF officers on leave for a couple of days at her house. One of the soldiers is a charismatic, black Jamaican Michael Roberts. Queenie is attracted to exotic Michael, she suddenly feels nervous and a bit silly when she is around him.

"Won't you stay awhile with me?"
"It's late."
"I will be gone tomorrow. Why don't you ask me all the questions you have been thinking about sitting quiet there?" (...)
"What makes you think I've got questions?"
"So you no curious about this coloured man in your house?" (...)
"Where am I from?" He repeated the question two more times to himself.
(...)
"Jamaica."
"In Africa?"
He made a strange noise, as if he was sucking out a bit of trapped gristle from between his front teeth. "Why every English person I meet think Jamaica is in Africa?"
"It is not?"
"No, it is not. It is an island in the Caribbean."
"Oh, well, I've never been anywhere," I said quickly. (...)
"Don't you miss your family?"
"I have no family in Jamaica. (...)"
(...) I said, "You must miss being among your own kind."
"My own kind?" He frowned but his eyes never left me. (Levy 298-299)

The above excerpt from the novel shows Queenie's ignorance of British colonies as well as racism and prejudice by mentioning that Michael must miss to be among his own people meaning of African descent. Michael's annoyance is visible in his non-verbal signs when he explains that Jamaica is a British colony in the Caribbean Sea to Queenie and answers her reference to his race. This moment is another depiction of ignorance of the British and lack of interest in their colonies. However, generally the above passage expresses strong attraction between white British Queenie and West Indian Michael.

Michael and Queenie spend passionate night together. Queenie feels like a different woman with Michael, for the first time fully enjoying sexual encounter. Levy could be accused of racial stereotyping by showing Afro-American man in this case Michael fully sexually satisfying Queenie in contrast to her Caucasian husband Bernard. Bomber crew leaves early in the morning and Queenie does not hope to meet Michael ever again. She considers her love adventure to be just one night-stand memory.

Couple of years later, Queenie has difficulties to get used to new post-war reality, she feels lonely in the big house without Bernard's father who died. Moreover, Bernard did not come back from his military service in India and Queenie thinks that he died there. One day former airman Michael Roberts knocks on her door. He is waiting for a departure of his ship to Canada

where he plans to start a new life and does not have a place to stay. Once again Queenie spends three passionate days and nights with Michael, enjoying every minute of it. After three days charming but careless Michael leaves for his ship and later on Queenie finds out she is pregnant. Michael made Queenie feel special and attractive and she experienced things with him she missed out on with her husband Bernard. However, she never idealized their relationship, she tried to be realistic and knew that she meant a convenient stop for him on his leave and during the time waiting for a ship departure.

Queenie tried to get rid of unwanted pregnancy but in the end she decides to keep Michael's child. Queenie hides her pregnancy from nosy looks of her neighbors and rumors. She plans to move away, maybe to Canada and raise her child on her own. But Bernard's return puts an end to her plans. Soon after her husband's homecoming Queenie gives birth to her son at home. She asks hesitant Hortense unaware of Queenie's situation to assist her during childbirth. Queenie remarks between contractions that her delivery reminds her of a scene in *Gone with the Wind* where naïve, not very clever young girl slave must help her white owner with child birth. This tactless comparison annoys Hortense. It is not only racist but it also undermines Hortense's education. Queenie with Hortense's help successfully delivers a baby boy. Hortense is startled when she notices that the baby is coloured. Also Bernard and Gilbert are speechless when they find Queenie with a newborn, dark skinned baby. Consequently, Bernard and Hortense assume Gilbert to be the father of the child without regard to his only seven months stay in England. Later on Queenie reveals who the father of her son is to Bernard.

Shortly afterwards Hortense and Gilbert are moving away from Queenie's and Bernard's house. Queenie wants to say at least proper goodbye to them and invites them for a cup of tea and a cake. She brings her baby son to a living room and gives him to Hortense to hold him. Queenie tells them that she wants to name him Michael which brings Hortense memories of her adored cousin Michael Roberts. Not suspecting that Michael might be a father of Queenie's baby, Hortense explains that Michael used to be someone very dear to her. Queenie watches how the couple handles her baby and she gets a weird idea. Gilbert and Hortense seem to look so naturally with the baby as if they belonged together. Queenie starts pleading Gilbert and Hortense to take her baby with them. At first the couple does not even realize what Queenie is asking them for. Then they can not believe it. Gilbert tries to calm down Queenie and explain to her that she is baby's mother and they are strangers to her son regardless of their skin color. Bernard is appalled

seeing his wife, Englishwoman Queenie on her knees in front of inferior black people. He causes chaos and tells his wife to keep the baby. Queenie warns Bernard about neighbours who would disdain him because of her illegitimate child. But Bernard suggests that they can pretend that Michael was adopted. Queenie tells him that he would not be able to face eviction from the neighbourhood and stares of people, then he would blame her son. And Queenie does not want to put her child into this situation. As Leder says, “There were an estimated 2.000 illegitimate mixed-race babies born in England during World War II. Not only were these children illegitimate, but they were also ‘coffee-coloured,’ making their absorption into society even more complicated” (119). She also sobs that she does not even know how to comb her baby’s hair or she would not be able to describe a humming bird to him. Queenie threatens that she would have to put Michael to an orphanage if Gilbert and Hortense do not take him. She adds that she read at newspaper that British orphanages are full of mixed race children and that British Government wants to move them to the USA. This scares Queenie even more as she realizes segregation of Afro-Americans in the States. She reminds Gilbert of the situation at the movie theatre they experienced together. Leder explains that in spite of facing great difficulties, some single mothers managed to keep their babies. On the other hand if married women made up with their homecoming husbands, they were in most cases forced to abandon their children. Leder further points out that many illegitimate mixed-race children growing up in orphanages struggled for years and those placed at foster homes usually had to change couple of foster families (119-120).

Bernard yells at Gilbert who is comforting and hugging Queenie to stop touching his wife with his filthy black hands. Gilbert asks him when he finally acknowledges that he and other black people are the same human beings as white skinned Bernard. Gilbert says they both fought the war on the same side at the same or similar conditions for better world but he is still considered worthless because of his race. At this moment Hortense realizes that her husband is an intelligent man and she is proud of him. But Bernard instead of apologizing for his prejudiced and racist behavior humiliates Gilbert once again, pretending he can not understand his English.

Gilbert pities the baby and does not want to leave her at this cruel, prejudiced country on her own. They decide to adopt Queenie’s son. Giving away her newborn baby is painful for Queenie but she knows that she will be well looked after. She spends last hours hugging him while crying a lot. This situation shows that in spite of desperately wishing for a child since marrying Bernard, Queenie is not able to face prejudice, racism and despise of the people. She

considers her child's ethnic origin more important than her mother's ties to him. Queenie encloses saved money and her picture to the baby. She does not have enough strength to say last goodbye, she watches Gilbert and Hortense with baby Michael to leave hidden behind a curtain.

In this chapter Levy illustrates intolerance and strong disapproval of mixed race relationships as well as their results in form of biracial children. Pressure of the society is too strong to bear for Queenie. Leder states that difficulties of biracial children still belong to a suppressed part of British WW II history (120). The novel also depicts contradiction between both Bernard's and Queenie's opinions and behaviour. Although they are prejudiced against colonized colored people, they engage in sexual relations with them, fulfilling their sexual fantasies.

5. Conclusion

The process of immigration in general is difficult and many immigrants have to deal with cultural, language and geographical barriers. However, the Caribbean immigrants did not have to overcome such difficulties as language or cultural differences. The biggest problem for them was their ethnicity which led to racial discrimination in various areas of their lives.

They often suffered from emotions of disillusion which was caused by very different, often unrealistic expectations about their life in Britain. These unrealistic images of Britain were created by colonial propaganda. Britain's policy in the Caribbean facilitated and supported the feelings of identification with and belonging to the British Empire. Thus the West Indians considered themselves as a kind of "Englishmen" and were not prepared for rejection from the native British. Jamaican female character in the novel *Hortense* is a clear example of these unrealistic ideas and dreams. She wants to immigrate to the "Mother Country" because she thinks it will automatically change her life for the better. In order to be able to live in Britain she even marries a man whom she is not in love with. Eventual encounter with harsh reality of life in Britain leads to Hortense's change of opinion about her husband Gilbert. First she feels superior to him because of her good education and manners but then she appreciates his care and kindness. Although Gilbert had an advantage of experiencing life in Britain as a colonial serviceman during the Second World War, a warm reception of the black people into British society back then has changed to prejudice, ignorance and hostility after the war. Life in post-war Britain seen through the eyes of immigrants does not only reveal characters' personalities but also gives evidence about British society back then. Jamaican Gilbert is struggling with open racism which sometimes leads to doubts whether the immigration was worthwhile.

However, Levy does not portray the negative attitude of many native British as universal. She also shows that some white British had empathy with the West Indians. Open, slightly hopeful ending of the novel leaves place for imagination whether Hortense and Gilbert survive and fulfill their dreams in towards them unfriendly Britain. Life in post-war Britain seen through the eyes of immigrants does not only reveal characters' personalities but is also reflective of British society in those days.

Resumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem imigrace ze Západního Karibiku do poválečné Velké Británie. Tématická analýza je založena na románu *Small Island* od britské autorky Andrey Levy, který se věnuje zejména rasové diskriminaci těchto přistěhovalců ze strany většinové britské společnosti. Prostor v analýze je věnován zejména tématům asimilace, integrace a recepce imigrantů do britské společnosti tak jak jsou vyobrazeny v románu. Analýza je doplněna relevantními informacemi ze sekundární literatury.

Hlavními postavami cenami ověřeného románu *Small Island* jsou dva manželské páry, které jsou také střídavými vypravěči. Imigrace je nahlížena jak z pohledu imigrantů- jamajských novomanželů Hortense a Gilberta stejně jako z perspektivy majoritní britské společnosti a to skrze londýnský pár Queenie a Bernarda. Děj je zasazen do roku 1948, kdy symbolicky příliv imigrantů z britských kolonií v Karibiku do Velké Británie začal a je doplněn četnými vzpomínkami na období druhé světové války a před ní. Ačkoliv se autorka zabývá vážným tématem, děj působí odlehčeně a román je napsán čtivým způsobem. Levy občas líčí humorné situace vyplývající z odlišností či neznalostí života v Británii a v Karibiku. Čtenář si z románu odnáší povědomí o problémech a překážkách jimž imigranti s tmavou pletí museli čelit v Británii na konci čtyřicátých let minulého století.

Labouristická vláda v čele s Clementem Atleem přijala v roce 1948 nový zákon, který umožnil všem členům britského impéria vstup do jejího centra. Zákon ve své době nevzbudil velkou pozornost, avšak měl nečekané důsledky. Na jeho základě začali později do Británie proudit imigranti z různých koutů říše, což vyvolalo nevoli v britské společnosti. Tento zákon byl v roce 1962 změněn, nová legislativní úprava omezila příliv přistěhovalců. Zákon upravující imigraci ze zemí Commonwealthu nastavil určité kvóty pro počty imigrantů za prací s ohledem na potřeby britského trhu práce. Oponenti nového zákona za ním viděli snahu o omezení imigrace především z nových zemí Commonwealthu (tj. bývalých britských kolonií). Argumentovali rasovým podtextem legislativy, která se podle jejich názoru zaměřila na přistěhovalce hlavně z Asie a karibské oblasti. Kromě ustanovení ročního limitu pro počty imigrantů za prací, zákon umožnil příjezd blízkých rodinných příslušníků, zejména manželek a dětí imigrantů již žijících na britských ostrovech. To umožnilo vyrovnat převažující počet mužských přistěhovalců ve společnosti. V průběhu šedesátých a začátkem sedmdesátých let bylo ještě přijato několik dalších

návrhů, které mnohem více zamezovaly přistěhovalectví do země. Nicméně přerodu dříve homogenní britské společnosti do multikulturní se zabránit nepodařilo.

Hlavními důvody, které vedly k odchodu lidí z karibských ostrovů byla především chudoba, vysoká nezaměstnanost a špatná ekonomická situace související s jednostranně zaměřeným hospodářstvím, které záviselo na zemědělské produkci takových plodin jako cukrová třtina, banány, káva atd. exportovaných pro spotřebu do Velké Británie. Tyto nezáviděníhodné podmínky zhoršil hurikán, který se přehnal přes Jamajku a další ostrovy v období druhé světové války a zdevastoval nejen úrodu, ale i domy a infrastrukturu. Hodně navracejících se vojenských dobrovolníků, kteří sloužili v době války v Británii, našlo doma beznaděj. Postavu románu Gilberta i další veterány vedly malé možnosti naplnit své sny na ostrově k návratu do Británie. Jejich návrat do centra impéria byl pro ně usnadněn právě tím, že měli možnost poznat tamnější život ve válečných letech. Tyto “push” faktory byly doplněny o důvody, které lákaly k příjezdu do centra britské říše. Devastace země ve druhé světové válce a její následná obnova vedly k poptávce po zaměstnancích zejména v málo placených, manuálních oborech. Některé státní podniky jako London Transport či nově vzniklý systém bezplatných zdravotních zařízení National Health Service dělaly náborů zaměstnanců přímo na karibských ostrovech a nebo tam inzerovali. Kombinace výše zmíněných “push” a “pull” faktorů spolu s novými imigračními zákony způsobili přistěhovalectví černošského obyvatelstva do poválečné Británie.

První karibští pracovní imigranti připluli na lodi SS Empire Windrush v roce 1948, toto plavidlo se stalo synonymem pro poválečné přistěhovalectví na britské ostrovy a zároveň symbolem změn ve společnosti, které příliv obyvatel jiné rasy způsobil. Jak je výše uvedeno v souvislosti s imigrační legislativou, bílí Britové byli zaskočeni pokračujícím přistěhovalectvím lidí pro ně odlišné rasy. Většina z nich neměla zájem o nově příchozí z britských karibských kolonií, ba naopak. Původní obyvatelé měli předsudky vůči imigrantům tmavé pleti, navíc měli pocit, že je obírají o volná pracovní místa, případně, že zneužívají nově zavedený sociální systém dávek.

Rasismus vůči černochům se projevoval v četných oblastech života, tak jako postavy románu Gilberta a Hortense měli např. problém najít práci odpovídající jejich kvalifikaci a když už byli zaměstnáni museli čelit diskriminaci a šikaně ze strany kolegů. Zřejmě největší obtíží bylo nalezení ubytování, protože majitelé domů a bytů odmítali nájemníky černé pleti. Gilbert měl štěstí, že jeho známá z válečných let, Angličanka Queenie, měla k dispozici volný dům a

potřebovala si přivydělat. Negativní reakce na to, že svobodomyšlná Queenie pronajímá svůj dům lidem tmavé pleti, na sebe nenechají dlouho čekat. Její známí a sousedé se jí začnou vyhýbat a obviňují ji z toho, že kazí život ve čtvrti, kde dříve žili jen vážení obyvatelé střední třídy. Také Quinin manžel Bernard je vzteky bez sebe, když po svém návratu z války domů najde černošské podnájemníky. I když nájemné je vysoké a životní podmínky v jejím neudržovaném domě špatné, Gilbert se cítí šťastný, že má vůbec střechu nad hlavou. Avšak jeho novomanželka Hortense je po příjezdu do Londýna v šoku, když zjistí v jakých podmínkách má žít. Obviňuje Gilberta z toho, že si ji dovolil přivést do malé, neudržované místnosti, která má být jejich společnou ložnicí, obývacím i kuchyní zároveň. Špatná bytová situace jamjského páru se nakonec vyřeší tím, že Gilbertův známý, taktéž přistěhovalec z Karibiku, jim nabídne pronájem bytu v domě, který koupil a chce jej pronajímat ostatním imigrantům. Gilbert a Hortense tak konečně budou mít dostatek prostoru a soukromí pro sebe výměnou za pomoc s přestavbou nemovitosti. Toto řešení problému poukazuje na určitou semknutost a vzájemnou výpomoc mezi karibskými přistěhovanci, k čemuž je dovedl nepřátelský přístup majoritní společnosti.

Dalšími překážkami v životě přistěhovalecké menšiny byly tvrdé životní podmínky ve válkou zničené zemi, vynucené všeobecné šetření, uskrovnování se, přidělový systém potravin atd. V románu *Small Island* je epizoda, kdy povýšenecká Hortense je v šoku, když vidí ošuntělé, obnošené oblečení místních žen na ulici. Nepříjemným zážitkem pro imigranty z tropických ostrovů bylo studené, deštivé a mlhavé počasí a nedostupnost exotických druhů ovoce. Všechny výše zmíněné obtíže často vedly k pocitům deziluze. Zoufalství bylo podníceno markantním rozdílem mezi idealizovanými představami o životě v centru britského imperia a skutečností. Tato odlišnost reality a snů je v románu zobrazena na postavě Hortense, která se vzdala života v Karibiku a vdala se za Gilberta, kterého nemiluje jen proto, aby mohla odcestovat do Británie a splnit si tam své sny.

Tyto mýty o životě a společnosti ve Velké Británii byly záměrně vytvořeny a podporovány Brity v koloniích. Byla to jedna z cest, jak ospravedlnit imperiální nadvládu nad koloniemi před jejich obyvatelstvem. Součástí a nástrojem této propagandy byly školy, kde se žáci a studenti učili o historii, zeměpise, ekonomice a hospodářství atd. na britských ostrovech, ale zároveň se nedozvídali nic o své domovině. Karibské obyvatelstvo bylo tak silně ovlivněno britským imperialismem, že cítilo silné pouto ke kolonizátorské Británii, ke které je v románu referováno jako k "Mother Country", kterou obviňovali a ctili. Sami sebe kolonizovaní obyvatelé

dokonce považovali za “Brity” s tím rozdílem, že byli černošské rasy a pocházeli z kolonií. Černoši byli na ostrovy v Karibském moři dovezeni jako otroci z Afriky pro práci na plantážích. Avšak o otroctví se ve společnosti nemluvalo ani neučilo, bylo to tabu. Hierarchie lidí v Karibiku byla založena na rasismu a ideologií o nadřazenosti bílé rasy obyvatel. Rozlišovalo se mezi etnickým původem obyvatelstva s co nejsvětější odstín pleti vedl k vyššímu postavení ve společnosti. Hortense se cítí být privilegovaná, protože podle svých slov „má štěstí”, že zdědila světlejší pokožku po otci.

Silné pouto sounáležitosti s Británií bylo důvodem k tomu, proč se hodně mužů z Jamajky a sousedních ostrovů dobrovolně přihlásilo do britské armády ve druhé světové válce. Gilbert stejně jako většina vojáků z britského Karibiku strávil čas u pozemní jednotky Královského letectva v Británii. Byl sice stejně jako jeho spolubojovníci nepříjemně překvapen nedostatkem informací a znalostí Britů o koloniích, zejména Jamajce, ale na druhou stranu přístup bílých obyvatel k černošským vojákům byl vděčný a přátelský. Ve stejné době byla v Británii přítomna i americká armáda, která byla pověstná segregací amerických černochů a jejich rasovou diskriminací. Někteří Američané bílé pleti se snažili šikanovat a zavést segregaci i mezi černošské vojáky z britských kolonií. Gilbert si s sebou nese velmi nepříjemné vzpomínky na bělochy z americké armády, protože se s nimi několikrát dostal do konfliktu. Jejich rasová nenávisť vedla k rozpoutání pouliční rvačky, ve které byl nešťastnou náhodou zastřelen Quinnin tchán Arthur.

Převaha Britů svůj kladný postoj k černochům bohužel po válce změnila. Gilbert je velmi nepříjemně překvapen nepřátelstvím a lhostejností, kterou vůči nemu lidé projevují. Quinnin navrátilší se manžel z války, Bernard, lidmi tmavé pleti opovrhne ať už se jedná o černochy či Indы, které měl možnost poznat, když byl odvelen jako voják do Indie, další britské kolonie. Podle Bernarda mají lidé tmavé rasy pokřivený charakter, vyznávají jiné hodnoty, jsou vychytralí, mstiví a pro peníze by udělali cokoli.

Závěr románu je velmi překvapivý a dramatický, protože Quinnie porodí nemanželské dítě, které vzešlo z jejího milostného dobrodružství s Jamajčanem Michaelem, který sloužil jako pilot u letectva v Británii. Nejen, že Bernard není otcem dítěte, ale novorozenec má černošské rysy. I když Quinnie si chtěla původně chlapečka ponechat, nakonec nedokáže čelit předpokládanému tlaku společnosti a předsudkům a rozhodně se jej dát pryč. Příslušnost jejího dítěte k černošskému typu etnika vede Quinnie k tomu, že ignoruje mateřské pouto ke svému

synovi a doslova jej vnutí na výchovu černošským manželům Hortense a Gilbertovi. Ti nakonec po váhání svolí a rozhodnou se Quinnina syna vychovat jako vlastní dítě. Důvodem k jejich rozhodnutí je to, že se bojí o budoucnost dítěte smíšené rasy v rasismem prodchnuté Británii. Jak sekundární zdroje doplňují, osud sirotek čekal na hodně nemanželských potomků, kteří vzešli z milostného vzplanutí místních bílých žen a černošských mužů z americké či britské armády.

Závěrem by se dalo říci, že tím, že poválečná Británie v románu *Small Island* je posuzovaná z dvou různorodých perspektiv, tedy imigrantů tmavé pleti a místních Londýňanů prozrazuje hodně nejen o zemi, ale i o samotných postavách.

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