

My work will be concerned with post-WWII migrant experience in Britain. Accordingly, I will focus on issues of identity, hybridity, belonging, diaspora and the concept of home. All these will be exemplified on the basis of selected works by black British writers that will be specified below.

Over time, the denotation of the term diaspora – originally meaning the dispersal of the Jews from Israel – increasingly widened. Nowadays, it may refer to people leaving their countries not only for reasons of expulsion and persecution, but also for example in the wake of political strife or war, through conquest and colonisation, as part of global flows of labour or as a result of the capture or removal of a group through slavery.¹ According to Avtar Brah, “the question is not simply about who travels but when, how, and under what circumstances?”² Moreover, it is not possible to create strict categories – types of diaspora - into which particular moving people can be placed. This is also the case of black immigrants in Britain whose ancestors were brought to the Caribbean from Africa for the reasons of slavery. They themselves came to Britain as a result of at least two factors: colonialism and the global flows of labour. As Avtar Brah claims, “[a]t the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey.”³ This is a factor that connects all types of diasporas.

When Salman Rushdie discusses immigrants, among which he himself belongs, he says: “We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown.”⁴ Rushdie claims that we humans are not trees; we do not have roots: “Look under your feet. You will not find gnarled growths sprouting through the soles.”⁵ For critics like him dislocation becomes the key to a release of a new form of creative energy. However, as he also admits, the phenomenon of “belonging” observably exists. Thus, similarly as in the case of this writer, the flight is never complete and the migrants do not shake themselves free of their roots completely. People become attached to their birth-places and there is for many a need to feel a keen sense of belonging. Accordingly, diasporic journeys are not only about departure, but as Brah puts it, “essentially about settling down, about putting roots „elsewhere.”