This project investigates the ways in which home is conceptualized and represented in sixty years of the literature of the Caribbean diaspora in Britain by balancing texts from the post-World War II period with contemporary texts and considering how the diaspora has been imagined and reimagined. Making a home of a diaspora—typically considered as a collection of scattered and ostracized migrants—requires a conceptual leap, act of agency, and, sometimes, a flight of imagination. Through the imagery of domesticity and the rhetoric of nationalism, literary analyses of representations of diaspora allow us to explore the imagined constructs of diasporic homes. This project explores how each presents a way of claiming a place as home and illustrates the literary tradition’s meaningful focus on migrants’ ability to create homes or to claim oppression-resistant spaces and lay claim to the nation. In doing so, these texts illustrate that instead of necessarily being a marker of displacement, the diaspora has the potential to provide a sense of home to people removed from their countries of origin.

After the Second World War, migration from the British West Indies (the contemporaneous term) to Britain, the “mother country,” increased unprecedentedly as Britain held out the promise of belonging through its colonial hegemony and legal British nationality for colonial subjects, yet migrating black British subjects were overwhelmingly socially excluded. The governmental, political, and popular rhetoric of this exclusion contributed to the level of racism migrants encountered in all areas of life and by 1962 they had been reframed and redefined as invasive foreign immigrants through the debates, bills, acts, memoranda, government reports, editorials, and biased reporting. The literature of the Caribbean diaspora in Britain takes this up as a central thematic concern and, in representing the diaspora, depicts it as shaping Caribbean and black British identity while providing insight into a remarkable confrontation between colonial subjects and colonial power.

Literary criticism concerning diaspora texts often focuses on psychological exile, authenticity, or the immigrant writer as a privileged intellectual abroad. Diaspora studies inclusive of the British Caribbean diaspora tend to fall into two groups: those with sociology-based foci on the dispersal of peoples longing for their nations of origin; or cultural studies-based examinations of the significance and experience of nation and multiculturalism. The cumulative result of these approaches has been an emphasis on fragmentation or rupture. This is important, yet the literature of the Caribbean diaspora also represents displacement as potentially unifying as the diaspora itself becomes a home to its members. “At Home in the Diaspora” rethinks experiences of diaspora and contends that migration is not plainly a matter of displacement because diasporic connections complicate the ways in which we can understand displacement.

Recommended Citation
Slavery in the British and French Caribbean refers to slavery in the parts of the Caribbean dominated by France or the British Empire. In the Caribbean, Great Britain colonised the islands of St. Kitts and Barbados in 1623 and 1627 respectively, and later, Jamaica in 1655. These and other Caribbean colonies became the center of wealth and the focus of the slave trade for the growing British Empire. A comprehensive Introduction provides a historical context for the study of contemporary British fiction by detailing significant social, political and cultural events. This is followed by five chapters organised around the core themes: (1) Narrative Forms, (2) Contemporary Ethnicities, (3) Gender and Sexuality, (4) History, Memory and Writing, and (5) Narratives of Cultural Space. Key Features. His main research interests are in post-1945 British fiction and literary and cultural theory. He is author of Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s (Peter Lang, 2007) and editor of British Fiction of the 1990s (Routledge, 2005). He has published journal articles on Julian Barnes, Zadie Smith, Colin MacInnes, Sam Selvon, and the representations of youth in British New Left writing.