



***RACISM, IDENTITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN SELECTED CANADIAN
ETHNIC FICTIONS BY LAWRENCE HILL AND M. G. VASSANJI***

HUSSEIN ALI ABBAS

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By

HUSSEIN ALI ABBAS

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

November 2019

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Kassim, and Najla



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in the fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

RACISM, IDENTITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN SELECTED CANADIAN ETHNIC FICTIONS BY LAWRENCE HILL AND M. G. VASSANJI

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November 2019

Chairman : Manimangai Mani, PhD
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This study addresses the issue of the representation of the marginalised minorities in literary texts by immigrant authors in White-dominated Canada. It examines six selected novels, which are *Some Great Thing* (1992), *Any Known Blood* (1997) and *The Book of Negroes* (2007) by Lawrence Hill, and *No New Land* (1991), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), and *The Magic of Saida* (2012) by M. G. Vassanji. In *No New Land*, Vassanji's newly-arrived immigrant character Nurdin has to live in poverty as he is not given a job because he has no 'Canadian experience', whereas Hill's Aminata in *The Book of Negroes* is given no chance to live among the Whites in the town she works in because she is Black. In Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida*, Kamal Punja, who is born to a mixed family, suffers from an identity crisis because Canada does not recognise the identity of biracial immigrants. In Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Vic is trapped between the oriental native world devastated by war and the occidental host, which is flourishing in peace. In Hill's *Some Great Thing*, Yoyo is forced by the long harshly cold winter of Canada to return to his sunny homeland in Cameroon, while Cane V's sense of identity loss in Hill's *Any Known Blood* compels him to go to Africa and the USA to unearth the roots of his family. In terms of theory, this study uses the ideas of both Critical Multiculturalism and Post-Colonialism to address the main concepts and their relevant themes of these novels. Frantz Fanon and Edward Said's ideas on racism are used to examine racism-caused poverty and the segregation of immigrants. Homi Bhabha and Sneha Gunew's ideas on immigrants' hybrid identity are used to address biracial immigrants' identity crises and bicultural in-betweenness. Displacement, voluntary or compulsory, is investigated respectively through the themes of longing/belonging and the search for familial roots, dependent on John McLeod and Neil Bissoondath's ideas on immigrants' return home and immigrants' family roots.

This study has three objectives to attain. The first is to explore how the African and South Asian immigrant characters are affected by racism in multicultural Canada. The second is to investigate the reasons and results of identity problems that are imposed on the immigrant characters of these two groups in that country. The third is to examine the reasons which trigger the sense of displacement among the immigrant characters of these two minorities in that host country. As this study finds that African and South Asian immigrant characters of the selected fictional texts suffered in terms of racism, identity, and displacement, it is concluded that literature contributes to give representation to those non-Europeans who have remained voiceless for many decades in Canada. In the end, this study recommends that more studies need to be done on literary texts by immigrant authors to investigate the stories of minority characters other than those of African and South Asian origin.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERKAUMAN, IDENTITI DAN PEMINGGIRAN DALAM FIKSYEN
PILIHAN ETNIK KANADA OLEH LAWRENCE HILL DAN M. G.
VASSANJI**

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Kajian ini menangani isu representasi kaum minoriti terpinggir dalam teks kesusasteraan oleh penulis kaum pendatang di Kanada iaitu sebuah negara yang didominasi bangsa kulit putih. Kajian ini membicarakan enam novel pilihan, iaitu *Some Great Thing* (1992), *Any Known Blood* (1997) dan *The Book of Negroes* (2007) oleh Lawrence Hill, selain novel *No New Land* (1991), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), dan *The Magic of Saida* (2012) oleh M. G. Vassanji. Dalam novel *No New Land*, watak yang dipaparkan oleh Vassanji iaitu Nurdin yang baru tiba sebagai imigran terpaksa hidup susah kerana tidak diberikan sebarang pekerjaan disebabkan dia tidak mempunyai 'pengalaman sebagai seorang Kanada', manakala watak Aminata dalam novel *The Book of Negroes* karya Hill tidak dibenarkan tinggal dalam komuniti kulit putih di bandar tempat dia bekerja kerana dia seorang kulit hitam. Dalam karya Vassanji iaitu novel *The Magic of Saida*, watak Kamal Punja yang lahir dalam keluarga berdarah campuran menderita krisis identiti kerana negara Kanada tidak mengiktiraf imigran beridentiti dua kaum. Dalam novel Vassanji *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Vic terperangkap dalam dunia natif oriental yang kecewa kerana peperangan berbanding negara yang didatanginya. Dalam novel *Some Great Thing* karya Hill pula, Yoyo yang menghadapi kepayahan musim dingin yang panjang dan terlalu dingin di Kanada terpaksa pulang ke negara asalnya Cameroon yang lebih indah bermatahari. Sementara itu, kehilangan identiti diri Cane V dalam novel *Any Known Blood* karya Hill mendorong watak ini membawa diri ke Afrika and ke Amerika Syarikat untuk mencari susur-galur keluarganya. Dari sudut teori, kajian ini menggunakan ilham Kritikan Multibudaya dan Pasca-Kolonialisme untuk menangani konsep-konsep utama dan tema relevan dalam novel-novel yang dikaji. Pandangan Frantz Fanon dan Edward Said terhadap isu perkauman digunakan untuk mengkaji kemiskinan disebabkan isu perkauman dan peminggiran imigran. Pendapat Homi Bhabha dan Sneha Gunew terhadap identiti hibrid imigran digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk menangani krisis identiti darah kacukan imigran dan perantaraan dwibudaya.

Peminggiran, secara sukarela atau terpaksa, setiap satunya dikaji melalui tema-tema kerinduan dan kesepunyaan (longing/belonging) serta penjejakan asal-usul keluarga, berlandaskan pendapat John McLeod dan Neil Bissoondath terhadap kepulauan imigran ke negara sendiri dan asal-usul keluarga. Kajian ini cuba menangani tiga objektif. Pertama ialah melihat bagaimana watak-watak imigran Afrika dan Asia Selatan terkesan oleh perkauman di Kanada sebagai sebuah negara pelbagai budaya. Objektif kedua ialah mengkaji sebab-musabab dan kesan masalah identiti yang dihadapi oleh watak-watak kedua-dua kumpulan imigran di negara tersebut. Objektif ketiga ialah untuk mengkaji sebab-sebab yang mencetuskan peminggiran terhadap watak-watak imigran kedua-dua kumpulan minoriti ini di negara yang mereka datangi. Kajian terhadap watak-watak imigran Afrika dan Asian Selatan dalam teks fiksi terpilih ini yang berkaitan penderitaan mereka dari sudut perkauman, identiti, dan peminggiran, secara kesimpulannya mendapati bahawa kesusasteraan menyumbang kepada representasi yang mewakili kaum bukan-Eropah yang tidak didengar suara mereka di Kanada sejak beberapa dekad lalu. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan bahawa lebih banyak penyelidikan perlu dibuat terhadap teks-teks kesusasteraan karya penulis imigran untuk mengkaji kisah-kisah watak imigran minoriti lain selain yang berasal-usul dari Afrika dan Selatan Asia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Canadian literature originated and evolved to reflect the intellectual values of the French and British, two colonial powers that colonized Canada in the 1660s. These colonisers used literature to present Canada as a bilingual and bicultural country where the French and British share the cultural identity of the society. This can be seen in the novel, *Two Solitudes* (1945) by Hugh MacLennan, which presents Canada as a nation composed of two European groups, the English and French.

In reaction to that vision, a new version of Canadian literature emerged and was labelled 'ethnic literature'. Palmer and Rasporich identify "Canadian ethnic literature" as a literature that is written by authors who are neither French nor British in origin. Joseph Pivato documents that early immigrant literature appeared in the language of the authors' countries of origin (Pivato, "Ethnic Writing"). Katalin Kurtosi notes that the authors' desire to increase the readership among Canadians pushed them to write in English and/or French, the two official languages of Canada. However, ethnic writing addresses issues connected to the groups that these authors belong to (Palmer and Rasporich). Thus, there has been "Canadian-Ukraine literature" and "Canadian-Italian literature," among others.

In the wake of the rush of immigrants from Asia and Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, the term "Canadian Ethnic Literature" was widened to encompass the writings of the newcomers. The new writings address aspects of the experiences of the ethnic communities they belong to. Indeed, the contributions of authors like the Chinese Canadian Sky Lee, the African Canadian George Clarke, and the South Asian Michael Ondaatje have given Canadian ethnic literature a strong impetus. According to Palmer and Rasporich, what makes "Canadian Literature" different from "Canadian Ethnic Literature" is that, while the first is made from the "colonial mentality," the second reflects the "diversity" of Canadian society. Thus, the voices of ethnic groups are articulated through Canadian ethnic literature. Out of ethnic literature, has emerged a new type of Canadian fiction called 'ethnic fiction'. In this genre, the author articulates himself/herself as not belonging to Canada but to the community on behalf of which he/she is speaking.

Several studies have attributed the emergence of non-White literature as an integral part of ethnic writing to multiculturalism, a policy orchestrated by the government of Canada to address the increasing diversity within Canadian society. However, this 'state multiculturalism' is bitterly blamed for ignoring the real problems of immigrants, such as racism and class inequality (Bannerji). However, some critics suggest that the only positive aspect of the government's multiculturalism policy is

that it has given the non-White immigrants the right to write their cultural story (Clarke, “What Was Canada”).

This dissertation uses Sneja Gunew’s theory of Critical Multiculturalism to examine six works of fiction that detail the experiences of two ethnic communities: the Africans and South Asians in Canada. These works of fiction are *Some Great Thing* (1992), *Any Known Blood* (1997) and *The Book of Negroes* (2007) by Lawrence Hill, and *No New Land* (1991), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), and *The Magic of Saida* (2012) by M. G. Vassanji.

Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji are two contemporary Canadian writers. The novels of these two authors have attracted the attention of literary circles both within and outside of Canada. Hill and Vassanji use their novels to document stories of their ethnic minorities, the Africans and South Asians, respectively. Lawrence Hill writes fiction to tell a story about Africans in Canada, as a story that “has largely been forgotten” (Krampe 80). As for M. G. Vassanji, he devotes his writings to his community to the extent that he is described as “the Chronicler of his community’s history” (Gill 231). The selection of the fiction in this study is based on the ability of each to reveal the terrible aspects of the experience of the two communities.

Critical Multiculturalism is a postcolonial theory that focuses on the experiences of immigrants in Western countries. The theory serves as a critique of the governmental policy of multiculturalism, which was adopted by Western governments to address the diversity in Western societies in the wake of the rush of non-White immigrants to these countries. Critical Multiculturalism appears in *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalism* (2004) and several articles written by the Canadian critic Sneja Gunew. The theory considers the presence of non-White immigrants in metropolitan societies as another form of colonisation: the European French and British majority as colonisers and immigrant minorities as the colonised (Gunew, *Haunted Nations*). In addition, this dissertation uses some critical ideas from the theory of Postcolonialism on the grounds that both theories, Critical Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism, cannot be divorced (Gunew, *Haunted Nations*).

The story of non-White immigrants in Canada is mainly the story of their counterparts in other Western countries. Following World War II, people from newly independent countries in Asia and Africa made their way into metropolitan countries like the UK, France and other European countries. These people are described as immigrants. However, the economic hardship, the civil wars, and dictatorships in the former colonies were among the reasons for this immigration. In this regard, one should not ignore the fact that Western countries in the post-war years were in need of both skilled and unskilled workers to re-build their infrastructure (Bertens). Thus, during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, Western countries amended the rules and conditions of immigration laws and citizenship.

These amendments encouraged those who were seeking peace and a better life to come to the West. Indeed, the presence of non-White immigrants in 'White' societies has brought much change to Western realities. Now, the diversity of people in terms of race and culture is greatly noticeable in Western countries. The presence of non-White minorities represents a challenge to White-majority Western societies. This challenge does not only come from the fact that these non-Whites are not ready to give up their ethnic values but also from the inability of Western countries to bring White and non-White groups of people into peaceful coexistence in which the racial/cultural distinctions of each group are recognised.

In Canada, the story of non-assimilation of White and non-White immigrants is no different. Yet, the non-White immigrants made their way into Canada only when its Immigration Act was amended in 1962. According to Grace-Edward Galabuzi, this amendment was made soon after European immigrants stopped coming to Canada due to the economic improvement and abundance of job opportunities in their native countries.

As an immigrant-receiving country, Canada has minorities descended from more than 200 ethnic groups (Howard-Hassmann). After years of confusion over the country's cultural identity, Canada introduced a system in which all these groups are assumed to be equally recognised. The system is called multiculturalism. According to this system, every Canadian has the right to hold his/her beliefs and maintain his/her ethnic culture. Indeed, Canadians are proud that multiculturalism was born in Canada in 1971 before it became a universal system in other Western countries. Multiculturalism has placed non-White immigrants of Canada into a better position. For instance, the immigration law was amended to give access to immigrants from Asia and Africa. More importantly, it has given non-Whites the right to keep and practise their cultures. It is by virtue of multiculturalism that immigrants, for the first time, were able to write and get their writings published. Yet, immigrants express dissatisfaction over the experience of multiculturalism. They feel that multiculturalism has done little to end racism and remove the inequality between Whites and non-Whites in terms of employment (Henry and Tator). Therefore, they are demanding a more inclusive system that gives them full participation in all fields of life.

Historically speaking, Africans are the oldest ethnic community in Canada, and their presence goes back to the 1700s when Black Americans who escaped slavery in their country started to arrive (Clarke, *Odysseys Home*). As enslavement is officially outlawed in Canada, the country has been a sanctuary for the Africans who were enslaved in the US. Enslavement not only meant that the enslaved had to work unpaid for long hours under deplorable conditions, but also went much further in that a human being essentially became the property of the White owner, who had the right to abuse him/her the way he saw fit. Today, three per cent of Canadian people ethnically belong to this group (MacIntyre). Indeed, the story of the Blacks in Canada is a story of pain and shame. They are still suffering from racism and other forms of discrimination. Yet, Black Canadians proved to be creative in all walks of life. In literature, for example, it is hard to talk about Canadian literary accomplishments without

mentioning the names of African Canadian authors like George Elliott Clarke, Austin Clarke, and Lawrence Hill.

As for the South Asian Canadians, this community is the biggest ethnic group in Canada (Fleras) and includes immigrants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. It also includes South Asians who emigrated to Canada from some African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as well as Trinidad. These South Asian Canadians form around five per cent of the total Canadian population (Henry and Tator). The history of this group started with the arrival of hundreds of Indian workers to British Columbia in 1906, where they started working in agriculture (Mishra). The South Asians take pride in their contributions to Canada. In literature, for example, the great achievements of South Asian authors like Michael Ondaatje, Rohinton Mistry, and M. G. Vassanji have lavished this ethnic group with international prestige.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Canada has had a long history of multiculturalism, but writers who have contributed to recording the composition of the society have marginalised the representation of non-White Canadians. Although Canadians who are labelled Immigrants form 20% of the population (Griffith), their voices are scarcely heard in any of the country's records. These non-White populations are represented in the fiction of Canada written by ethnic authors, and Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji are such authors.

Hill and Vassanji's representations of their ethnic communities in their writings have received favourable reviews from George Elliott Clarke and Itty Sharma. The critic George Clarke, who was captivated by Hill's writings, suggests that "because African Canadian history is ignored in Canada, African Canadian writers are forced to act as historians" (Clarke, *Eyeing the North Star* xx). Similarly, Itty Sharma comments on M. G. Vassanji's novels by saying that Vassanji writes about his South Asian ethnic community because the "community is absent from the ... record of the country [of Canada]" (Sharma 2).

This study tries to examine how the selected novels have depicted the ordeals faced by the African and South Asian immigrant groups to which Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji respectively belong.

To accentuate the point that this study is different from previous ones reviewed in the literature by Canadian immigrant authors, the study examines and critically evaluates some relevant theses. In *Stories of Canada: National Identity in Late-nineteenth Century English-Canadian Fiction*, Elizabeth Hedler traces the effects of writings on the emerging Canadian national identity. Hedler quotes from the author J. S. Woodsworth's *Strangers within our Gates* (1909) as follows:

Within the past decade Canada has risen from the status of a colony to that of a nation. A national consciousness has developed - that is, a nation has been born. A few years ago, Canadian-born children described themselves as English, Irish, Scotch or French, according as their parents or ancestors had come from - England, Ireland, Scotland or France. Today, our children boast themselves as Canadians. (qtd. in Hedler 189)

Hedler simply established her study on sources that ignore the presence of non-Whites in Canadian society. For example, it ignores the presence of Africans, one of the oldest visible ethnic groups in Canadian society. According to Maureen Kihika, Africans are attributed to have lived in Canada since the 1500s (Kihika). Hedler's study brings to mind *Orientalism* by the post colonialist Edward Said, who suggests that in European writings, the non-Europeans are marginalised or misrepresented. For Said, the real problem that stands between Europeans and non-Europeans is about the representation of the second in the writing of the first.

Unlike Hedler's, my study gives representation to two outstanding groups in Canada who have been ignored by Hedler. They are the African and South Asian groups.

Investigation of ethnic history in non-White fiction has attracted the attention of some researchers: Mary Van Horne is one of them. In her thesis, *Carving a Place in the Canadian Imagination: (Re) writing Canada's Forgotten History in a Selection of Chinese Canadian Historical Fiction*, Horne examines the fiction written by two ethnic Chinese authors, Paul Yee and Sky Lee. The two authors write fiction to tell stories about their ethnic people in Canada, stories that have not been recognised in multicultural Canada. For the researcher Horne, "[T]hese [two] authors are attempting to reshape their cultural and ethnic identity within Canada by writing their people into our national history" (Horne 2).

Horne is right when she says that the two authors' writings desire to make the story of the Chinese minority known among Canadians, but that sentiment is not reflected in the manner in which she introduces the authors and their writings. The use of the pronouns 'their' and 'our' by Horne denotes that she is affected by the colonial mindset which addresses Europeans as 'we', 'us', 'our' and non-Europeans as 'they' 'them' 'their'. Edward Said warns of the colonial discourse that divides people into two groups, superior Europeans and inferior non-Europeans.

My study is substantially different from Horne's in the following sense: it does not use the colonial discourse that divides people into 'us' and 'them'. My study uses a different discourse, called Critical Multiculturalism, which unifies the Canadians, addressing them with the same pronouns but recognising the racial and cultural differences among people. This discourse is based on the idea that Canadians are different but together.

In *One Small Way: Racism, Redress, and Reconciliation in Canadian Women's Fiction (1980-2000)*, Rebecca Babcock explores the pains of racism which afflicted Canadian women, as portrayed in selected works of fiction written by White and non-White female authors. Babcock criticises the state multicultural programmes and describes them as a way of obscuring a long history of racism that has devastated Canadian women. She observes:

[T]he legacy of systemic racism and of multicultural discourse ... has ... masked racism in this country [Canada] ... demanding that we acknowledge our complicity with a social and political system that has frequently been racist, exclusionary, and even violent. (Babcock vii)

Babcock is right to say that Canada has a long history of racism, but little of that history is revealed in the fiction. Indeed, Babcock's remarks on Canada's racism is in line with the writing of Vic Satzewich, who suggests that the history of Canada is coloured by racism. In his words, "our country's history is essentially a history of racism" (Satzewich x).

My study holds a different perspective from that of Babcock regarding racism in Canada. Unlike Babcock, I suggest that racism which targets immigrants is not a social problem. Rather, it is a colonial practice based on illusions as to the superiority of the Whites over the non-Whites that alludes to Whites being more civilised and intelligent than non-Whites. As a supporting piece of evidence, the postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon attributes racism to "the European's feeling of superiority" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 69).

Martin Genetsch's PhD dissertation brings into focus three prominent Canadian immigrant authors. Although they are South Asian in origin, M. G. Vassanji, Neil Bissoondath, and Rohinton Mistry come from different countries, namely Tanzania, Trinidad, and the Indian subcontinent, respectively. In his dissertation, "Difference and Identity in Contemporary Anglo-Canadian Fiction: M.G. Vassanji, Neil Bissoondath, Rohinton Mistry," Genetsch says:

Canada's multicultural or ethnic fiction provides a particularly rich showcase for exploring modes ... of living together in a multicultural society ... It is crucial to perceive that in order to arrive at an adequate understanding of the narratives of many Canadian immigrant authors writing about multiculturalism, specific [p]ost-colonial experiences are indispensable contexts. Writers like M.G. Vassanji, Neil Bissoondath or Rohinton Mistry ... do not only explore Canada and its multicultural society but also direct their attention to their respective countries of origin. (Genetsch 4-5)

Genetsch makes the point that the author's personal and communal experiences in the country of origin share the author's narrative attention in ethnic fiction. This remark has also been referred to by other writers such as Asma Sayed, who believe that such writing is reflective of the state of "in-betweenness" in that the author is trapped between both the native and adopted countries.

My study has a different explanation for the presence of the native country in the ethnic fiction. I suggest that such presence is a matter of belonging. Immigrant characters are narratively shown to establish a connection with the old countries while living in the adopted one. This connection, which is an indication of one's belonging to the old country, is usually made through memories triggered only when immigrants are exposed to what John McLeod suggests as "miserable conditions" in exile (241).

In his dissertation, "Histories Reclaimed and Borders Transgressed: The Narrative of Michael Ondaatje and Joy Kogawa in post-colonial and Multicultural Canada," the researcher Enrique Nelson Lim Resma suggests that the stories of ethnic groups are not given space in Canadian records, and immigrant authors, therefore, are motivated to give representation to their ethnic groups by writing fiction. Thus, the writings of Joy Kogawa and Michael Ondaatje were received as representations of the Japanese and South Asian minorities which have been ignored in Canadian writings. Resma suggests:

Both Ondaatje and Kogawa are very much concerned with re-writing what they themselves consider as a distorted history by subverting in the official political discourse in what they believe as their unflinching search for truth. They have managed to write novels that, intentionally or otherwise, serve as the narrative of the dispossessed, the forgotten or the silenced minority. (Resma 5)

Resma is right to say that the stories of immigrant groups are not represented in Canadian history books. She is also correct in saying that immigrants' stories are contained in works of fiction and not in the country's records. Indeed, this idea has been discussed earlier by other writers such as Asma Sayed, who notes:

[When] groups, cultures, places, and events go largely unrecognised, ignored or stereotyped by others, ... [ethnic] writers bear the brunt of responsibility to create personal stories that encompass the histories, cultures, languages, and peoples of little-known places. (Sayed 33)

What makes my study different is that the validity of the literary text to produce true history is only verified after the authenticity of that text is established. According to the theorist Sneja Gunew, such authenticity is established when the text is based on events that are eye-witnessed or personally engaged in by the author himself/herself or one of his/her community (Gunew, *Haunted Nations*).

Another significant thesis is one entitled *Construction of Racial Hybridity in Contemporary African-Canadian Literature*, by Hike Bast. The significance of the study comes from the fact that it addresses the problematic issue of identity for immigrants born to racially different parents. This is one of the most sensitive of issues that have been avoided by both authors and researchers. As she begins her research, Bast says:

I felt as if I was venturing into forbidden territory, approaching a highly sensitive and controversial topic ... the subject of mixed-race identities had scarcely been unearthed before within Canada's literary landscape. (Bast 11)

Bast makes a significant point as she says that the experience of biracial immigrants over identity in a multicultural society is among the topics that have greatly been ignored in critical discourse. Samantha Fischer makes a similar reference when she states:

This [mixed] population is rapidly growing, and little work has been done on how Mixed Race individuals develop their identity in the existing framework of multiculturalism. (Fischer 2)

My study is different in the sense that it addresses the issue of biracial identity from a different perspective, which has its basis in the immigrants' efforts to articulate their sense of belonging depending on the critical ideas of the theory of Critical Multiculturalism. These ideas suggest that the problem of biracial immigrant identity in a multicultural society comes from the fact that both the White majority and non-White minority, to which their parents racially belong, give the biracial individual no chance to affiliate (Gunew, *Haunted Nations*).

The displacement of Canadian immigrants has also attracted the attention of many researchers such as Shaya Golparian, an Asian immigrant. In her thesis "Displaced Displacement: Being an A/R/Tographic Performance of Experiences of Unhomed," Golparian mobilises a variety of themes relevant to place and displacement. She observes:

This work draws on Post-colonial literature to analyze the journey of ... [a] researcher ... sharing her personal experiences as an emigrant/immigrant struggling with absence and loss, trying to make a place to belong. (Golparian ii)

Golparian is right to say that the theme of displacement is filtered through the immigrant's sense of belonging to the place one occupies in exile. A similar remark is made by Asma Sayed when she suggests that the sense of belonging is a self-imposed concern in exile, and immigrants act to articulate a sense of belonging to the place,

wherever they go. However, the sense of displacement becomes a sense of loss when Asama suggests immigrants in exile “belong everywhere and yet, nowhere” (Sayed 14).

My study is different as far as the sense of displacement is concerned. For me, the immigrants’ sense of belonging to the country they live in is closely associated with their sense of well-being in that country. In this connection, John McLeod suggests that displacement occurs when one is exposed to “miserable conditions” (241) such as discrimination and poverty.

In conclusion, my study is different from the theses that have been reviewed because it examines a selection of fiction by Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji within the theory of Critical Multiculturalism, a theory that is not used and discussed in the above theses.

1.3 Justification for the Selection of the Two Authors and their Fiction

The authors and their fiction in this study have been carefully chosen because their writings provide a new perspective in which the main problems of racism, identity, and displacement faced by African and South Asian immigrants are sufficiently represented. However, three considerations are taken into account in selection of the authors and novels of this study: the authors’ biographies, the chronological facts of each work of fiction, and the themes of the selected fictions.

In relation to the consideration of author biographies, Lawrence Hill has been selected for this study because he is, to my knowledge, the only African Canadian author who narrates the experience of biracial immigrants. Dependent on his lived experience, Lawrence has portrayed biracial immigrants’ ordeals over identity and belonging in his writing. Choosing Lawrence Hill gives me the potential to investigate the experiences of a biracial immigrant in his fiction.

As for Vassanji, he has been chosen from among several prominent South Asian Canadian authors such as Michael Ondaatje, Rohinton Mistry, and Anita Rau Badami. Vassanji has been chosen because there is a harmony between Vassanji as an author and Sneja Gunew, the theorist whose idea of Critical Multiculturalism is applied in this study. They share the idea that the demographic changes in Canadian society make it necessary for Canada to re-build an identity that reflects the diversity of the new society. Vassanji’s concept of ‘demographic changes’ both inspired and is cited in Gunew’s discourse on the theory.

The different locations of Hill and Vassanji in the experience of Canadian immigrant experience compelled me to choose the two authors and their writings for my study. Although they share a lot of concerns regarding immigrants in their writings, Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji occupy different locations in the Canadian

experience of non-White immigrants. While Hill is seen as a Canadian-born immigrant, Vassanji is a foreign-born immigrant, locally referred to as a 'naturalized' Canadian. Unlike Vassanji, Hill was born into a mixed-race family with a Black father and a White mother. These differences in location and family background have contributed immensely towards a variety of imagery in their writings on the concepts of racism, identity, and displacement.

As for the chronological facts of the fiction, Hill and Vassanji's works of fiction are selected for my study because they tend to focus on different historical periods of the non-White immigrant experience in multicultural Canada. Hill's narrative efforts focus on the period that started in 1700s when the formerly enslaved Africans arrived in Canada from the US, which is narratively seen in *The Book of Negroes*. As for Vassanji, his narrative effort is to address the period that started in the 1970s, which is when his 'African Asian' ethnic group began to arrive in Canada, and this can be seen in the novel *No New Land*. If combined, the works of the two authors give an overall picture of the non-White immigrant experience in Canada.

In terms of the thematic consideration, the selection of the works of fiction to a great extent depends on the relevance of these works to the three concepts of racism, identity and displacement, and the capacity of each work of fiction to provide a certain theme for each concept is the main criterion for this selection. When it comes to the concept of racism and its connection to the themes of poverty and segregation, each of the chosen works of fiction reveals a common thread pertaining to these themes. As for poverty, Lawrence Hill's *Some Great Thing* has been chosen for this study because it shows that the Whites use the strategy of relegating the Blacks to low-paying unprofessional jobs so as to impoverish these immigrants. However, Vassanji's *No New Land* is chosen because it reveals two more strategies of impoverishing the non-White immigrants in Canada. The first is called 'Canadian experience'. According to this strategy, the newly arrived non-White immigrants are not given jobs on the grounds that they do not have relevant Canadian experience in the fields in which they apply for work. The second strategy is to harass the non-Whites in the workplace until they quit their jobs.

As for segregation, the fiction has been chosen on the basis that each work of fiction shows a certain kind of segregation that the non-Whites have been exposed to. Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood* and *The Book of Negroes* are chosen to provide two different kinds of residential segregation. In the first type of fiction, a non-White immigrant is unable to rent an apartment in a building inhabited by the Whites. In the second type of fiction, the residential area is divided into two parts, one for the Blacks and another for the Whites. Vassanji's *No New Land* is chosen to reflect another kind of segregation, namely social segregation which enables the Whites to minimise social contact with non-White immigrants in public facilities such as buses, etc. Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida* indicates another kind of segregation called occupational segregation, related through the story of a non-White doctor whose White patients refuse to be treated by him. This then constitutes another way to keep professional

jobs for the Whites only. Thus, the selected works of fiction present various depictions of the themes of poverty and segregation.

When it comes to the concept of identity, talking about immigrants' problems of identity in exile immediately brings to mind the subject of hybridity. This is a term that is used to describe two positions. The first, called racial hybridity is when an immigrant is born to racially different parents. The second, cultural hybridity, is when the immigrant is under the effects of two opposing cultures—oriental and occidental. I have chosen these works of fiction so as to address the immigrants' experiences with these two hybrid identities. Lawrence Hill's *Some Great Thing* and *Any Known Blood* and M. G. Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida* are selected because they depict the non-White immigrants' story of racial hybrid identity in the multicultural society of Canada. The similarities between these two works of fiction run parallel, the only difference being the hybrid character who is born to a Black father and a White mother in Hill's fiction and the one born to a South Asian father and an African mother in Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida*. However, the experiences of the two racially hybrid characters lead to an identity crisis which usually afflicts such immigrants in the Canadian multicultural society.

As for cultural hybridity, it is suggested that immigrants in exile are trapped between two cultures—occidental and oriental. Thus, the works of fiction in this study have been selected to give various descriptions of the 'in-between' locations that the immigrants usually establish in exile. In *Some Great Thing*, the in-between identity is imagined as a location of contestation between two characters from two opposing cultures, oriental and occidental, where each acts to impose its own culture on the other. Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* is selected to give a different perspective of the in-between location which stands between two conflicting worlds—one devastated by war and another where peace flourishes. In Vassanji's *No New Land*, the in-betweenness of identity is discussed within a family space where the father-child and husband-wife relations become trapped between an oriental-inherited heritage and an occidental culture. In Hill's *The Book of Negroes*, the author realises the in-betweenness as a location where an immigrant is caught between two names: one which is connected to the native homeland and another which is imposed by the host society. Thus, the works of fiction are selected because they provide varied imagery of the immigrants' experiences with racial and cultural hybrid identities in exile.

To understand displacement as the third conceptual idea, the works of fiction in this study have been selected to enable me to develop the concept of displacement. By merit of these selected works of fiction, displacement is conceptualised not only as a physical movement of people from a certain geographical area into another, but also as a sense that is articulated when the immigrant feels unhappy with the place in which he/she lives. However, the works of fiction are selected because they give two readings pertaining to non-White immigrants' return to their country of origin as a kind of displacement. The first is attributed to the hardship in exile; the second is caused by the immigrant's sense of identity loss in the host society.

Regarding the hardship of life in exile as a reason for a new stage of displacement, these works of fiction have been selected because they portray the whole gamut of human emotions faced by the non-White immigrants which eventually compels them to return home. Hill's *The Book of Negroes* and Vassanji's *No New Land* suggest that violent racism forced non-White immigrants towards a return to their native homeland. The two works of fiction have the same theme but explored differently. While racism-caused displacement is explored in Hill's fiction through a collective story, it is explored in Vassanji's fiction through an individual story. Moreover, Hill's *Some Great Thing* and Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* have been selected to portray the theme of displacement. The two works suggest that the long cold Canadian winter induces a sense of displacement among exotic immigrants and compels them to return home. In Hill's fiction, the theme of cold weather-caused displacement is explored through the immigrant's fear of freezing to death, whereas the theme in Vassanji's fiction is addressed through the sense of loneliness that is caused by the cold winter. Thus, the selected works portray different images of hardship in exile that breaks the immigrants' sense of belonging and identity, thus compelling them to return to their country of origin.

As for the sense of identity loss as a reason for displacement, Hill's *Any Known Blood* and Vassanji's *The Magic of Saida* have been selected because they suggest that immigrants who are born to racially different parents are seized by a sense of not belonging in a multicultural society like Canada because multiculturalism identifies people with their races. Thus, the identity of these biracial immigrants is not recognised because they do not represent a single race. Hence, they are motivated to return home to explore their family roots. Although Hill and Vassanji agree that immigrants in such a multicultural society are essentially required to return to the country of origin to know their family history, the two authors present characters who construct their family roots differently. While Hill's fictional character is seen as one who is mainly dependent on written narrative such as letters and memoirs to construct his family history, Vassanji's character uses an oral narrative, particularly that of eyewitnesses. However, both works explore the family roots at length, albeit in different ways.

In short, the works of Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji have been aptly chosen because each work reveals a certain dimension of the experience of Africans and South Asians as far as the concepts of racism, identity, and displacement are concerned.

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

This study also sets out to attain the following objectives:

1. To explore how the Africans and South Asian immigrant characters in multicultural society are affected by racism in the selected works of fiction.

The novels in this study suggest that African and South Asian immigrants have been the targets of individual and institutional racism in Canada. Racism has relegated them to low-paid, unskilled jobs. Moreover, it has segregated the non-White immigrants from the White majority. In *Some Great Thing*, Lawrence Hill's character Alvin James is a master's degree holder in the sciences, but he fails to attain a professional job in any company. Later, he is forced to work as a railway porter simply because he is Black. In *No New Land*, Vassanji presents Nanji as a South Asian immigrant character who painfully complains that the White people prefer to stand rather than sit beside him in the bus.

2. To investigate the reasons and results of identity problems that are imposed on the African and South Asian immigrant characters in multicultural society as portrayed in the selected works of fiction.

The selected works in this study accentuate the problems affecting the non-White immigrants in a multicultural society in relation to identity. In *Any Known Blood*, Langston Cane V is searching for a way to construct his biracial identity: Cane V is born to racially different parents. In *No New Land*, Nurdin Lalani, an immigrant from South Asia, is trapped between two conflicting identities, the old oriental and the new occidental. Lalani's efforts to compromise between these two identities by constructing a third one come to naught.

3. To examine the reasons which trigger the sense of displacement among African and South Asian immigrant characters in the multicultural society of Canada as pictured in the selected works of fiction.

The works selected for this study critically suggest that living in a multicultural society may result in displacement that compels immigrants' to return to their countries of origin. In *The Book of Negroes*, the oppression against the African immigrants forces them to return to their motherland in order to avoid racial violence in the host country. *The Magic of Saida* suggests that the immigrants' biracial identities are not recognised in Canada because they do not represent single races. This non-recognition causes the immigrants to feel that they have no place in Canada, a feeling that compels them to return to their native countries.

1.5 The Research Questions

1. How are the African and South Asian immigrant characters affected by racism in the selected works of fiction?
2. What is the essence of the identity crisis that afflicts the African and South Asian immigrant characters in the selected works of fiction?
3. What are the main reasons that trigger a sense of displacement among the immigrant characters from Africa and South Asia in the selected works of fiction?

1.6 Significance of the Study

There have been many studies conducted on Canadian ethnic fiction, but none of these studies have discussed this version of fiction within the country's experience with multiculturalism as this study is doing. These previous studies have focused mainly on identity, belonging, and other cultural issues as separate themes. However, my study differs in that it addresses three themes, namely racism, identity, and displacement, as being interconnected issues. As shown in the selected works of fiction, once an immigrant suffers from discrimination and/or identity crisis, the ethnic character, for example, decides to leave Canada. The significance of this study lies in the selection of the two authors, Lawrence Hill and M.G. Vasanji and their fiction, the literary theory that is used, and the themes that are addressed.

In terms of the selection of Hill and Vasanji, the significance of the study comes from the fact that these two authors speak for and belong to two different groups, African and South Asian immigrant communities. As for the selection of the works, they are selected to significantly establish a spectrum to trace non-White immigrants' stories since they made their way to Canada in the 1700s. This gives me the potential to trace how themes of racism, identity, and displacement have emerged and developed across centuries of the Canadian experience.

A part of the significance of this study comes from the theory that is used in this study, namely Critical Multiculturalism. It is a theory that addresses the contemporary experience of immigrants in Western countries. The theory is the brainchild of Canadian theorist Sneja Gunew and was created to address the particularities of ethnic experiences in multicultural Canada. The theory, which gives credence to ethnic fiction in representing minority groups in multicultural Canada, empowers me to explore the ethnic histories in the selected fiction, an exploration that is most effectively carried out through the lens of Critical Multiculturalism theory rather than any other theory. For example, using the theory of Critical Multiculturalism, it is possible to perceive facets of the ethnic community under study. Vasanji's *No New Land*, for example, is perceived to have been written to give representation to an ethnic group called the "East African Asian Shamsi Community" (109).

Another significant aspect in this study is that it combines the critical ideas of two theories, Postcolonialism and Critical Multiculturalism, in examining the main themes in the selected fiction. This combination was made after extensive research to show that these two theories are two different theoretical perspectives that address one similar thematic issue: the troubled relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans as colonisers and the colonised, respectively.

Another significant aspect of this study is the way it addresses racism as one of the three main themes in the selected fiction. Usually, previous studies focused on the forms of discrimination that target immigrants in Canada. The current study focuses on the socio-economic consequences of such discrimination to the immigrants. As a

colonial practice, the discrimination that targets immigrants is projected to impoverish them and degrade them as marginalised people. Such consequences have not been sufficiently shown in previous studies. In Hill's *Some Great Thing*, Melvyn Hill, an ethnic character with a high school diploma seeks an office job. After many unsuccessful attempts, he concludes that an office job is "a White man's job" (147).

Another part of the significance of this study can be found in the way it addresses the identity crisis of immigrants born to racially different parents, the biracials. This study connects that the biracial immigrant's sense of identity crisis is a consequence of multiculturalism, a system introduced by the government of Canada to address the increasing diversity of Canadian society. The study investigates how multiculturalism identifies immigrants on a racial basis, which leads to biracial immigrants developing an identity crisis because they do not represent any particular single race. To the best of my knowledge, such a connection between multiculturalism and biracial immigrants' sense of identity crisis has never been discussed in any previous study. However, the biracial immigrant identity crisis could be explained as in the following: "when you're black and white, negotiating racial identity is like going through a revolving door" (L. Hill, *Black Berry* 41).

Another significant aspect of this study is realised when looking at the way it has tackled the theme of displacement, another of the main themes of in this study. Unlike previous studies, displacement in this study is addressed as a sense or feeling before it becomes a driving force that takes people from one place to another, and this sense is articulated only when a person is living under miserable conditions. While displacement in the previous studies was recognised as a movement of people from their native country to some other country, displacement in this study is viewed through another lens that provides a different view. It is a movement of people from the adopted country in the West back to the country of origin in the East. This study therefore deals with immigrants' 'return home' as a kind of displacement. Such a concept of displacement was not noted in previous studies.

Although this study is not the first to examine the experience of Africans and South Asians in multicultural Canada as portrayed in the selected literary fiction, it seeks to add a contribution of quality to the body of work from previous studies by enlarging the discussion to address new ideas about this little-acknowledged notion of displacement. As she examines Vassanji's works, Asma Sayed introduces the term "narrative of the returnee" to describe writing by the immigrant authors or their characters who return to the country of their ancestral roots (Sayed 26).

1.7 Conceptual Theory of the Study

This study examines six selected Canadian works of fiction written by two ethnic authors, Hill and Vassanji, by using the theory of Critical Multiculturalism, a critical approach derived from the umbrella theory of Postcolonialism. Critical

Multiculturalism focuses on the relationship between the Europeans and the non-Europeans in Western countries as depicted in literary texts.

This study suggests that the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised has undergone two stages of development. The first stage occurred in the 19th century when the Europeans, British and French in particular, empowered by the technology of mass destruction, invaded countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This invasion was based on two considerations, economic and cultural. Economically, the invaders were attracted to the vast natural resources in these countries. Culturally, the invasion was based on the misguided idea that the people of these countries were living in a state of ‘barbarism’, and that they were unable to manage their domestic affairs properly. The presence of “absolute governing” (Said, *Orientalism* 33), the colonisers argued, was more than necessary to put an end to this condition. Edward Said blamed the Orientalists for this misguidance.

The second stage of contact between the colonisers and the colonised was in the 20th century. It happened when successive waves of immigrants came to the shores of certain Western countries from the former colonies that had recently gained their independence. Civil wars, economic hardships, corruption, and dictatorships that threatened the newly independent countries were the main reasons for these waves of immigrants (Bertens).

Significantly, this study focuses on the second stage of the postcolonial era. Critics seem to consider the presence of coloured people in White Western countries as renewed contact between the colonisers and the colonised. The period has thus been described as “new colonial relations” (Bertens 202). However, Sneja Gunew uses the terms ‘neo-colonialism’ and ‘internal colonisations’ to refer to metropolitan societies where “power relations operate unequally” (Gunew, “Multicultural Multiplicities” 32) and where the ethnic minorities are oppressed and exploited to give advantage to the dominant White race.

1.7.1 Canada as a Postcolonial Country

Although the study is based on the ideas of Critical Multiculturalism, it also uses the theory of Postcolonialism. Thus, it becomes necessary to show in what way Canada is considered a postcolonial country. This necessity becomes critical when critics start to have different ideas on the same issue.

In general, there is an on-going debate on the issue of whether Canada is a postcolonial country or not. The postcoloniality of this country, however, must first be realised as a political issue before turning it into one based on literary identity. Thus, it would be quite convenient to discuss the postcoloniality of this country from a political perspective before tackling its literary identity, which forms the core of this study.

Those who argue against the postcoloniality of Canada suggest that Canada, on record, is different from other postcolonial countries. Unlike Egypt, for example, Canada has never engaged in any armed struggle against the British colonisers or participated in any struggle for independence (Moss).

In the post-independence era, Canada also shows that it is different from other postcolonial countries. Canada has remained one of the most loyal countries to England. Politically, Canada is a country of democracy which respects human rights, while the other British ex-colonies are torn by civil wars, corruption, and some of the worst dictatorships. Economically, Canada has become one of the Bloc of Industrialised Western Countries, whereas the many other postcolonial countries are suffering from abject poverty and chronic economic crises. The only thing that Canada shares with the other postcolonial countries is its relationship with the British, which is marginal to centre (Doughty).

Howard Doughty diverts the discussion about the postcoloniality of Canada to another direction. He suggests that Canada has gone through two types of colonialism. The first was British colonial rule, which continued until the end of World War II. The second was the American one, which started after the end of World War II, during which “Canada has gone from colony to nation to colony” (Doughty 3). For Doughty, Canada’s problem as a nation lies not with British colonial rule, but with the sweeping economic and cultural colonisation of the emerging empire of its southern neighbour, the United States. In conclusion, the issue is not only whether Canada is a postcolonial country, but also whether it is a post-imperial country (Doughty).

George Clarke argues that Canada is a postcolonial country with its own model of postcoloniality. Clarke adds that the Canadian model of postcolonialism is “too ambivalent, too occasional and uncommon” (Clarke, “What Was Canada” 31). He explains that while Canada took the lead among commonwealth countries which demanded that economic and diplomatic sanctions be imposed on Apartheid South Africa, it bristles at the criticism levied against the Canadian way of dealing with its ethnic minorities and Indigenous people, locally called Aborigines. Canada confiscates the land of Indigenous people, yet has taken a firm stand against the war on Vietnam by the United States (Clarke, “What Was Canada”).

Jim Zuccherro suggests that the presence of immigrants and the literary texts that have been produced by immigrant authors play a significant role in deciding whether Canada is a postcolonial country or not. Zuccherro argues that the literary texts by authors who have emigrated from postcolonial countries are appreciated in Canadian society: these authors are highly acclaimed and winners of Canadian national literary awards. Zuccherro takes all these facts into account to conclude the following: “Canada is [P]ost-colonial then only to the extent that it recognizes and embraces the otherness and difference that its ethnic writers ... represent” (Zuccherro 257). In other words, the presence of immigrants and their ethnic literature have contributed to bring Canada closer to postcolonial countries at the expense of its traditional status as a part of the colonial world.

The postcolonialism of Canada is sometimes accounted for through the country's attitudes towards non-European people. Cecily Devereux borrows "break-away settler colony" (McClintock 89), a term that was coined and used by Anne McClintock, to describe the status of Canada along with the United States, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand in the postcolonial world. Devereux draws attention to the fact that Canada is no longer a "part of another nation's empire" (Devereux 178). However, the country still adheres to "the old imperial ideological system" (Ibid), at least in terms of dealing with the indigenous people and non-White immigrants.

In Postcolonial references, Canada is excluded from the mainstream of postcolonial countries. In *The Empire Writes Back*, for example, Bill Ashcroft and his colleagues give Canada the status of "Settler Colonies" (Ashcroft 24), a term that is used to describe Australia and New Zealand, as well.

In conclusion, the increasing presence of non-White immigrants from the former colonies in Asia and Africa and the impressive literature they have written in the host country reinforce the sense that Canada is but a postcolonial country with its own version of postcolonialism.

1.7.2 What is Multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is a system that was adopted by the Canadian government in 1971 to address the increasing diversity in population in the wake of a sweeping wave of non-European immigrants entering Canada, which started in the 1960s. The purpose behind adopting this policy is manifested in the following declaration:

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to ... recognise and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. (qtd. Bissoondath 39)

The above quotation suggests that the Act seeks to give every Canadian the right to keep and rely on his/her culture. Yet, multiculturalism is denounced by the immigrant intellectuals for different reasons.

Neil Bissoondath, an immigrant Canadian author from Trinidad, criticizes multiculturalism on the grounds that this system divides Canadians based on their ethnicity. Bissoondath warns that this may contribute to the notion that the immigrants are members of ethnic communities but not members of Canadian society. What is required, according to Bissoondath, is a unifying system that diminishes, not emphasises, the differences among Canadians. In Bissoondath's words, "differences between people [in Canada] are already obvious enough without their being emphasised through Multiculturalism policy" (Bissoondath 122).

Himani Bannerji, a South Asian immigrant author, suggests that multiculturalism fails to address the core problems of the immigrants as it focuses on the diversity of cultures and ignores the problems of class in capitalist Canada. As such, multiculturalism is denounced because “there is little in the state’s notion of multiculturalism that speaks to social justice” (Bannerji 79). Thus, the racialised class division is the real problem for the immigrants in Canada. Bannerji makes it clear enough that “our problem is class oppression” (Ibid 119).

Apart from the immigrants, multiculturalism has been denounced by other Canadians, as well. The French Canadians are afraid that this system may dispossess them of their privileges and turn them into an ethnic group. As for the indigenous people, they argue that multiculturalism concerns the immigrants, and since Aborigines are not immigrants, they should not be included within this system (Bissoondath).

However, Sneja Gunew’s theory of Critical Multiculturalism is another attempt by an immigrant intellectual to criticise the official multiculturalism in Canada. Her theory suggests that the Canadian programmes of multiculturalism leave much to be done before the Canadians can take pride in them.

1.7.3 The Canadian Concept of Multiculturalism

The Canadian experience with multiculturalism seems to be different, in part, from other immigrant countries like Australia and New Zealand. This difference comes from the fact that Canada was a multicultural society even before the arrival of the Europeans in the 1600s. The country was originally populated by three indigenous groups: Indians, Metis and Inuit, who were different in culture and language. Thus, 1971 does not represent the beginning of the age of multiculturalism in Canada. Rather, it is the year multiculturalism became official in Canadian society.

Further historical evidence of the diversity of Canadian society became apparent when Canada was declared a British colony in 1778, and Quebec was established as a province for French-speaking Catholic Canadians. Since then, Canada has been viewed as a bi-cultural, bi-lingual country. In my view, the state of living with more than one culture has helped Canadian society to smoothly shift into a state of multiculturalism.

Sneja Gunew, an immigrant Canadian theorist, calls for distinguishing between two types of multiculturalism, namely ‘state multiculturalism’ and ‘critical multiculturalism’ (Gunew, *Haunted Nations*). The former is suggested to seek better representation of minorities from various walks of life in the fields of economics, education and many others. State multiculturalism is criticised as it encourages ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ which are mainly restricted to festivals with costumes, cooking and concerts held yearly under financial aid from the government. In contrast, critical multiculturalism is used by minorities to leverage for full participation on the grounds of their diversity. In other words, multiculturalism is given two different

perspectives: one by the government, and another by ethnic minorities. However, in both cases, community emerges as a representative of and as a reference point for cultural differences in these two types of multiculturalism (Gunew, "Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism").

Sneja Gunew establishes the foundations of the term "Critical Multiculturalism" as a postcolonial theory which addresses the experience of immigrants in Western countries. Under this theory, the immigrant experience is approached through the racial/cultural differences between the European majority and non-European minorities. For Gunew, multiculturalism "deals with theories of differences" (Gunew, "Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism" 22) and the idea that racial differences are among the main concerns of multiculturalism. She suggests that "multiculturalism is often perceived as a covert means of indicating racialised differences" (23). This means that "racialised differences" along with the cultural ones are among the main concerns of multiculturalism. This makes multiculturalism an approach which tackles not only cultural differences among people but racial ones, as well.

Multiculturalism postulates that talking about racial and cultural differences among people is indeed talking about differences between the majority and minorities. In terms of culture, these differences could be narrowed down or bridged. Likewise, since culture itself is constructed, it could, therefore, be reconstructed again and again, in part or as a whole. When it comes to racial differences, these differences, according to Gunew, are "irreducible" (*Haunted Nations* 21), and a minority individual has no option but to keep and defend his/her racial identity. Indeed, when Critical Multiculturalism talks about the majority and minorities, it talks about the majority English and French as colonisers and minorities of other Canadians as the colonised.

1.7.4 Race, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism

As long as multiculturalism addresses the cultural and racial differences between the minorities and the majority, as discussed above, the question arises as to whether these two types of differences have a place in Canadian ethnic fiction or not. To answer this question, one needs to carefully consider terms like 'ethnicity', 'ethnic groups' and 'race' and show the interconnections between these terms.

In *Beginning Postcolonialism*, John McLeod tries to draw a distinction between "Race" and "Ethnicity" and realises that race construes racial differences such as "skin colour," whereas ethnicity involves "a variety of social practices, rituals and traditions." Although McLeod warns that race and ethnicity "don't mean the same thing," he admits that these two terms "have some similarities" (131). *The Empire Writes Back* discusses 'race' and "ethnicity" in literary and critical texts in a more specific way, suggesting that 'race' is no longer in use because the meaning of 'race' is implied within the word "ethnicity." Ashcroft et al. state the following:

[T]he tendency over the last decade has been to employ the term 'ethnicity' to account for human variation in terms of culture, traditions social patterns and ancestry rather than 'race'. (207)

In a meaningful gesture, the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen stated his strong belief that the borderline between race and ethnicity "is so blurred" (6). In his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Eriksen impinges on readers the idea that scholars are no more inclined to divide human beings into races to examine their cultural experiences. Scholars are increasingly satisfied that there is no relationship between a human being's behaviour and his/her ancestry. The term 'race' is avoided as it has "dubious descriptive value" (5). Accordingly, scholars no longer use race because "race refers to the (negative) categorisation of people" (Ibid). Instead, they prefer to use ethnicity because "ethnicity has to do with (positive) group identification" (Ibid). More evidently, race is avoided because it "is a negative term of exclusion, while ethnic identity is a term of positive inclusion" (6). Eriksen clarifies his point of view in the following:

The boundaries between race and ethnicity tend to be blurred, since ethnic groups have a common myth of origin, which relates ethnicity to descent, which again makes it a kindred concept to race. (6)

Ethnicity as a term has thus become connotative not only of the cultures of minorities but their races, as well. In Canada, the government stopped the use of "race" in 1951 (Fischer). "Ethnicity" has come to replace "race" in Canadian writings. This step is described as vital for the Canadian society in its move toward multiculturalism. Thus, ethnicity is widely used to refer to one's racial background.

However, Augie Fleras observes that Canadians are conflicted in their attitudes towards race. While Canadians may refuse to use 'race' as a term, they stick to its connotations. The politics of race is used to give advantage to the majority and disempower the minorities. Once a person is identified as a European, he/she is raised to a higher position. Otherwise, one is degraded to a lower class. It may thus be apt to conclude that if race is not real in Canadian life, it is in "perception and consequences" a part of reality (Fleras 34). However, in an attempt to avoid using the term 'race', the Canadians use colours to racially categorise people. "Black" is used for the Africans, "Yellow" for the Chinese and Japanese, and "Brown" for the South Asians (L. Hill, *Black Berry*).

Lawrence Hill argues that as long as it has no scientific meaning, race becomes a "social construct." Thus, race "is nothing more than an arbitrary and fluid social convention" (203). Hill talks about the "arbitrariness" and "absurdity of rigid racial categorisation" (204). He reminds us, for instance, that a Native Canadian woman has a legal status as Indian, but she legally becomes non-Indian if she marries a non-Indian. Similarly, a non-Indian woman becomes Indian if she marries an Indian. This

is how one's racial identity is arbitrarily accounted for. Indian here refers to one of the indigenous groups.

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the experience of ethnic groups in selected literary texts. It is limited in scope and deals with the following six works of fiction: *Some Great Thing* (1992), *Any Known Blood* (1997) and *The Book of Negroes* (2007) by Lawrence Hill; *No New Land* (1991), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2004), and *The Magic of Saida* (2012) by M. G. Vassanji.

Conceptually, the exploratory narrative that is researched in this study is limited to three concepts: racism, identity pains, and displacement. In examining each concept in the above novels, the study is restricted to certain themes. In terms of racism, the efforts are limited to the investigation of poverty and segregation as two racism-caused themes. As for identity, my discussion is confined to identity crisis and in-betweenness as two relevant themes. The efforts on the third theme, displacement, are confined to longing/belonging and looking for ethnic roots as two relevant themes.

In terms of theory, this study makes use of two theories: Postcolonialism and Critical Multiculturalism. Several sociological ideas are also consulted to expand the breadth of the discussion on the relevant themes.

In discussing the experience of multiculturalism and its effects on the ethnic minorities in the selected novels for this study, the discussion focuses only on the Canadian experience. It has nothing to do with the experiences of other countries where multiculturalism is evaluated differently due to the fact that the national contexts of those countries are different from that of Canadian.

The scope and limitations of this study suggest as well that it is basically confined to the selected works of fiction. I want to make it clear that no ethnic character other than African and South Asian is covered in this study. Moreover, events that may have taken place outside Canada are not considered unless they are associated with the themes in question.

1.9 Methodology

This study depends on textual evidence to examine the characters' experiences through the theory of Critical Multiculturalism and as a Postcolonialism. The study will explore the concepts of racism, identity, and displacement. Racism is conceptualised as an ideology that is used by the Whites to impoverish and segregate ethnic minorities from the majority. Identity is conceptualised to mirror how immigrants suffer when they are caught between two opposing cultures or born to

racially different parents. As for displacement, this concept expounds how the immigrants can have a sense of displacement when they are oppressed in exile or overwhelmed by the feeling of not belonging to any ethnic group because they do not represent a single race. These relevant themes represent the defining elements of the two ethnic communities relevant to this study—African and South Asian. In order to do so, this study uses the method of textual analysis to examine the selected novels.

There is a noticeable interrelation between Sneja Gunew's theory of Critical Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism. The two theories are concerned with the relationship between the Europeans as colonisers and the non-Europeans as colonised. Gunew has stated that there is no way to 'divorce' these two theories. Thus, the study uses the critical ideas of both Critical Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism to examine the themes relevant to this study, namely racism, identity, and displacement.

The concept of racism is prominent in the works of Sneja Gunew, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha, who try to build a perspective that divides racism against non-White immigrants into individual and institutional types. These two kinds of racism realise two relevant themes, namely poverty and segregation. Indeed, these two themes are shown to be interconnected.

Identity is the second major concern of this study. The critical ideas of the postcolonial culturalist Homi Bhabha have paved the way for a forum in which identity problems that afflict non-White immigrants can be divided into biracial and bicultural ones. Within this forum, two themes are identified and discussed in relevant literary texts. They are identity crisis and in-betweenness.

Displacement is the third focus to be diagnosed and discussed in this study. This focus is made to give attention to two kinds of displacement—compulsory and voluntary. The critical ideas of Ashcroft and John McLeod are explored to address the themes of longing and belonging alongside Neil Bissoondath's idea about immigrant roots in discussing the theme of 'Looking for the Origins.'

To divide the themes of this study—racism, identity, and displacement—does not mean that these themes are dealt with separately. On the contrary, the experiences of African and South Asian immigrants in Canada have shown that these themes are interconnected. Once the immigrant is exposed to racism and/or afflicted by identity problems, he/she decides to go back, temporarily or permanently, to his/her native country.

1.10 Structure of the Study

This study comprises seven chapters. The first outlines a comprehensive map of the elementary aspects of this study. In this chapter, things like the background, objectives, significance, scope and limitations of the study are identified. This chapter

also encompasses sections for the conceptual framework and methodology. A brief conclusion is drawn, as well.

The second chapter of this study provides a comprehensive review of related literature. Although the main efforts of this chapter concern the previous studies that have been conducted on Hill and Vassanji's works of fiction dealing with the concepts of racism, identity, and displacement, some other relevant ideas are discussed. The background on four versions of Canadian literature is also briefly discussed. The similarities between the authors Hill and Vassanji are established, and the capacities of the works of the two authors to give representation to the Africans and South Asians are discussed.

The third chapter introduces and explains the methodology of the study. It addresses the main ideas of Critical Multiculturalism in terms of racism, identity, and displacement. The connection between Critical Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism is identified and discussed to allow me access to some relevant postcolonial ideas. A great deal of effort is made in this chapter to show how the ideas of both Critical Multiculturalism and Postcolonialism are used to examine the selected works of fiction in this study.

In the fourth chapter, two types of racism, individual and institutional, found in the selected works of this study are identified. The immigrants' poverty and segregation are addressed as racism-associated issues. However, the theme of racism in the relevant works is discussed within the historical context of the Canadian experience. Moreover, racism against the immigrants is viewed as a part of the untold history of Canada.

The fifth chapter thematically addresses the immigrant's problems over identity in exile. In this regard, the study seeks to suggest that the multicultural society has brought about and imposed hybrid identities on the immigrants. In this chapter, biracial and bicultural identities are viewed as being responsible for immigrants' confusion over their identities. Identity crisis and in-betweenness are investigated in the literary text as relevant themes.

The sixth chapter strives to examine the sense of displacement among the immigrants in the literary texts pertinent to this study. This chapter seeks to show that the difficult circumstances in exile, such as racism and identity problems, compel or motivate immigrants to return to their native countries. As relevant themes, longing/belonging and looking for origin are investigated within the perspective of compulsory and voluntary displacement.

The seventh and final chapter provides the conclusion to the study. The critical ideas that discussed in the preceding chapters are used to draw a conclusion. The experience

of immigrant literary writings in Canada reveals that Africans and South Asians in Canada have been exposed to severe racism, identity problems, and displacement.

1.11 Definition of Terms

The following terms are repeatedly used in this study to clarify the relevant ideas. Thus, it becomes necessary for the study to identify these terms, especially in their operational contexts.

Bicultural Identity

The term 'bicultural identity' is derived from Homi Bhabha's notion of 'hybrid culture formation' (Bhabha 250). 'Bicultural identity' is used to describe one's identity that is constructed when he/she comes under the influence of two different cultures (Schwartz). In the selected works of fiction in this study, the immigrant characters are seen as bicultural in identity because they are in effect, from two opposing cultures: the oriental culture of the native country and the occidental culture of the host country. Bicultural identity is narratively shown in the fictional works of this study as a source of displeasure for non-White immigrant characters.

Biracial Identity

The term 'biracial identity' is based on Homi Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity of race' (Bhabha 251). It is used in reference to one who is born to racially different parents. In the selected fiction, biracial immigrants face life crises over their racial identity. It was Homi Bhabha who first wrote about biracial identity. According to Bhabha, biracial identity is another piece of evidence of the mutual influences between the Whites and non-Whites in a multicultural society. Biracial identity is narratively shown to cause identity crisis in immigrant characters and hinder their efforts to affiliate to either of the communities of their parents.

Canadian Ethnic Literature

The term 'Canadian ethnic literature' is widely used to describe literary texts that are written to give representation to non-English and non-French ethnic groups by an author from these groups. It was established and grew outside the Canadian mainstream literature and addresses themes that are related to the experience of those who are neither French nor British in origin, especially those who are non-White Canadians and referred to as immigrants (Palmer and Rasporich). In the selected fiction of this study, discrimination against the non-Whites, the pains of identity, and displacement are narratively shown as essential parts of that experience.

Ethnic Fiction

The term 'ethnic fiction' is a kind of fiction derived from the term 'ethnic literature'. The term is used by many critics to describe literary texts that are written by authors who are neither British nor French in origin (Palmer and Rasporich). In some critical studies, it is called 'multicultural fiction' in reference to Canada's Multiculturalism Act 1971 (Hutcheon and Richmond). In ethnic fiction, race and the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans becomes an issue that affects the events and characters in the literary text.

Hybridity

As a term, hybridity originated in Biology to refer to a mix of two different species by sexual reproduction to produce a third one. Hybridity is applied to both animals and plants. Hybridity has since been introduced into literature by the theorist Homi Bhabha. For him, hybridity results from the interaction between White colonisers and the non-White colonised. Bhabha discusses both racial and cultural hybridity (Bhabha). Hybridity is narratively shown to cause a lot of discomfort to immigrants in Canada.

Immigrant

The term 'immigrant' was originally used to describe a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country. In Canada, the meaning of immigrant was expanded to include any Canadian who is neither English nor French in origin. Recently however, the term has been reduced to describe those people, or their ancestors, who emigrated from non-European countries (Gunew, *Haunted Nations*). The term also covers the coloured people who have emigrated from Europe.

In-Betweenness

The term 'in-betweenness' is attributed to the critic Homi Bhabha's notion of "in-between identity" (Bhabha 18). It is used to describe the identity that is constructed when one is caught between two different cultures. In this study, 'in-betweenness' refers to the identity that is constructed by a non-European immigrant when he/she is trapped between two opposing cultures, that of the occidental host country and that of the oriental native country (Zohdi). As an identity space, in-betweenness is narratively shown in Canadian ethnic fiction to have caused disturbing effects on immigrants' experience in Canada.

Individual Racism

The term 'individual racism' is usually used in reference to what happens when a European individual is inspired by the racist environment of his country to mistreat those who are from other races. This practice stems from the belief that the European is superior to others in terms of culture and civilisation (Henry and Tator). In the

selected fiction of this study, individual racism is narratively shown to be practised against the non-White immigrants.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is a form of racism that is practised against people of a certain race by official/unofficial institutions. This form of racism goes unnoticed because it is mostly based on unwritten rules. Institutional racism is usually practised by companies and authorities against immigrant workers from Third World countries. Canadian institutions are narratively shown to have systematically practised institutional racism against immigrants in employment (Henry and Tator).

Loyalists

Loyalists are the pro-British Americans who were evacuated to Canada for resettlement in the wake of Britain's defeat in the American Revolutionary War, also known as the American War of Independence (1775-1783). These Loyalists, comprising Blacks and White American colonists, were promised lands in Canada as a kind of compensation for supporting the British in that war. The term loyalist has become familiar in the vocabulary when talking about discrimination against non-White immigrants (Galabuzi).

Multiculturalism

A multicultural society is identified as one in which people from different ethnicities and cultures live together in peace. Later, its ambit was expanded to describe the Western countries to which people from Third World countries arrived for resettlement. It is assumed that in multicultural societies, all groups have equal rights and enjoy the freedom of practising their own culture. Multiculturalism that is labelled as 'state multiculturalism' is described as having had little effect in addressing the real problems concerning racism and class inequality between the White majority and the non-White minorities (Bannerji, *The Dark Side*).

Segregation

Segregation is identified as the separation of an individual or group of individuals from a larger group. In this study, the term is used to refer to racist efforts to confine non-Whites to certain geographical places (Fanon, *The Wretched*). Segregation is also practised to confine non-Whites to low-paying menial jobs (Galabuzi). In the fictional works of this study, segregation is narratively shown to be practiced against non-White immigrants.

1.12 Conclusion

The first chapter of this thesis describes Canada as populated by Europeans and non-Europeans. The non-Europeans, locally called immigrants, are narratively shown as suffering from racism, identity crisis, and displacement. These maladies, which have been largely absent from Canadian history books, have become dominant themes in the fiction written by Lawrence Hill and M. G. Vassanji, two contemporary Canadian authors. They write to project representation of their ethnic groups, the Africans and South Asians, respectively.

Hill and Vassanji's selected works of fiction provide copious descriptions of Canadian immigrants' experiences from the past four centuries. Through these depictions, it has been made clear that the institutionalised multiculturalism Canadian adopted in 1971 to address the increasing diversity in Canadian society has not done much to alleviate the immigrants' suffering as far as discrimination and displacement are concerned.

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