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**Caribbean Immigration in Sam
Selvon's: The Lonely Londoners.**

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Introduction

The last years of World War Two, which provoked side effects went like this: in January 1942, the president of the United Nations, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, together with the prime minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, agreed to make their first priority defeating Germany, which had threatened to invade Poland in 1939. On May 7, 1945 Germany surrendered.

On the 1947, the British troops withdrew from the Indian colonies and left India to establish its independence. Among other side effects that caused the Second War World two was immigration. Hence, in 1947 start the first forms of immigration from the Indian colonies, Asia, and Africa towards Britain. Though, what need to be clarified here is that those who moved to Britain had the endorsement of “British Subject”. A title that would allow them to have free access and entry to the soil of the so- called “mother nation”. Since the flows of immigrants at the beginning were not threatening for the British Government, no restrictions were applied to holders of such citizenship until the 1950s.

Therefore, due to these mass movements of “Subject Citizen” towards Britain, the 1950s turned out to be the years of a massive immigration in England, which brought not only black immigrants, but at the same time the placement of multiculturalism, and other ways of living to England which had been preserving over the years a strictly homogeneous country.

The reasons that provoked such flows were different: first, the withdrawal of the British from the colonies caused a disproportionate lack of jobs in their former habitat. As a consequence of a poverty situation left by the British Empire, people moved in search for better living conditions. Yet, a huge part of members of the British colonies moved from the colonies towards England with the idea and conscious that they were “British citizens”, and that they would have no problems to make a living.

On the light of these happenings, as a consequence of uncontrollable entries, from the 1950s onwards Britain decides to put into action legislation plans and policies that would stop or at least would control the influx of illegal immigrants entering in England.

At this point, seeing the great number of people moving to Britain, the British government refused to accept their free access, turning down the right that it had been given to them years ago by applying the law of “patrials”, meaning only those people whose father was born in England could be granted the right to remain. To some extent, regardless of their previous title, in a diplomatic and politic language, this meant nothing less than ‘only white immigrants were accepted’. This is just one of the laws applied to reduce or rather to revoke the percentage of the entries. Other many laws were applied and modified with the same tactical diplomacy.

Henceforth, in regards of what have been mentioned above, my aim is to give more details regarding postcolonial immigration issues in Britain, taken

from a literary point of view, mainly analysing Sam Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners*.

Thereon, this thesis is divided into three chapters. The first one deals with immigration in the United Kingdom in the early 1950s until the 1970s. In the foreground, is the historical and political background dealing with race law migration issues at stake. As a consequence, I will discuss the struggles that mass immigration face in the first instance, and then the difficulties of the British Government to deal with finding a proper and adequate policy in order to stop the huge migration flows from the 1950s onwards.

In addition to political and social background, other important issues such as racism, language, and Englishness will be also explored.

Since the contemporary society is a society on the move, always on the run, and the way of living is shaped by many factors, I would like to believe that one of these factors that influences people's life is literature. Literature is just like a little closet with many boxes.

In the second chapter I will discuss the meaning of migration literature and then I will draw up the distinction between migration literature and migration in exile. I will also compare two other writers who, in spite of their differences, still have some features in common. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Hanif Kureishi with *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The reason why I have chosen these two writers is that of migration literature and above all about migration experience.

The third chapter will focus on the course of immigration between yesterday and today, making necessary comparisons and analysing common features as well as their differences. How have things changed nowadays, with regards to immigration? Have people become more aware of such issue? Are immigrants seen with different eyes or it is just the same as was in the 1950s? Do any other forms of migrations exist? If so, what?



Jacob Lawrence, Migration Series; 1941

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Historical Background

According to the British Nationality Act of 1948, members of the British Empire who had the endorsement of “Commonwealth citizens” or “British subjects” had free access in Britain. Therefore, being entitled as such, people started to avail themselves of this right and move to England – some in search for a better life, others because of drained jobs in their own country. From 1948, the so-called Empire Windrush that arrived in Southampton symbolises the start *par excellence* of the West Indies and Caribbean migration in Britain. From this year onwards, the influx of people entitled as British subjects or not as such moving to the “mother-nation” increased drastically. As a result, this process of migration is well seen as the start of a multiracial, as well as multicultural Britain. There were numbers and numbers of people entering every week in the UK.

The beginning of migration movement from the West Indies towards the “mother nation” reached the peak during the 1950s. As the years passed by and the immigrants number increased, the UK had a hard time with immigration legislation, trying to find the best immigration policy in order to help both the immigrants, and the host country.

From the 1950s until the 1970s, Britain was affected by a massive immigration coming from all parts of the world. As the immigration flux continued growing, the British Government did everything possible to repeal the number of the Commonwealth citizens by putting into action different laws, which would revoke the previous laws that had been at stake up to that moment.

The previous laws at stake had allowed a huge number of immigrants to settle in Britain. Thereon, Britain decided it was about time that it stopped. Such were The Aliens Act 1964, most of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 and finally the Immigration Appeals Act in 1969. It created a new “right to abode” for a particular category of Commonwealth immigrants, “patrials,” which meant citizens that have been adopted, naturalized, or have a parent born in Britain”¹.

Other people who have no such privileges do not have the “right of abode”². If people decided to go and live in England, before arriving in England they needed to have or to show at the moment of entry a permit of work. Usually this permit of work was issued for a specific job, place and time, and it would normally last no longer than twelve months, and probably it could be renewed on the basis of laws regulation as well as work force needed.

Those who were issued a permit of work had the opportunity to apply for three different categories of vouchers: “Category A for professionally qualified

¹Chris Mullard, *Black Britain*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1973, p. 62.

²*Ibid.* pp. 62, 63.

immigrants, Category B for skilled workers and Category C for the unskilled”³. As these different Acts were ratified, controls on immigration doubled. Despite these Acts, the immigration policy seemed to be issued differently to different immigrants, namely, on the basis of their nationality. It is true that laws should be applied equally to everybody, but when it came dealing with immigrants coming from the West Indies, Asia, Africa, etc., compared with immigrants coming from Northern Ireland, and Eastern Europe, rules changed a bit. Even though these immigrants were facing the same situations, things turned out to be quite different for white and black immigrants. The best example I could give here is that of the Irish immigrants settling in England looking for jobs. They were granted free access and did not need to provide a permit of entry or work, and after their entry they were offered jobs.

Black immigrants instead, despite the fact that most of them were British subjects and members of the British Empire, faced serious problems in finding jobs and housing. Employers did not want to employ black people, but if they were lucky enough they would get the menial jobs and lowest paid ones.

Householders on their part would rent rooms only in the slum areas and, if this was not enough, with the highest price possible. Analyzing carefully the instable and often changing laws from 1950s to 1970s, as well as the difficulties Britain was facing, one might come to a conclusion that the British authorities were “playing the race card.”

³ *Ibid.* p. 49.

On the top of that, Enoch Powell, a Conservative British politician and member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West, began a politic of anti-immigration campaign. He made his famous and controversial speech called “Rivers of Blood” in 1968. After his speech, Prime Minister Edward Heath sacked him from the Cabinet for making such an openly controversial race speech. His anti- immigration campaign against black immigration expressed his preoccupations quite openly that there were serious problems that Britain was facing with the new multiracial migrants. He claimed that Britain was not anymore the homogenous country it used to be. On the other hand, he was the first politician to observe and to state the multicultural path England was taking. It was quite obvious that he was not happy with that because, in his view, this multiculturalism would divide England and all that they have fought for and believed in. From an analytical point of view, this could be understood as a reverse of colonialism. The colonialist comes back to hunt the invaders, or better said, the invader becomes the colonised.

Going back to the Irish case migrants, here, the laws applied to the Irish migrants were more subtle than those applied to the migrants coming from the ex colonies. All in all, it seemed that British authorities were off- guard to welcome coloured immigration. Slogans such as “Keep London White”, “Keep Britain White” or “A Nigger for a Neighbour” that appeared in the 1964 in the Smethwick campaign, prove clearly the situation in which London, and the entirety England was going through those years. There is no need to jump at any

conclusion that British authorities were willing to keep or at least trying to preserve a “white” nation as it has always been.

Under these circumstances, the implied policy was that the British citizens were not happy having coloured people as neighbours, or sharing their neighbourhoods with coloured people because they were considered: “evil, dirty, rapist, lazy and savage”⁴. At that time, black immigrants were considered and labelled as generators of the political and the economical troubles that the British society was going through. This labelling was just an external issue to distract attention from the real issues, and the serious problem that the immigrants were facing in the postcolonial London. Sam Selvon portrays the lives of the immigrants looking for a better life and better conditions.

The other case concerning black British citizens who were born and educated in English language and yet were labelled as immigrants. Chris Mullard, black and born in Britain, is one of the first black writers to discuss the other face of black British people born and living in England. He argues that black British subjects were brain-washed through their entire life, since they were children they were taught to behave in a certain way. Therefore, he says “community taught me to conform, the policy of the school was making believe that white was better than black”⁵. He was induced to believe and consider the idea of an outsider of his own being. He never thought about the colour of his skin until the moment he decided to move to London when he had to face racist

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 13.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 14.

discrimination. Chris Mullard declares openly that he knows no other culture than the British, though it took him a long time to go through this self-recognition process. Even if he knows solely British culture, his awareness of being different raises when putting together all the little puzzles that engender the circumstances in which the political and the social clashes to find a way in which they could make a compromise to walk together.

The necessity and the desire to learn and make clear a situation where actually there is nothing that can be made clearer than the feelings of a person or even an entire generation, but it is thanks to these clashes, confrontations and inner disputes that C. Mullard asks himself questions such as: “Is it possible to be black and British?”- “Does it really necessary follow that because a man is born and educated in a particular country he should rightfully assume the identity of the nationals of that country”⁶ These questions that provide food for thoughts, but above all still remain available in the content of the present multicultural society where one feels to pertain to a determinate identity even if one belongs to a mixed or multiple identities.

However, as can be noted from the above situation, the questions that Mullard asks himself produced a kind of confusion amongst the black British generation, but above all confused the proper inner identity of any British subject. In this regard, Gayatri Spivak in *Outside the Teaching Machine*

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 14.

observes, “the empire messes with the identity”⁷. Therefore, it is due to the empire that the identity of these people has come to a questionable reversal role. The climax of the discourse is reached with the statement: “All in all I was a white boy in a black skin”⁸. In other words, becoming aware of the produced confusion, he gains awareness as he acquires conscience regarding his identity and put the blame on the British authorities for causing such disorders of nervous conditions to black people, because only in this way he is not conforming anymore, as he now already know who he is.

Last but not least, the passing of the years and the worsening of the migrants’ conditions lead to several riots. Apparently, it was the only way to counter response the injustices done to them. Under these circumstances, the year 1958 was a decisive year for the British Government. The Notting Hill riots were a public cry out to demonstrate against, and at the same time to make people aware of, the situation of black immigration, and to show Britain that she was already living and sharing the nation with other, multiracial citizens and there was no need to make such a fuss for nothing. What the outcasted immigrants needed was to live in peace and to conduct a normal life as any other human being. Above all, they wanted to live in peace altogether, black and white, without doing any harm to nobody and not letting the colour of the skin be the main protagonist that causes unreasonable troubles as it has been causing up to that moment.

⁷Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 226.

⁸Chris Mullard, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

1.2 Sam Selvon: Biography

Sam Selvon, Samuel Dixon Selvon was born in 1923, in Trinidad, and was educated at Naparima College in Southern Trinidad. His father, a dry-goods merchant, was a first-generation East Indian immigrant to Trinidad, and his mother was Anglo-Scottish.

He started writing while working as an operator for the Royal Naval Reserve during the Second World War. After the Second World War, he became a journalist for “The Trinidad Guardian” and a fiction editor for “The Guardian Weekly”. He published several short stories and poems under pseudonyms before departing for London.

He wrote his first novel *A Brighter Sun* when travelling to London. It was published in 1952. It is situated in Trinidad, in a rural environment. The young couple, Tiger and Urmilla, had had an arranged marriage, which goes through different processes of integration. The integration is quite special for Tiger. He has never been to the city, never been outside his little village. He learns to read and write thanks to the old Sookdeo.

Four years later, in 1956, at the beginning of the Caribbean immigration, Selvon published *The Lonely Londoners*. In fact, *The Lonely Londoners* is the first in a sequence of three novels, the second and the third being *Moses Ascending* (1975), and *Moses Migrating* (1983).

Since both novels are a sequence of *The Lonely Londoners* the first common feature that strikes out is the character Moses. Moses Aloetta appears in the three of these sequence novels. They tell his life during different stages of being an immigrant.

In *Moses Ascending*, he is portrayed as a matured immigrant who has reached a certain independency. He has put aside some money, and has bought a house. In this way he seems to have created some commodities, which were missing in *The Lonely Londoners*. Is shown as an immigrant who has done some progresses in his life. Other books published by the same author: *Ways of Sunlight* 1957, *Turn Again Tiger* 1958, *The Housing Lark* 1965, *Those Who Eat the Cascadura* 1972, *Foreday Morning* 1989, *An Island is a World* 1993, etc.

Sam Selvon left West Indies in 1950 and immigrated to England in one of those ships “boat-train” he mentions in *The Lonely Londoners*. During the journey to England, he met George Lamming, a writer from Barbados. Since the moment they met on board of the same ship they became close friends and would remain for a long time onwards. Their friendship grew stronger when they reached London. Both would spend time together in their early arrival days in London, living in a hostel. George Lamming mentions Sam Selvon in *Journey to an Expectation* included in the collection *The Pleasures of Exile*, where he states that Sam Selvon has almost finished his first novel *A Brighter Sun*. Moreover, Lamming explains that both of them “had had left home for the same reasons.

We had come to England to be writers.”⁹ Showing again the affinity that they had for writing.

Sam Selvon, as well as others authors like George Lamming, and V.S. Naipul, just to mention a few, portrays the reality of everyday from migrants’ lives. Therefore, all writers without exceptions were facing the same difficulties as immigrants did.

It is for this reason that *The Lonely Londoners* is inasmuch an autobiographical novel as well as a memorial, since it draws the attention specifically to black migration and the battle for equal rights in post - war Britain. At the same time, his novel can be seen as a memorial, as it highlights the struggles, difficulties, the necessities and personal experiences and stories of immigrants over the world. He died the sixteenth of April in 1994.

1.3 The Lonely Londoners. Plot, Language and Style

The Lonely Londoners is set in post War World Two London. It tells a story of immigration and immigrants who seek better fortune for themselves as well as their families. It tells the story of a bunch of immigrant boys who come from different countries and get to know each other in London, while looking for

⁹ Susheila Nasta, *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon*, Connecticut, Three Continents Press, 1988, pp. 17, 18

jobs or trying to survive the hard life that London offers to them. England, as well as London is told through the eyes of these immigrants, a created myth city and country, as Nasta Susheila explains in the introduction of *The Lonely Londoners*, London “It demonstrates the disenchantment of an imagined city, which turns out to be an illusion”¹⁰.

In this regard, Selvon depicts migrants’ life since the very first moment they set foot in the English soil. The difficulties they encounter every single day, the struggles of immigrants trying to survive in a hostile environment. Moses, Galahad, Big City, Cap, just to mention a few, are immigrants who embody various difficulties in getting used not only to the city, but to the loneliness that they face everyday. People, has neither time nor tend to mind other people’s business. They would rather stay in the world they fit better without wanting to mix up with other realities. Therefore, one of the main characters, Moses, sees London as a city divided in little worlds:

“It divide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world you belong to and don’t now anything about what happening in the other ones except what you read in the papers”(p. 60. LL).

Loneliness is not the only preoccupation that divides our characters from the city. There are a lot more issues that they need to face as newcomers in the

¹⁰Nasta Susheila, Introduction to Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, London, Penguin Books, 2006, p.v. (Henceforth, all quotations will be given in parenthesis with pages numbers and will refer as LL).

land of the opportunities. Hence, issues of job and housing were to vital importance for the survival of the newcomers. Finding a place that would be called “home” was a real adventure. Long formed queues outside of the employment office showed the stressful situation that immigrants were facing.

Throughout the novel, feelings of displacement, disorientation and alienation will accompany immigrants’ lives. *The Lonely Londoners* can be seen as a cry out for all those immigrants who cannot speak for themselves; immigrants who leave their own countries in order to make a better living in a new country. All this stresses the close connection with the immigrants, and at the same time encompasses the troubled years of migrants in London until the moment when they gain some rights.

Now, speaking about the technique and the style of language in *The Lonely Londoners*, there are two peculiar features that distinguish Sam Selvon from many other authors. The narrative voice of *The Lonely Londoners* is one of its most distinctive characteristics. Selvon, firstly starts writing the novel in Standard English, but then realized that the language could not convey fully the experiences and the desires of his characters.

It was for this reason that Selvon decided that the language that would fit better in this novel was a creolized form of language. This language would render better the idea of a newcomer. The language of the characters contains a great number of slang words as well as slang expressions. For instance, the characters refer to each other as “spades”, meaning black, or other words such as

“the Water” or “the Gate”, which refer respectively to Bayswater and Notting Hill.

Speaking in slang allowed the boys to form a codified language that only they would have access to and would know the meaning. On the other hand, this codified language is a way of reserved personalities and feelings, as it preserves a kind of community that wants to be untouched by the outside world of London.

The Lonely Londoners has been identified as a vernacular comedy and it hides many layers of meaning. Considering the time when it was written and contextualizing it in post-war British fiction, it is important to consider the novel of Sam Selvon within such contest as to understand terms of realism, and modernism, since the novel in itself embodies these genres. The novel report simply what happens during that time without giving opinions or judgments, it expresses just the feelings and the situation as it is.

The techniques used in *The Lonely Londoners* are dialogue and narrative. The stream of consciousness will be present throughout the novel, but it has a prevailing strength in Moses, who is one of the main characters. The strength reaches its climax with the monologue, and the profound realisation of Moses' life, and his solitary thoughts standing on the banks of the Thames:

“The old Moses, standing on the banks of the Thames. Sometimes he think he see some sort of profound realisation in his life, as if all that happen to him was experience that make him a better man, as if now he could draw apart from hustling and just sit down and watch other people fight to live. Under the kiff - kiff laughter, behind the ballad and the episode, the what- happening, the summer-is-hearts, he could

see a great aimlessness, a great restlessness, swaying movement that leaving you standing in the same spot” (pp. 138- 139. LL.)

Moreover, the lack of punctuation from page 92 to page 101 is another important issue in *The Lonely Londoners*. It emphasizes a continuity of language and thoughts, and at the same time it accentuates the alienation of black immigrants in an alien environment. This lack of punctuation is an allusion to their lives, running quickly.

As everybody knows, language is one of those puzzles that not only identifies with the nation but also it distinguishes from other nations. Language is a geographical marker of identification within the same nation as it defines a single and precise group of people who speaks it. According to Norman Fairclough language is divided in different processes:

- a. Language as a part of society,
- b. Language as a social process,
- c. Language as a socially conditioned process¹¹.

For such reasons, *The Lonely Londoners* is unique in its use of the language for it is a mixture of West Indian slang and Standard English. Therefore, *The Lonely Londoners* reflects the language in a determined social context: the gesticulations and the rhythms of Caribbean colloquial speech.

¹¹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, Harlow: Longman, 2001, pp. 18, 19

Adopting this technique and structure, Sam Selvon states that with this kind of syntax pattern and language he wanted to sound as close as possible to Caribbean language:

“When I wrote the novel that became *The Lonely Londoners*, I tried to recuperate a certain quality in West Indian everyday life. I had in store a number of wonderful anecdotes and could put them into focus, but I had difficulty in starting the novel in straight English. The people I wanted to describe were entertaining people indeed, but I could not really move. At that stage, I had written the narrative in English and most of the dialogues in dialect. Then I started both narrative and dialogues in dialect and the novel just shot along”¹².

He goes on explaining that in *The Lonely Londoners*: “the language that I used expressed exactly what I wanted it to express”¹³. The best example that I can give here is this:

‘Tanty, you wasting too much coal on the fire,’ Tolroy say.’

‘Boy, leave me alone. I am cold too bad.’ Tanty put more coal on the fire.

‘You only causing smog,’ Tolroy say.

‘Smog? What is that?’

‘You don’t read the papers?’ Tolroy say. ‘All that nasty fog it have outside today, and you pushing more smoke up the chimney. You killing people. (p. 57. LL)

¹² Susheila Nasta, op. cit., p. 66.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 78

This renders perfectly Selvon's intent and aim. The musicality, the rhythm of the phrases recalls Caribbean speech. In addition, the articulations of phrases are constructed with an incorrect use of grammar, which gives even more emphasis to the marginalized voices throughout the novel. This means that the voice that Selvon gives to the immigrants is the voice that distinguishes the newcomers from the natives. The newcomers, who in spite of many difficulties that they have encountered in settling down in the new environment, needed to assimilate one of the first requirements to be accepted by the society where they live. That first requirement is language. However, the voice of the immigrants here implies a unique as much as an ambiguous task in reshaping the path through historical background towards different stories so to avoid "the danger of a single story" since "the single story creates stereotypes"¹⁴. On the one hand, the voice and the language determine exactly the group in which this language is embodied, and it characterizes the geographical belonging. Categorizes the subculture within a multicultural faceted society. It is through this voice that the subaltern speaks.

Moreover, it is a matter of who speaks for whom. As Sara Suleri claims, "only a black can speak for a black"¹⁵. On the other hand, the aim to represent reality, or showing patterns of verisimilitude is in fact, nothing less than the context of realism in the novel of the 1950s. George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul

¹⁴Chimamanda Adichie, *The Danger of a Single Story*, Video on TED, 2009, http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

¹⁵Sara Suleri, *Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition*. *Critical Inquiry*. 18. 4 (1992), pp. 756-769.

are some other writers who are coeval to Sam Selvon, and take postcolonial novel each and every one of them in a different level. At the same time adding up single characteristics that evidences their personality and character.

Despite the different creolized voices that characterize the novel, the form is interesting, since some critics have identified *The Lonely Londoners* with an oral storytelling. The structure of the oral storytelling, as Nasta Susheila argues in her introduction to the novel, is influenced by “storytelling strategies of Trinidadian calypso, a musical form well-known for its wit, melodrama, licentiousness and sharp political satire”¹⁶. The novel’s uniqueness, however, relies on the written dialect in form of storytelling as far as it determines the life and the struggles of immigrants in a Caribbean dialect.

As I have mentioned above, *The Lonely Londoners* has different layers of meanings, it is about time to explain them in order one by one. First, since the novel is set in London, it is quite interesting to see how Selvon depicts London through the eyes of immigrants, who for the first time set foot in the British soil, and besides in a big city as London is. London, as the rest of England, strikes immigrants for its cold, foggy and grim weather:

“One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the light showing in the blur as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet”. (p. 1. LL)

¹⁶Sam Selvon, op. cit., p. xiii.

Since at the opening of the novel, London emerges as an alien city. Among other elements, the grimness of the city is one of the first factors, which seem to prevent characters from settling in.

On the other hand, the representation of London as a metropolitan centre is quite evident in the way in which Selvon describes and names all sorts of streets and squares. In this way, Selvon gives life to postcolonial London, cataloguing different parts of the city, locating them as constituent parts of London; Hyde Park, Bayswater road, Marble Arch, Notting Hill Gate, Piccadilly Circus, Queensway, just to mention some of them. Places that are often mentioned throughout the novel from the characters of *The Lonely Londoners*. However, each of the characters conceives the city and its streets in a different view, especially according to their inner personal feelings, and the relationship they have with the city.

What stands out in *The Lonely Londoners* is a common feature, a double vision of London. This double vision of London is given in two different colours, gold and grey. Both colours relate to a particular meaning. They are connected with the arrival of immigrants. When immigrants first came to London, they thought that they would make a fortune, and would improve their economic situation. The myth that they had in mind was that London was so rich, and that the streets were paved with gold. Instead, grey colour relates to the grimness of the city and the weather they find, but also it relates to their inner feelings in which immigrants find themselves in London. For these reasons, gold and grey, in the novel of Sam Selvon show this double meaning metaphor. On

the other hand, it can also be understood as a metaphor of two different worlds, the material world and a world made of feelings.

Another important characteristic, which deserve to be mentioned here, is silence. It is showed in many ways, yet it seems unperceived from the environment where the migrants live. It lives within them wherever they go and whatever they do. They carry it within them as a burden than cannot send away. The only place and moment where the silence ceases to exist is when they gather on Sundays to discuss and talk freely about anything that crosses their minds.

Silence dies out only between the walls, the houses where they live, in the moment they enjoy each other's company. Though, often times it seems to be rooted in their hearts since London environment has provoked such profound sufferings to them, and it is not easy to deal with it. Silence is a noisy echo that has no voice to speak, but it has eyes to see. It fluctuates in the air with them, through the streets, while searching for jobs. It is a silence that kills when ignored from the rest of the world. It hurts to know that the old lady in Hyde Park cares more about the snatched pigeon than she cares about a human being as Galahad, who is about to die of hanger. Henceforth, silence in *The Lonely Londoners* speaks through gestures, and it is only through these actions that their inner silence comes up to the surface, manifesting their pains.

1.4 Immigration Issues: Analyzing *The Lonely Londoners*

The Lonely Londoners is the first novel in a chronological order of two other short stories representing the migrant Moses, the struggles and the stories of immigrants in London, *Moses Ascending* (1975), and *Moses Migrating* (1983). Since the beginning, *The Lonely Londoners* deals with the new arrivals from the West Indies. It is “built around an exiled body”¹⁷ though the arrivals are not referred as migrants but as “fellars.” That is enough to lead the reader just to the focal point, exile.

On the other hand, the name of the place where these people come from and the way they further remember their places, emphasizes the idea of exile in relation to immigrants. The name “Waterloo Station” throughout the novel becomes a crucial point for all immigrants. It becomes an interchangeable crossroad: a junction point for those who come to Britain and for those who leave England. It is the place where for the first time they set foot in English soil. Once they are off the boat – train, the first thing they face is the cold English weather. The first impact with the English soil is a hostile impression.

However, although a great number of immigrants were familiar with England’s history and geography, few of them had any idea of what it really was like. This is clearly explained by Mary Chamberlain in *Narratives on Exile*, short memoirs and experiences recounted by immigrants:

¹⁷ Susheila Nasta, op., cit. p. 174.

“We did things like the history, so you knew all about the kings and queens... I think we knew more about the history of England than we did about the history of Barbados... And all about the geography of England... Not a lot about people... themselves...”¹⁸.

As a result, when migrants reached the so-called “Mother Nation” they came with the idea that “the streets paved with gold”¹⁹, but very soon, things turned out to be very different from what they had expected. Arguably, they had been relying on the myth of the Mother Nation from what they have read from the books. All their primary information about the mother country came from schoolbooks. This myth, however, dissolves as soon as migrants experience life in Britain. According to N. Susheila, “England lays before, - the immigrants, - not as a place or a people, but a promise and expectation”²⁰.

The myth of the Mother Nation has proved to be deceptive. Now, the migrants had to deal with the country and its people. Immigrants not only have to cope with the hostility of the weather, but on top of everything else they have to deal with the colour of their skin, with discrimination and the hostility of white people. Throughout the novel a heavy feeling of loneliness, and grimness can be depicted – feeling in between, in a crossroad with no one to lend a hand to our immigrants:

¹⁸Mary Chamberlain, *Narratives on Exile*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2005, p.71

¹⁹Sam Selvon, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁰Jopi Nyman, *Border crossing; ‘Novo selo’ Home, Identity, and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009, p. 17.

“He realise that here he is, in London, and he ain’t have money or work or place to sleep or any friend or anything, and he standing up here by the tube station watching people, and everybody look so busy he frighten to ask questions from any of them. For this city powerfully lonely when you are on your own...”(pp. 23 – 29 LL)

In the paragraph above the narrator is telling the experience of the migrant Henry Oliver Esquire, alias Galahad the moment when he has to deal with the city. A powerfully felling of loneliness seems to paralyse him, and what is even worse is that nobody notices his loneliness. Both the gaze and the sensation of having no secure place in the new world as life buzzes so hastily is situated by the tube station, which in its own is an empirical place denoting hasty intertwined paths, thousand of directions and possibilities which expect to be taken. It symbolizes in itself a world that begins and at the same time it ends there for one of the most recent newcomer, whose name is Galahad. Suddenly, all sorts of feelings mix up: loneliness, displacement and alienation of Galahad.

As a new comer, Galahad embodies the alienation of all immigrants who experience the same feelings when exiled. Not being part of a place or the place: feeling lost, displaced demonstrates a “lack of centre”²¹ a sense of alienation and rejection towards a new culture, a new language, new socio-cultural behaviour, hence the place itself:

²¹Susheila Nasta, op. cit., p. 5.

“You could always tell when a test new in London- he always handing a ten-shilling cause he ain’t learn yet how to work out money in pounds, shillings and pence”(p. 26. LL).

Selvon, not only gives the idea of someone new in town, but at the same time he emphasizes it through the image of working out a particular currency, in this case pounds and shillings. “It was 12 pennies in a shilling, 24 shillings in a pound, all designed to confuse and perplex the foreigners”²². Currency is of one those first things that a foreigner has to deal with the moment he is setting foot in another country.

Working out money while trying to buy a bus ticket is a very normal routine of everyday life, although, in these circumstances it shows nothing but someone new in town. That gives a high more credibility to the whole idea of a new arrival. On the other hand, this situation gets the moment, the act; touching people’s feelings from a possible personal experience aspect lived in a foreign country. Henceforth, it comes naturally to ask: Is migrant a test?²³The answer is probably more complicated than it seems, but when it comes to people moving from one country to another, than most probably one should remember that migration is not just about a geographical move. Obviously, that it is something more complicated than the simple fact of crossing a border as a geographical

²²Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, Stephen Small, Introduction, *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2009, xxv.

²³ Sam Selvon, op. cit., p. 26.

spatial point, for immigrants “would never stop crossing boundaries all their lives”²⁴:

“Migration is not just a geographical move from one country to another. It involves more than crossing geographical borders, settling in a new land or even acquiring citizenship in the technical sense... a border is more than just a division between two countries; it is also the division between two cultures and two memories. Above all migration involves crossing cultural boundaries, experiencing another culture, and making a new home in a new country with all the internal transformations on the self that such processes”²⁵.

Thus, a man can go through various transformations in a new country, all the same, we still can state that man is a carrier of the smell of his “home” as well as his/her own traditions wherever he/she goes: “I am a turtle, wherever I go I take home on my back”²⁶. It does not matter how far, or how many borders one passes, what is authentic here is the relationship with one’s customs, language, and religion. The above bonds mentioned such, as identity, language etc. comprehend a certain familiarity in recognizing or being familiar with his or her childhood memories. Remaining totally trustfully to ones origin and ones memory in relation with smells, tastes and customs as it recalls home, the place

²⁴Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, London and NY, Routledge, 1990, p. 111.

²⁵Evangelia Tastsologu, Alexandra Dobrowolsky, *Women Migration and Citizenship*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, chap. 9.

²⁶Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands, La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999, p. 43.

you were born and with which one maintains a particular attachment independently from the place one is living.

Memory is as important as identity because it is thanks to the memory of people that keep alive their origin countries in their minds. It is for this reason that the fellows join Moses' house every Sunday forming a small community, which allows them to keep in touch with their language, their land "home" bring them about to have a talk and remember the good old times. This small community allows them to be part of a certain group where they can be recognized and accepted through different issues such as language, sense of humour, gesture, and food.

Moreover, the gathering of the boys every Sunday at Moses' place, seems to recall two different motives: firstly, the repetition of a celebration ceremony of a specific group who wants to depart from the city life. Secondly, needing a secure place where they would feel at home, discuss about issues that they experience and go through everyday without being disturbed from the rest of the world. In this way, they express a multiplicity of values that are intertwined, and somehow made even more evident by the fact of their being in exile; at the same time they manifest their original sense of culture in the every Sunday congregation-like with all the boys.

These gatherings prevent immigrants from feeling outsiders, since an outsider being considered "a marginal figure a stranger whose presence disturbs

the community”²⁷. It is thanks to these connections that ‘home’ remains alive wherever one goes. Yet, Nasta Susheila argues that, “home is not necessarily where one belongs, but the place where one starts”²⁸. Therefore, ‘a test’, namely, an immigrant is always a new test for the fact that has to start from the very beginning involves two cross-cultural experiences. Selvon’s immigrants have to learn to live in a new socio-political environment starting with a new language, they have to adapt to new rules of social behaviour. The clash between the two cultures leads to both physical and spatial displacement. However, it takes place in the moment when immigrants are considered “others” in the eyes of the natives. Not good enough to compete with them. Immigrants are not special in the eyes of the natives. They do not sympathise with them. As Selvon states: “So don’t expect that they will treat you like anybody special – to them you will be just another of them Jamaicans...”²⁹ As if immigrants are all alike, no matter where they come from. Thus, the label Immigrant does include all outsiders:

“Now Moses does not know a damn thing about Jamaica- Moses come from Trinidad, which is a thousand miles from Jamaica, but the English people believe that everybody who come from West Indies come from Jamaica”(p. 7 LL).

²⁷Jopi Nyman, op. cit., p. 45.

²⁸Susheila Nasta, *Writing Across Worlds. Contemporary Writers Talk*, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004. p. 80.

²⁹Sam Selvon, op. cit., p. 22.

³⁰Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, Stephen Small, Introduction, *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009, xxvi.

As a consequence of this, prejudices and stereotypes are different and yet they are the same in every country that hosts immigrants. As Darlene Clark Hine suggests: “variations are in the eyes of the beholder, but they are shaped by localities, prevailing understandings and subjectivities, themselves reflecting the particular histories and nations”³⁰.

Yet, prejudices and stereotypes exist in a society where citizens are not interested in destroying the created myth. Usually, these cracks of prejudices and stereotypes are caused by a bad policy information organization that fails to issue a right as well as an adequate policy in such regards. Mass medias that fails to give the exact information as well as the exact occurred facts, without distorting or transforming them. In so doing, they arise fallacies in the public opinion.

Very often immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners* are thought savage. Moses explains to Galahad that natives fear the immigrants, but why are they frightened? “... they frighten we get jobs in front of them, though it does never happen”³¹. Is it true that the immigrants take away the natives’ jobs? Considering the historical facts of emigration in general, it is quite obvious that immigrants get the menial jobs and the lowest wage paid. No need to mention that most of them work in very poor and bad conditions. All you can do, is blame immigrants for accepting such poor work conditions, because in so doing they risk to compromise the standards of payment. Yet many of them do not have many choices. People who feel in the margins of a society, which they still, do not

³¹Sam Selvon, op. cit., p. 20.

know. Accepting low wage paid jobs is better than doing nothing at all. It is a price to pay to survive in a new country.

While migrants manage to get used to the British weather, housing is another huge problem which needed to be solved out: “So what Moses could do when these fellars land up hopeless on the doorstep with one set on luggage, no place to sleep, no place to go”³². Everyone knows that migration flows determines a certain society towards a multicultural facet, but at the same time highly affect the number of the population.

Due to this migration factor, Britain experienced a considerable increase in the amount of population; in fact, in view of this growth Britain faced a serious problem in regards of housing shortage. Stanley Anderson however, claims that the aforementioned housing shortage was more regional rather than national. The housing shortage, as he states, was of course referred to London, where the migration flows were initially directed. At this point, S. Anderson denotes that the standards of the houses in Britain between 1951 and 1961 were below the required norms of hygiene and comfort, to not say uninhabitable: “Their houses are decayed, dilapidated, dirty, ugly, without baths, without flush lavatories, perhaps without kitchens”³³. He, also points out that, “the causes of the housing shortage are economical and political”³⁴. As a consequence, the tenants or private householders have been affected by the high interest rates of the Rent

³²*Ibid.* p. 3.

³³Stanley Alderson, *Britain in the sixties. Housing*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 13.

³⁴*Ibid.* p. 13.

Act. As a result, people were obliged to share the same room in many, in spite of very small spaces at their dispositions. That is the case of Sam Selvon's migrants.

Immigrants express themselves like this: "We can't get no place to live..." (p. 8. LL). If lucky enough, the rooms available to immigrants were situated in the slum areas and above all shared with other tenants in order to manage to pay the rent or rather because it was quite impossible to find a place. Besides, one could not choose for better accommodation and especially for better quarters because those were reserved for British white people.

Now, London is a multifaceted as well as multicultural city where one could find his own little place to feel secure from the rest of the world. London "is a labyrinthine city"³⁵, it shows its face and shape from time to time through the eyes of Galahad, through his experiences and the way he lives London. He is the "flâneur" *par excellence*, and he is also to some extent an explorer. The one who leads to encourage the imagination of the reader. From his point of view the reader learns to discover London in the way Galahad sees and lives it, giving the names of the streets and the names of the places where he goes. He strolls from one place to another, from one street to another. Giving bits and pieces of routine life that sheds light not only in the lives of migrants' but at the same time he compares behaviours, gesticulation, and clothing between migrants coming from all parts of the world, especially West Indies and the British white people.

³⁵Sam Selvon, op. cit., p. V.

Furthermore, with his observation he provides food for the eyes of the reader by putting him in his position, though at times the reader might perceive mixed feelings of pity and sympathy. Pity because of his situation and sympathy for the way he tries to enjoy life in spite of the insurmountable difficulties he faces. Other times again, readers sympathize with him for his sense of humour and the way in which he addresses and attributes to the black colour a human nature. Wanting to show that it is not Galahad, who is causing troubles to the world, but the world seem to have problems with his skin colour. This situation is perfectly shown in his monolog below:

“Colour, it is you that causing all this, you know. Why the hell you can’t be blue, or red, or green, if you can’t be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world. It is not me, you know, is you! I ain’t do anything to infuriate the people and them, is you! Look at you, you so black and innocent, and this time so you causing misery all over the world!” (p. 77. LL).

One might be thinking why didn’t I introduce the characters since the beginning? The reason why is that I wanted to introduce them not only as simple characters of a novel, but from a namesake point of view. The main characters are a bunch of boys coming from the West Indies on board of the Empire Windrush (see picture below) in search of jobs. They get to know each other in London, in different circumstances of everyday life as they wander through the city in search of jobs and housing. Almost all of them have nicknames, but I would like to analyse just some of them since the process of naming is very

important. That means that the namesake determines or affects the personality and the character of a man. This method of giving nicknames comes from an antique tradition of the West Indies as Selvon argues in an interview given to Michel Fabre between 1977 and 1987:

“Nicknames are far more important in the West Indies. It is when I came to England that I discovered the importance of having a name and tradition, ancestors and heritage”³⁶.

From this point onward I would like to give account of some of the characters through the perspective of the namesake rather than their inner personality.

Now, there is Big City, a young man who comes from an orphanage. When he grew up he left the orphanage and went in the army in Trinidad. He used eating so much and it was here that he got the nickname as he always was talking about big cities. As his nickname suggests, he likes to travel and one day he wishes he could visit big cities as: “Big city, boy, big city. Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Rome, Bagdan...”³⁷ The other dream of his is to win £75, 000, so that he can manage to go round the world. Here we have a game of words and at the same time a reverse in meaning. The big city is part of his life, of his name; on the other hand, he physically lives in the big city of London. The name Big City itself is a synonym of the thrill, the excitement and the pleasure of the nightlife and the blur of lights on the streets of the city.

³⁶Susheila Nasta, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³⁷Sam Selvon, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

Than, there is Five Past Twelve “Boy, you black like midnight”³⁸. This reverse of meanings in the nicknames of the characters can be understood in two different ways. Firstly, as a self-irony, demonstrating how the others sees and calls them. Secondly, being self conscious of whom they are and in the same way revealing it with a sense of humour that characterizes the West Indians. The character’s name, Five Past Twelve is defined by the conformity to fact and truth on space and time as it imply an association with the colour of the skin. At the same time, midnight is associated with dark, in this case with black colour. Hence, it is a statement about a superficial part of the body, the skin.

Captain, a young boy called Cap was from Nigerian and was sent from his family to study law. But when he arrived in the big city he went stupid. He left his studies and started spending money on women and cigarettes. His name may suggest that he is the captain of his own destiny and it is only him who can and decide his present and future. However, some times our choices are shaped by different factors, being these political, social, or economical. Elements, that somehow marks our way of being in a specific geographic space and background.

Moses, just like the prophet from the Bible as well as Qu’ran, is a sort of father figure, an older brother, and a family for all boys. Certainly, he is a referring point for the boys, in every single occasion. He embodies not only the

³⁸*Ibid.* p. 102.

family, but at the same time home as a geographic space and time. He also represents the old generation in confrontation or in opposition to the new one. He is the voice and the conscience of all the other characters as “he feels the weight of each man’s experience”³⁹.

While analysing the character’s name it suddenly came to my mind Jumpa Lahiri’s novel: *The Namesake*, which demonstrates that according to an Indian philosophy and believe, everything is written in the name. Therefore, it is the name that determines the present and the future, and somehow even the character, the paths and the choices that are made are shaped by name. As an evidence of the namesake, there are the names of the characters in *The Lonely Londoners*, which are connected not only with what they do but also, the name expresses their inner characters.

In such extent, all the characters’ name, are correspondents of their way of living, but above all they determine the person who carries a specific name, and peculiar characteristics.

On the other hand, usually names not only are related to the identity of a person, but also they are geographical complementary, as certain names can be associated only to particular countries. Hence, the name is one of those little puzzles that fit in to recognize or rather to distinct the identity of a nation.

³⁹*Ibid.* p. 41.

1.5 Discourse on Englishness

As I have mentioned, most of the immigrants who came in England were entitled British subjects before they came in England, therefore it was a legitimate right to demand what the British Empire had given them before its fall. As a consequence, Moses claims this right since the very beginning of the novel:

“Listen, I will give you the name of a place. It call Ipswich. There it have a restaurant run by a Pole call the Rendezvous Restaurant. Go there and see if they will serve you. And you know the hurtful part of it? The Pole who have that restaurant, he ain’t have no more right in this country than we. In fact, we British subjects and he is only a foreigner, we have more right than any people from the damn continent to live and work in this country, and enjoy what this country have, because is we who bleed to make this country prosperous”(p. 2. LL).

In fact, according to the Nationality Act in 1948, guaranteed and granted the right of British subject “wherever there was British territory”⁴⁰. As a result of such endorsement, individuals who were granted with the bill of the 1948 marked their lives with great confusion and unexpected difficulties when they moved to Britain. As soon as they arrived in the UK, they found out to be what

⁴⁰Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 10.

Ian Baucom calls “subjects of a global system but citizens of no country”⁴¹. Not only were alienated by a political system and being recognised as citizens of no country, but they were also alienated by their selfhood.

Paul Gilroy maintains that there is a sharp distinction between identity and nationality. Identity has become a significant element in contemporary conflicts over cultural, ethnic, religious, “racial”, and national differences⁴². Again, he makes a clear-cut difference between individual and collective identity, though the individual identity grows within the collective identity. It is in collective identity that the individual is shaped, modified and arranged in the womb of society and its subdivisions. Furthermore, he goes on saying that “an identity is bonded on fundamental levels: national, “racial”, ethnic, regional, and local”⁴³. As a consequence, one could argue that identity is formed in the local, then in the regional, and after that in the ethnic. All these categories or “fundamental levels” go around in vicious circles that are entrenched in the national, whereby the aforementioned identifications conform to a higher ideal and lead to the national identity formation, which distinguish one country from the others.

Now, as to the national formation of identity in England, terms such as Britishness and Englishness have been mentioned and studied since the Defoe’s era by different scholars and each of them have given their opinions. The following lines show how these terms have been discussed by some of them.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 11.

⁴² Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps; Race, Identity and Nationalism at the End of Colour Line*, London, Allen Llen Press, 2000, p. 106.

⁴³ Paul Gilroy, *Against Race; Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Colour Line*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 98.

According to Ian Baucom, during the British Empire the employed ideology was that: “being a British subject was to belong to an unlimited collectivity... Whenever there was British territory, one could be English”⁴⁴. In this regard, one could come to think that being British was determined by place rather than by birth. And indeed it was. All the territories under the colonisation of the British Empire were supposed to be British; consequently their citizens were called British subjects.

Nonetheless, after the falling of the Empire, the situation changed pretty soon and the so-called place that was used to determine the British subjects was replaced by *ius solis*. Following the line of *ius solis* meant to follow just the bloodlines. To which Daniel Defoe, in his turn responds in a short and precise way demonstrating quite the contrary, but rather than opposing trying to read the historical facts claiming the heterogeneity of England in terms of Englishman. His poem “The True- Born Englishman”, written around 1700, shows his awareness of this issue. Written in satire verses it gingerly holds irony. It ridiculed the notion of racial purity towards the politics engendered up to that moment in regards of Englishness:

Thus from a mixture of all kinds began,
That heterogeneous thing an Englishman;
In eager rapes and furious lust begot,

⁴⁴Ian Baucom, op. cit., p. 10.

Betwixt a painted Briton and a Scot;
Whose gendering offspring quickly learned to bow,
And yoke their heifers to the Roman plough;
From whence a mongrel half-bred race there came,
With neither name nor nation, speech nor fame;
In whose hot veins new mixtures quickly ran,
Infused betwixt a Saxon and a Dane;
While their rank daughters, to their parents just,
Received all nations with promiscuous lust.
This nauseous brood directly did contain
The well-extracted brood of Englishmen.
...
Among themselves maintained eternal wars,
The wonder, which remains is at our pride,
To value that which all wise men deride.
For Englishmen to boast of generation
Cancels their knowledge and lampoons the nation.
A true-born Englishman's a contradiction,
In speech an irony, in fact a fiction...⁴⁵

In Defoe's view a "mixture of all kinds" forms the nature of England.
Words such as, heterogeneous, betwixt, half-bred are all well selected words that

⁴⁵Daniel Defoe, *The True- Born Englishman and other Writings*, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1997, pp. 35-36.

show the *ab initio* of English nation. Basically, what he is trying to say here is that the English nation is made of a conglomeration of many nations, and that it is for this reason that there is no pure English blood running in the veins of Englishmen and therefore the Englishness in a Englishman is a sort of contradiction because it does not exist, it is a fiction for him.

According to both Ian Baucom and Daniel Defoe can lead to a righteous conclusion when Moses in *The Lonely Londoners* reclaims being English subject and pertaining to the English soil more than any other European immigrant:

“In fact, we British subjects and he is only a foreigner, we have more right than any people from the damn continent to live and work in this country...”(p. 21. LL)

As a matter of fact, Moses’ anger grows thick as he feels unjustly alienated from his supposed nation, and the hurtful part of it is that he finds himself not being part of the nation and the identity he thought to pertain. Moses’ powerful declaration that he is a British subject and as such, he claims that his rights are more than justifiable. On the other hand, with this powerful confirmation of his identity, somehow Moses declares to pertain to the British Empire. In spite of his surprisingly counterfeit nation and identity given from the British colonialist, he shares and demonstrates a close relationship and “a person’s familiarity with the

orientation to his or her environment”⁴⁶ and in this case with British soil, London metropolis:

“When them English people tell strangers they don’t know where is so and so is, I always know. “From Pentonvilla right up to Musket Hill, all about by Claphand Common. I bet you can’t call a name in London that I don’t know where it is” (p. 9. LL).

However, the discourse of Englishness in *The lonely Londoners* is portrayed in a more visual and external way, somehow trying to imitate and reproduce the stereotype of Englishmen embodied by Harris all kinds of behaviour and ways of doing of an Englishman:

“And when he dress, you think is some Englishman going to work in the city, bowler and umbrella, and briefcase tuck under the arm, with The Times fold up in the pocket so the name would show, and he walking upright like if is he alone who live in the world. Only thing, Harris face black”. (p. 103. LL)

The moment Harris tries to disguise himself under the label of Englishman, while speaking a proper and correct Standard English he acquires a new identity. Hiding behind a codified dress or rather imitating an Englishman, in order to be one of them.

⁴⁶John Clement Ball, *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2006, p. 122.

He dresses up in bowler and umbrella, making sure that *The Times* would be nicely visible. The way he dresses, the way he talks and behaves drive Harris to the assimilation of an identity, which is not his. Prompting to create a certain kind of confusion that clashes in relation with his inner as well as exterior identity. And in turn, this controversy is depicted by his skin colour.

In fact, all in all, the skin of his colour is a controversy on the basis of an external reference that prevents the others expecting him for what Harris is trying to sell his self, an Englishman.

Chapter 2

2.1 Migration Literature. Crossing Voices

Talking about the characteristics of the novel, most probably many would go back on time and think of the classical novel or make reference to some fathers of the realist English novel, such as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Ian Watt, etc. Obviously, one might come to a conclusion as well as agree with Ian Watt when he states “novel attempts to portray all the varieties of human

experience”⁴⁷. At the same time, the environment is a very important key point as it deals with how the plot as well as the characters is represented in the novel.

The usual universal themes that used to appear in the novel were left behind starting from the Renaissance. It was from the Renaissance onwards that there was a growing inclination towards an individual experience. The attention not only was driven towards the individual body, but it was necessary to give importance to the “correspondence between words and reality, correspondence between life and literature”⁴⁸. Daniel Defoe is the best example to be mentioned here as he portrays “the *homo-economicus*” where, “the hero has a home and family, and leaves them for the classic reason... to better his economic condition”⁴⁹. In this respect, migration literature has a common feature with the Defoe’s *homo- economicus*.

Therefore, since the society and the world we live in is a society in continuous transmutation, transformation and movement it is quite normal that there will always be a *homo- economicus*. Moreover, the contemporary age “is supposed to be an age of unparalleled mobility, migration, and border crossings... world appears to be on the move... with all clashes, meetings, fusions and intermixing it entails reshaping the cultural landscapes of the world’s and cities”⁵⁰. Migration, border crossing, fusion and intermixing of

⁴⁷Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, London, The Hogarth Press, 1995, p. 11.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* p. 12.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* p. 65.

⁵⁰Sten Pultz Moslund, *Migration Literature and Hybridity. The Different Speeds of Transcultural Changes*, Chippenham and Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 1-2.

cultures are the key words that describe the so-called migration literature, which will be to my concern in this chapter.

When speaking about migration literature, regardless of the themes it might discuss, it comes naturally to think about the exile literature. Be careful! The term that introduces these genres are false friends, as they differ from each other since their original connotations has shift meanings in a deeper level.

The terms “exile” and “migrant” has undergone through a process of transformation through the course of the years. As Carine M. Maradossian explains, “exile” commonly suggested an unwilling expulsion from a nation, such that no return is possible, unless it be under the shadow of imprisonment, execution, or some other coercive physical response”⁵¹. On the contrary, “migrant” suggested a relatively voluntary departure with the possibility of return”⁵². Hence, due to these connotations, not only changes their former meaning in literature but it also changes the plot of the novel. Migration literature deals with the experience of migrant between past and present in relation with the new country that host him/ her, in relation with a new language and all the transformations - namely, the social, the economical, the political and the psychological point of view that the migrant undergoes in a new social context.

This whole situation makes the migrant a human being living in between,

⁵¹Carine M. Mardorossian, “*From Literature of Exile to Migration of Literature*”, 32, 2 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 15-33.

⁵²*Ibid.* pp. 15-33.

in the borders of each side of the cultures - the culture of his provenance and that of the country that host him. Though, the hardest trauma to overcome is the displacement; having to leave their homes and countries, hoping to find another place that would accept them where they could start from the beginning a new life with better conditions.

But, what is necessary to keep in mind while reading migration literature, is that along with the trauma of the displacement, the difficulties of learning a new language, the nostalgia of home and everything that comes with migration flows are represented and pertain to this genre.

The writers who come from another social context, propose through literature authentic personal experiences generated in literature or vice versa. Different critics have baptised this kind of literature with different names. Some of them have denoted it as the so-called migration literature others again have mentioned it as diasporic literature, or just Diaspora.

Whatever is the case, or whatever is the name that they have chosen to give, it is enough predictable that migration literature has imposed an indelible mark in the history of literature. Its roots are well entrenched in the soil of contemporary literature as it projects and introduces a transcultural society on the move.

But, what is migration literature? Migration literature comes along with and it is caused by the experiences of immigrants itself. It “analyzes and show the many complex ways in which contemporary diasporic writers... use their

medium to broker, to affiliate and translate the places, peoples, cultures, and languages”⁵³.

Authors who comes from different places, bearers and speakers of different languages, who have decided to write in the language of the country they have emigrated, or in the language of the host country. Grown up writers with a determined mother tongue and culture. The moment they exile from their origin countries, they create another way of living, adapt to another new culture and above all speak another language. Even so, their writings have left behind a slipstream of their own original culture in the context of nowadays-literature as much as in the memory of the readers.

Altogether, these writings share the traditions of the authors to a wider circle of people making them aware about other existing realities within their own territories. As a consequence of this sharing, “the mass movements of people creating new diasporas, border (land)s, transcultural and transnational identities has been emerging globally”⁵⁴. Henceforth, these transnational identities have been distinguished to “live *here* and remember *there*”⁵⁵. To make it even simpler of what I have discussed above, starting from this point onward, I will attempt to give examples taking in consideration two different authors, who still involve some dose of sameness in respect with their writings.

⁵³Igor Maver, *Diasporic Subjectivity and Cultural Brokering in Contemporary Post-Colonial Literatures*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009, p. ix.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* p. ix.

⁵⁵*Ibid.* p. 2.

The first one is Salman Rushdie with *The Satanic Verses* and the other one is Hanif Kureishi *The Buddha of Suburbia*. All of them share some resemblances as well as distinctness. Therefore, I thought it necessary to make a confrontation with Sam Selvon.

The reasons why I have chosen these writers are two. First, they are bearers of two cultures. Second, they are familiar with two different surroundings; the original one and the new acquired environment. Even though Hanif Kureishi was born in London. No one else better than them can read the reality and speak about pros and cons of different peculiarities that very often only these writers can translate without distortions.

They give voice to the problems that immigrants face everyday without getting sentimentally involved. The ability to give an accurate vision on both sides, on the one hand that of the immigrants, and on the other that of the inhabitants. This ability have matured with their experiences in the different social backgrounds where they have grown up, being that a child or adult.

2. 2 Salman Rushdie: *The Satanic Verses*

In an interview released by the Emory University Salman Rushdie maintains that *The Satanic Verses* “is a novel about migrancy, which to some extent represents his personal life and the trauma that each individual as well as migrant communities goes through. The novel must be the place where everything is put into question; nothing has to be taken for granted. Everything has to be re-examined”⁵⁶.

Now, referring to the three authors; S. Rushdie, H. Kureishi, and S. Selvon, the first common feature or the tie that pulls them all together is language, their origin, how they represent the issue of racism, border crossings, immigration, and London city. The other common feature that unites them is that all of these authors situate their characters mostly in London city. Henceforth, my aim in this chapter is to analyse common features as well as differences while comparing Salman Rushdie with Hanif Kureishi.

Among other things, the most important issues that these novels have in common are London city and immigrants. Notwithstanding, they differ from each other in the way they represent characters. The essential difference among

⁵⁶SalmanRushdie,www.emory.edu, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKgl_SPUCx

the novels lies in the experience of the immigrants, and the environment in which the novel is developed.

The Satanic Verses is a novel about expatriates in contemporary London. In the novel there can be found many characters and different stories, which do not have common threads between them. The only thread that pulls them together are the two main characters of the novel; Saladin Chamcha and Gibrel Farishta, who appears in every chapter of *The Satanic Verses*.

So, let start first with the city where everything is generated and to some point London seems to be the forbidden fruit. Unlike Kureishi and Selvon, Rushdie invents a name to refer to London city. The name carries a dramatic handicap or distortion of the word that seems indistinguishable from its form, meaning and structure. He decides to transform London in a sort of personal name, quite like an individual composition.

Therefore, Ellowen Deeowen, is the correspondent name of London, which is written just the way it is spelled. As a consequence of the deformation of the shape and the form of the word, it naturally comes to connect the single name of the city transformed in a personal name a given name and a surname, that means a human being. Without the slightest doubt ever, this game of words conceals two different meanings. The first one is a matter of language, pronunciation, and from what standpoint and where this language is spoken. The second one, the name hides within it and represents a certain kind of power, a determined dose of longing to be there.

Probably one would miss the meaning of it, if the author himself would not have explained it in the first instance, but then it returns many times in the novel that it is hard to say you would not have reached by yourselves at such conclusion.

In the ears of the immigrants London sounds to be a majestic city. It was considered to be the core of new opportunities, as it was the cradle of culture and peace; and it still is nowadays one of the most multicultural and metropolitan cities. Soon enough they realise that this city was far beyond their expectations and the generated myth during that time.

From a linguistic point of view the name London is drastically distorted. It gives the idea of someone who is not able to make the correct pronunciation as a consequence of not being its first language or rather wanting to show a sense of marginalization from the side of the one who speaks a determined language, in our case is English. It is an acquired language not a mother tongue. Perhaps, for this reason Rushdie has decided to distort the name of the city, but at the same time, it can be thought as a certain construction or destruction form that puts together what is known in contrast with what it is not known or maybe never thought of. The result of it is a transformed language, making reference to a place that could be recognized without any difficulty.

Moreover, Rushdie unlike Kureishi and Selvon depicts immigrants through an entire process of transformation ending with a Kafkian metamorphosis. Everything begins with the image of Icarus falling from the sky. This metaphor can perfectly be seen as that of someone coming from somewhere else but the

moment he/ she set foot in a new soil they immediately understand that what they have found is not what they have expected to be.

Rushdie does not speak in an explicit way about immigrants or immigration; rather, what he does is translating everyday happenings into action and metaphors that lead to think about immigration and due to this immigration everyday happenings seem to be ordinary violent scenes of racism and marginalization.

The ability to melt and describe stereotypes of how immigrants were seen: calling them names or seeing them under a determined light, as animals, and dirty: “They describe us’, the other whispered solemnly. That’s all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct⁵⁷”.

All these stereotypes are embedded and personified in a metamorphosed person. Neither a person nor an animal, someone who is bound to live in the same body, but divided between two different beings. The metamorphosed Chamcha gives the idea of a half- bred mixture, half animal and half human. What else better than the metaphor of a single body divided into two different beings can express the idea as well as the feelings of a man who lives between two countries, between two languages, between two identities?

⁵⁷Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, London, Viking, 1988. (Henceforth, all quotation will be in parenthesis with page numbers and will refer as SV.)

“He was dressed in a new pair of alien pyjamas, this time of an undifferentiated pale green colour, which matched both the fabric of the screens and what he could see of the walls and ceilings of that cryptic and anonymous ward. His legs still ended those distressing hoofs, and the horns on his head were as sharp as before...” (p. 165. SV)

So, the process of transformation is a long process as it takes many different stages of the characters’ lives, and it have already been seen up to what point the transformation of language has influenced to confuse and manipulate the readers. Then, it goes even to a higher level as it involves metamorphosed individuals:

“Chamcha wanted to speak, but was afraid that he would find his voice mutated into goat- bleats, and, besides, the policeman’s boot had begun to press harder than ever on his chest, and it was hard to form any words. What puzzled Chamcha was that a circumstance which struck him as utterly bewildering and unprecedented- that is, by his metamorphosis into supernatural imp- was being treated by the others as if it were most banal and familiar matter they could imagine” (p.158. SV)

There is a double transformation with names, especially with one of the main characters’ name. This way of transforming the name is somehow deceptive, for it is like wanting to change his identity. Wishing to be somewhere else, in a different situation, of course. He introduces himself to the police who are abusing him in their van in this way:

“My name Salahuddin Chamchawala, professional name Saladin Chamcha” (p. 163. SV)

Salahuddin states that his professional name is Saladin, though it is quite evident that his name has been transformed for pronunciation reasons. Saladin is a man whose entire life, just like his name, undergoes a long process of transition and transmutation. Needless to say, whether this transition is internal, external, social or psychological. It is a struggle that first and foremost, has to deal with the single individual. It is just in a second moment when the transition of the single individual has to cope with and push ones personal being towards a totally new social context way of living.

In *The Lonely Londoners*, London city is described and depicted in details through its streets as a huge metropolitan gloomy city; often times, more like a tangible object, whereas in *The Satanic Verses* it is a city visible but unseen to those who inhabits it. Though it is an invisible city, Gibrel Farishta wishes to transform the city, but above all his desire is to change the weather. In his dreams, he wishes to transform London or rather as he say to “tropicalize” it. Instead of adapting to London life, Gibrel Farishta wants to “fix” London. He suggests a metamorphosed London city, and this is how London city should be like:

“When the day is not warmer than the night,’ he reasoned, when the light is not brighter than the dark, when the land is not drier than the sea, then clearly a people will lose the power to make distinctions, and commence to see everything- from political parties to sexual

partners to religious beliefs- as much –the –same, nothing- to – chose, give or take. What a folly! For truth is extreme, it *so* and not *thus*, it is *him* and not *her*; a partisan matter, not a spectator sport. It is, in brief, *heated*. City,’ he cried, and his voice rolled over the metropolis like thunder, ‘I am going to tropicalize you.’(p. 354. SV)

In *The Satanic Verses*, sleep and vision get a great importance as it is thanks to the visions that London city, and especially migrants get to know better themselves and their actual surroundings. The sleep is perceived more as a trance like, which clearly declares the psychological nervous conditions in which the immigrants face life in exile.

Finally, these visions and dreams seem to be the premonitions that inform the reader and give a fully insight of what is going on or what will be going on in the near future, though the main characters does not realise fully his position in relation with the environment. Similarly, all this, is to be discovered in relation with London and as well as in relation with their intertwined personal experiences that each and every one of them goes through.

2. 3 Hanif Kureishi: *The Buddha of Suburbia*

While Rushdie writes from the immigrants' first generation point of view, Kureishi instead, writes from a second-generation immigrant point of view. Even though Kureishi was born and bred in England some people do not consider him English. With his writings, Kureishi embodies all the second-generation feelings and the atmosphere: the way he feels about it, the manner how others interact with him.

Kureishi himself comes from mixed parents; his father was from Pakistan whereas his mother was English. He was born and grew up in the suburbs of South London. *The Buddha of Suburbia* at first seems to be describing his personal autobiographical background. Since the beginning of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi opens with a quite strong self-conscious confirmation:

“My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though I am not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not that makes me restless and easily bored”⁵⁸.

⁵⁸Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, London, Faber and Faber, 1990, p.3. (Henceforth, all quotation will be in parenthesis with page numbers and will refer as BS)

Taking into consideration the lines above, what catches immediately the attention is that with some considerable amount of stubbornness, he emphasizes being an Englishman born and bred. No one can put the blame on him. He is right as long as he feels in all aspects an Englishman. One cannot blame someone for who he/she feels as it is thanks to the environment in which one is grown and it is the environment that dictates who you are. In deeper level, it leads to think that the entire novel goes into little circles explaining through well selected words and scenes the meaning of becoming, behaving or being an Englishman, on the other hand it informs on the opposition and the contrast that the discourse on Englishness happens to be.

While examining in detail Karim's speech, strangely enough, for some reason it sounds to produce a double message. So speaking, the first message is already known as he clearly declares it quite openly, that is his nationality. The other reason is somehow hidden, though the voice and the tone of his speech cannot be mistaken. In other words, the voice and the tone seem to be a submissive voice. You would well ask me why? And I would explain you in a minute the reason; first and foremost, Karim wants to make clear that one can pertain to whatever nationality supposing he/she feels part of that particular society, part of that determined language.

Nevertheless, the submissive voice is to tell people that he does not care anymore about his being considered a new funny kind of Englishman. Having emerged from two different cultures is a fact, and that should be taken into consideration as it does support the values that exist in both cultures. That should

be more important than the single fact of being considered or stereotyped as something else, worse non-classified at all or assigned with negative nicknames. No matter how English one would feel deep inside. There are enough visible external elements, the colour of the skin as well as their customs that would always make native inhabitants inquisitive and keep an alert eye. These are some of the main reasons why the immigrants were considered as wogs, nigs and Pakis as it is explained in the lines below:

“The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it”(p. 63. BS).

On the other hand, *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a hymn to two different generations, fathers and children. This generation gap is showed in a parallel way from two diverse visions and ways of how each of them deals with the discourse of displacement. H. Kureishi goes on claiming since the very first lines the importance and all sorts of implications that comes with growing up between two old histories.

Through Karim he depicts all the second-generations immigrants who find themselves “restless, dissatisfied, yearning for more, ultimately serious and saddened awareness of loss”⁵⁹. Karim happens to be in a permanent displacement: from India to England, from the suburbs to the city, from London

⁵⁹Susie Thomas, *A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 62.

to New York. All this displacement makes Karim even more aware about his displacement and at the same time making space for the new aspirations.

Though, the one who really feels displaced and stuck somewhere in the middle, between the place and the early memories is Haroon, Karim's father. It is thanks to the memoirs that he can reach his childhood and the culture of his country. Gaining awareness and paying attention to the oriental philosophy as much as giving yoga lessons is a way that induce to think that once you have certain roots entrenched in your own body and mind it is not easy to forget where do you come from and who you are.

Therefore, the father of Haroon even after twenty long years struggles to find the right orientation. Even though, it is quite a long spatial time, which allows getting used with the place one have been living in. However, Karim's father seems to have stopped there as if it was a kind of protest against the foreign customs or uses. His brain never ceases to preserve its original roots. In so doing he reminds all those people who have just arrived in Britain and feels lost and deprived from any sense of affection. Karim's father seems to have stopped at the beginning where everything started:

“Dad had been in Britain since 1950- over twenty years- and for fifteen of those years he'd lived in the South London suburbs. Yet he still stumbles around the place like an Indian just off the boat, and asked questions like, ‘Is Dover in Kent?’... I sweated with embarrassment when he halted strangers in the streets to ask directions to places that were a hundred yards away in an area where he'd lived almost twenty years” (p. 7. BS).

This kind of unfamiliarity with the place, never feeling part of the place even after twenty years shows nothing less than the break, a discontinuity and the lack of creating a close relationship with the place where Haroon have been living for twenty long years. That is still present regardless of the very long time. The form of discontinuity is brought back first from the memoirs of Karim and then from Haroon himself as he gets busy to give yoga classes.

Another very important element that should be mentioned here is imagination. When speaking about imagination it is not referring to a personal imagination, but to imagination as an experienced moment in a precise time and place. Keep that moment vivid in mind for a long time, though one has not been living there necessary. At this point, imagination for immigrants becomes more like a dream that comes back now and then, but in a limited way. In such regard, Kureishi, becomes the leading voice of the truth, the one who negotiates between the past and the present:

“We old Indians come to like this England less and less and we return to an imagined India”(p.74. BS).

Catching hold of habits and customs of ones original provenance is a way of keeping hold to the identity that one feels familiar with. Another very important reason why people, in this case the immigrants, keeps reproducing habits and customs is for fear of losing them. The best way to maintain them safe is to practice them. Above all, it helps to keep burning in their minds and

veins the bond of membership, the affinity of rituals, and ceremonies that distinguishes them from the others. All these issues pull them together in breaking the present status of discontinuity in the lives of immigrants.

Unlike the other immigrants who came to England for economic reasons, Haroon was sent from his family in England to be schooled, so that one day he would go back to India with qualified qualities that would recall an English gentlemen.

What is interesting in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is that Kureishi not only makes an overall situation about immigrants, but he also shows the situation and the conditions in which London citizens were living. Among other things poverty and ignorance were two very delicate issues that reined in the England of the 1950s. Kureishi depicts England like this:

“He’d never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers, and barmen. He’d never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told him that the English didn’t wash regularly because the water was so cold - if they had water at all. And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or that they didn’t necessarily want tutoring by an Indian...”(pp. 24 -25. BS)

England seen from the eyes of a foreigner who thought it to be a kind of paradise, but in reality it is far from the myth that they have created in their minds. While reading the paragraph above, England seem to be quite a controversial country not only for its inhabitants, but at the same time for those

who come from outside like Haroon. People who are considered like wog, nig or Paki can read and write, whereas the English inhabitants cannot.

Unlike other writers Kureishi depicted London as “a house with five thousand rooms”⁶⁰ a signal that London is divided into little worlds that every one can manage to find and look for what is interested in. Having experienced different cultural changes that Britain has gone through, especially in the 1950s, when huge immigration flows came from all parts of the world must have led a great impact on British society as well as in the life of the author first as a child and then as an adult.

Most probably, all these changes pushed Kureishi “into the role of the commentator”⁶¹. However, his personal experience differs from postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie, Sam Selvon, and V.S. Naipaul, authors these that he is often compared with. It differs in the way H. Kureishi lives and interprets various situations that captivates his attention but still that is different for the indisputable fact that he was born in South London. Leaving behind the possibility that he might have gone through repercussions being a half-breed English. And it is equally true that most of the images and references he uses in *The Buddha of Suburbia* reflect the effectiveness of showing the environment and at the same time the nature in which everything is bound to happen around a heterogeneous society, as it is that of London.

⁶⁰Hanif Kureishi, op. cit., p. 126.

⁶¹Bradley Buchanan, *Hanif Kureishi*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1997, p. 13.

Perhaps, it happens precisely due to this ready-made background that H. Kureishi's commitment in evidencing directly with some hints of direct vision of feelings, customs, rituals, etc. Subjects these that demonstrate the actual condition and disposition to the practice of being displaced. Though, the image of Haroon dressed up in Indian clothes goes a step backward as it simultaneously shows the vanished tension, and above all making a step forward in feeling accepted and in turn approaching to accept his own culture in the eyes of the others, but first and foremost in his being. This scenario is created on purpose as it allows seeing the never-ending distance that goes on in a chain reaction, from the way of dressing to the way of behaving.

On the contrary, all this never-ending displacement, discontinuity, or better say the continuity of the displayed nostalgia in the lives of immigrants implies a rejection from both sides. First, from the original culture, second, from the new acquired one, that of the host country. The long lasting nostalgia prevents immigrants from living neither here nor there. To them is like living in the present and thinking about the past. The most hurtful part of it all is that it causes a self-isolation, which draws to other huger problematic issues such as rejection of accepting other cultures and societies. Since it is known, when living in a multifaceted society, acceptance is a necessary peculiarity to not be shut out from the community one live.

In spite of the characters and the scenarios that H. Kureishi depicts, unlike the other authors, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, and H. Kureishi has been criticised as an author who "is not a displaced postcolonial writing back to the

centre; he writes from the center”⁶². Because of his personal position, being grown up by an immigrant father and an English mother. He is consciously able to write and describe both societies without taking sides.

Maybe, it is exactly for this reason that Kureishi is able to give an overall insight of both cultures. At some point he feels to pertain to both cultures, though his entire life has been rooted in England, in the soil of the Empire, in the soil of the power. Although he writes from the centre, the evidences demonstrate that he is perfectly conscious of wanting to highlight, praise and why not criticise the characteristics of each country, from a citizen standpoint.

⁶²*Ibid.* p. 13

CHAPTER 3

3.1 A Comparison of Migrations from 1950 to 2012

Since our society has always been and it will continue to be constantly in movement, it is not that hard to calculate the overall reasons and conclusions that have reached to leave an indelible mark not only on the individual perspective of those who have experienced immigration, but also on the international history. Not to mention, the changes: the pros and cons that different societies, which has been subjected thanks to continuous movements. Given the constant mobility, people have come to understand and shape the meaning of the world from different backgrounds and with different eyes.

Going back on time and see how these relocations happened to be, with what kind of vehicles, and above all for what reasons, certainly it could be found out that the reasons as well as the means of transport were the same as nowadays are. Not limiting ourselves to analyse just a single area, but giving the same amount of importance to many other different fields, such as historical facts, literary facts, and everyday happenings, which draws to the conclusion that most of them leads to a specific means of transport: the ship.

According to Ioanna Laliotou, “the ship became a signifier of the interrelation between travelling, survival, and the importance of opportunity networks”⁶³.

Often, in the memory of people, the ship is associated and related to the history of immigration. Therefore, in this case, the ship serves as a steppingstone in search for better opportunities of work. It is a starting point of transformation in time, in the lives of each person who have experienced immigration from an external as well as internal point of view.

Nowadays instead, with the development of Hi – Tech, are applied many other means of transport to move from one country to another. Thanks to these technologies immigrants, literally walk from one place to another. Notwithstanding, this happens with neighbour countries as it allows them to go back and forth without making lots of efforts. On the other side it helps them to not make a profound and definitive break with their countries.

The confrontation between past and present times in the lives of immigrants starts establishing at the moment when the migrants leave their homeland, and it is a process that continues for a long time. It is just like one-way direction, but in fact it is more than that. Although their life goes on in the present, the memory of life in homeland makes recollections from the past. Living the present with such strength of nostalgia for having left their homes and

⁶³Ioanna Laliotou, *Transatlantic Subjects, Acts of Migration and Cultures of Transnationalism Between Greece and America*, Chicago, Chicago Press, 2004, p.139.

their beloved, it becomes an agency of obstruction for their naturalization in the new destination country. For such reasons, it can be stated that the entire process of moving from one country to another has not changed that much. What is different instead, is the way in which each and every single person deals with the experience of immigration.

Through the course of the years, migration happened for different reasons. Taking for granted all sorts of immigration that exist, from natural disasters to voluntary or forced immigration, to war and conflict reasons in their origin habitat. As a consequence of the latter reasons, the immigrant, according to specific laws and policies are determined with different names; for instance, just to mention one, asylum seekers who have experienced war or political conflict in their birthplace.

Though, I am ranging an overall situation, it is necessary to make a more appropriate and detailed research, which could lead to a reasonable comparison. Unfortunately, I cannot do this, as I would need to make reference to specific countries, which have experienced a great number of immigrants, yet there are many studies done on single countries as well as specific communities of migrants regarding their peculiarities which differ from one community to the other, from one host country to the other. Only in this way evidences cannot be faulty, as it is the right manner and observation to deal with evidences. In this regard, the evidence becomes a form of testimony or rather a witness that could be given to inform or whether to not let down in fallacy the public opinion or anyone who is interested on migration issues.

Since the situation regarding immigration has remained mainly unaltered except for laws and legislation that changes every day in order to support or rather to block illegal immigrants in reaching the destination country, it comes naturally to ask what about the laws and the policies that accommodate and adjust the immigrants in the country they immigrate? Upon what basis do they deal with the immigrants? How do they work? What about the economic impact that comes with the immigration inflows?

What have changed a lot since the 1950s, are the policies as well as the people's approach to the phenomenon of migration. Though, it is necessary to consider the fact that every country applies policy regarding immigration issues in a different way. Firstly, it is necessary to differentiate that such policies include a difference between International laws and National laws. To such extent, IOM (International Organization for Migration) explains the reason why do we need these policies and norms:

“Historically, migration was, for the most part, only regulated at the national level. National legislation was the only relevant law in migration field. With the increase on global mobility, States have begun to realize that migration is no longer something that they can manage alone. They have recognized the need for regional and international cooperation on the issue”⁶⁴.

⁶⁴IOM, International Organization for Migration, *International Law*, Section 1.6, p. 3.

At this point, the first thing that immigrants have to keep in mind when immigrating to another country, are the laws and the policy of the country they are intending to settle in. Then, in a second moment these laws are applied in agreement with other international legislation regulation. The laws and the policies that reconcile the immigrant with the country in which they emigrate are many, but since I cannot provide all of them, suffice to say that with the passing time and the acquisition of the needed documentation from the part of the immigrant it allows the immigrant to manage better the feeling of alienation and displacement, as they feel somehow accepted, at least from a legal and legislation point of view.

Other sources that nowadays encourage and help immigrants to establish a certain familiarization as well as naturalisation with the country that they have immigrated and have chosen to settle to settle in are: Media, and other international or national agencies that deal with migration issues.

Most of the above mentioned sources were less present in the lives of the immigrants in the 1950s, or to some extent they were missing at all. Surely, the lack of these sources, and often times the misuse of information has worked negatively upon the status of immigrants. The fallacy of evidences, and the inadequate used language to inform the public opinion have caused serious troubles regarding the position of migration in helping to comprehend their primary necessities and needs, not to mention the relationship with the natives of the receiving country.

As a consequence of this global immigration, there does exist a multitude of agencies that deal with, and regulate such issues. Just to give a quick insight, I could mention some of them, GMG, IOM, ILO, OECD⁶⁵, etc., though it is obvious that the list could go on. All these agencies work together, and are a helping hand for a world on the move. Besides the great number of agencies, another important ally to be added up to the nowadays comparison list is that of the Media.

Traditional journalism, over the years have presented quite a distorted concept about immigration issues as well as immigrants. Comparing with the 1950s, journalism nowadays has gone through a pronounced transformation. Webs and sources of information have multiplied and people are free to choose any kind of Media and newspaper they like to get the information they want. Today, people are aware and cannot deny the power of Media as a means of communication since it gives account on facts and happenings over the world. Over the years, Media has been occupying a highly influential role in everyday life; it also influences the public opinion and the decision-making of people. For these reasons, it has a valuable importance, on broadcasting information and report issues of politics, economics or any other area.

For this reason, it is necessary that the language and the professionalism of the journalists must be accurate in order to not inflict any kind of distortion in the reality of the facts that they are trying to demonstrate. Portraying facts

⁶⁵GMG (*Global Migration Group*), IOM (*International Organization for Migration*), ILO (*International Labour Organisation*)

without hesitating, heightening or obscuring the continuity of policymaking. Moreover, Media must be impartial while investigating; all it needs to be shown are facts. So that they do not cause contradictions in public opinion by deforming the truth as journalism has been doing through the past years, especially with immigration issues:

“Over the course of many years, traditional journalism presented a distorted portrayal of immigration; when the new forms of media supercharged that portrayal, the search for policy compromises became more difficult”⁶⁶.

Notwithstanding, journalism is one of the most widely diffused forms of getting information regarding different issues, policies, economics, etc.

Since this chapter is about the comparison of migration through years, and have gained awareness that the most diffused forms, among others is that of economic reasons. Though, each of the above forms are considered, studied and seen differently from statistics, as well as point of views.

The question is: what other forms of migration are inasmuch developed as the migration for economic reason is? Does there exist other forms that worry

⁶⁶The Norman Lear Centre, *A Report on the Media and Migration Debate, Democracy on the Age of New Media*:
http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Events/2008/9/25%20media%20immigration/0925_immigration_dionne.PDF

the original country, and by original country I mean from where the migration starts, and that probably the destination country might have a profit in it? If yes, what?

The answer is, yes! There are other forms of immigration. Therefore, from this point onwards, I would like to talk and discuss about the well-known phenomenon of brain drain, and the economic impacts of skilled immigration in the host countries. First, what is brain drain? Basically, it is the migration of highly skilled people, from poor to rich countries. It happens mainly for labour shortage in their native countries. Another reason is that probably these people have got better offers from other companies that are established in developed industrial countries. According to some statistics made by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this phenomenon seems “threatens development”⁶⁷.

In addition, it also suggests, “the effect of highly skilled emigration is not always negative”⁶⁸ as often times it allows an exchange between countries, which means “migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries”⁶⁹ Referring to these statistics, the exchange between countries appears to lead in positive effect of sending and receiving immigrants, though it is enough clear that the developing countries lose more than what they earn. But, when does migration

⁶⁷OECD, *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*, <http://www.oecd.org/social/povertyreductionandsocialdevelopment/migrationandthebrainrainphenomenon.htm>

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

have a positive effect on development?⁷⁰ According to Louka T. Katseli and Theodora Xenogiani, it depends on two facts:

“Low-skilled migrants typically contribute more to poverty reduction in their countries of origin than higher-skilled professionals, because they tend to originate from lower-income families and communities and their departure opens opportunities for other low-skilled workers to replace them; they also remit more per person...”⁷¹

On this basis, skilled immigrants seem to be a double positive resource, not only for their country, but also for the country that receives them. They are a resource for the native country, as they support the economy and their families by providing remittances for them. Nevertheless, the sending country loses the most skilled power work force, which mostly need in order to provide healthier and better conditions for its citizens. Instead, in turn, the receiving country gets a ready made, and skilled professionals without paying for his/her education. On the other side, Jagdish Bhagwati, in comparison with Katseli and Xenogiani affirms that:

“It is widely believed that skilled immigrants create fewer assimilation problems and are more desirable in modern knowledge-based economies than unskilled immigrants”⁷²

⁷⁰Louka T. Katseli and Theodora Xenogiani, *Migration: A Negative or a Positive Driver for Development?* OECD, Development Centre, Policy Insights, no, 29, September 2005.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²Jagdish Bhagwati, Gordon Hanson, *Skilled Immigration Today; Prospects, Problems and Policies*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009. p. 3, February 2, 2013. <http://www.amazon.com/Skilled-Immigration-Today-Prospects-Problems/dp/0195382439>

Jagdish Bhagwati goes on saying that “the average citizen will feel less threatened by skilled immigrants, for assimilation reasons and because the skilled immigrants are not perceived as a drain on the fiscal situation”⁷³

As it can be noticed from the above statistic skilled immigrants not only encounter fewer problems regarding the naturalization, but also seem to be even more welcomed than low skilled immigrants for safety reasons.

Despite safety reasons, skilled immigration as George J. Borjas affirms and analyzes, have great impact on the economy of the host country. Therefore, the natives do benefit from skilled immigration as they bring into the economy of the natives a different input from the stock overall productivity of the native workers:

“...natives do benefit from immigration mainly because of production complementarities between immigrant workers and other factors of production, and that these benefits are larger when immigrants are sufficiently "different" from the stock of native productive inputs”⁷⁴.

What is even more interesting is that Borjas maintains that the host countries would keep higher benefits if they would provide immigration policies that would attract skilled immigration inflows. He also stresses the fact that host

⁷³*Ibid.* p. 5.

⁷⁴George J. Borjas, *The Economy Benefits from Emigration*, “*The Journal of Economic Perspectives*”, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Spring, 1995), pp. 3-22, February 2, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2138164?origin=JSTOR-pdf>

countries benefits from skilled immigrants, whereas the developing countries lose and win at the same time. The major loss of the developing countries is exactly this skilled work force, which is one of the most important wealth that a country need in order to provide and guarantee services that would better the conditions of its citizens.

In another survey lead by Harvard Business School, regarding the economic impacts of immigration⁷⁵ on the labour market, it is focused that skilled immigrant tend to have higher wages than unskilled immigrant. Yet, the wage of the immigrants increases with the passing of the years and its permanent stay in the same country. The brain drain coming from developing countries is transformed in skilled immigration as soon as they reach the destination country. At this point The Word Bank lead a survey where the skilled migration is controlled and divided by age group, and country given in percentage. For further information consult The World Bank Research⁷⁶.

It is quite obvious that the overall situation given above refers to modern times, or else the recent years. Since the immigration policies have changed over the years, in the 1950s skilled immigration was much different then today is. Albeit in the 1950s, the demand for work force was a general need for labour force. All the same there were fields where skilled immigrants were required.

⁷⁵Sari Pekkala Kerr and William R. Kerr, *Economic Impacts of Immigration; A Survey*, Harvard University and NBER, January 15, 2011.

⁷⁶The World Bank Research, “*Measuring International Skilled Migration*”, World Bank (2006) February 5, 2013.
<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/0,,contentMDK:21085139~pagePK:64214825~piPK:64214943~theSitePK:469382,00.html>

These fields were in different institutions, nursery, teachers, engineers, etc., besides the percentage of skilled immigrants was lower than in the recent years.

From the 1990s, the demand for skilled immigrants has increased, and the “governments has had to relax long- standing work permit rules in order to remain competitive...”⁷⁷. Above all, in the last twenty years or so, the immigration policies criteria has come to favour the skilled migrants:

“policies now favour highly qualified, educated, well-off immigrants; very few places still exist for unskilled workers unless they qualify under family reunion programmes. Economic criteria also are applied in the selection of business migrants who bring capital and establish businesses”⁷⁸.

Taking into consideration the great number of demands for highly skilled migrants, and that the economic criteria of each country demand in order to have high competitiveness in human resources, Hi- Tech, economy, engineering etc., therefore the necessity to hire qualified workers who provide and are able to contribute with their qualities to the host country.

In the same way, skilled immigrants have provided a positive public opinion on their behalf. Surely, from this point of view, native citizens probably have come to analyse and to approach immigrants in a different way.

⁷⁷Appleyard, *International Migration Policies: 1950-2000*, Vol. 39, (6) SI 2/ 2001, pp. 7-20, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1111/1468-2435.00176/asset/1468-2435.00176.pdf?v=1&t=hcta47v4&s=47f539ff92fb40907eff953166298c39fad4b93b>

⁷⁸*Ibid*

Thereof, the public attitude towards immigrants, comparing with the 1950s, nowadays has become more aware of the other, and that the world is everyday and more on the move.

Therefore, making attempts not only to accept immigrants, but coming to think that somehow they need them. What is certain nowadays is that world is not considered anymore as it used to be, a limited geographical and physical border. The latter definitions are not anymore a barrier; they have come to be shaped in cultural borders, in an intermixing of change and exchange of opinions and cultures. The border is just a physical and visible entity where laws have to be respected, but what brings us all together is freedom, goodwill to surpass those physical and visible borders in order to leave enough space for the exchange of opinions and experiences, that to me is more important than any other physical border.

In conclusion, it is not really easy to make a comparison, but what has really changed since the 1950s is our way of reckoning the world, the way it is perceived. More than making a simple comparison, I tried to explain the differences or how things have changed, most of the times for better. Above all, how have changed some specific issues. Perhaps, the falling of the geographical borders has worked on people, and has changed the old opinions that used to have into new ones.

3.2 Conclusions

As the title of this thesis announces, its aim is to give an overall view of immigration issues over the years and make a comparison with today immigration. In such regard, this issue will be analyzed through the novel of Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*.

The beginning of mass immigration in England starts immediately after the Second World War, and subsequently later with the withdrawal of British troops from the Colonies. According to the British Nationality Act of 1948, all members of the Empire who had the endorsement of “British Subject” or “Commonwealth citizen” were granted free access to the so - called “mother nation” upon such law. People who had such endorsement took such right on their behalf, creating certain confusion, and a status of off-guard for the British Government.

From this point onwards, the influx of people immigrating to England grew more and more in the years to come. For this reason, things started going beyond the reach and the expectations of the British Government. From the 1950s until the 1970s there was an immigration boom coming not only from the ex British colonies, but at the same time from over the world.

As the influx of immigrants coming from the West Indies and the Caribbean continued growing drastically, the government started applying severe measures in order to stop the flow. Legislation and policy regarding such

issues changed very often. The changes sometimes involved revoking the previous laws and putting into action new ones - other times just changing drastically or improving in such way that would prevent immigrants to reach the “mother nation”. For instance, The Aliens Act 1964, Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968, Immigration Appeals Act in 1969, were laws that adjusted and controlled the entrance to England on the basis of the “right of abode” or “patrials”- these being people who had one of their parents, most of the times the father, born in England. Then, the legislation policy started categorizing immigrants according to the England’s market labour needs: professionally qualified, skilled workers, and unskilled workers.

The post-war England, though on one hand needed a low wage workforce to build up the cities and the economy of the country, on the other hand, it could not afford to have a multitude of citizens coming in search to better their life conditions. This was because the increase of the native population influenced the shortage of those few vacancies that were available for the natives. At this point, the immigration work force worsened the situation, but yet it was a low wage work force that Britain could not afford to lose.

Besides, as a consequence of this mass immigration, England, and specifically London suffered serious problems in housing shortage, and it had a hard time in providing accommodation for its citizens. Therefore, those who would suffer the most from the burden of housing shortage were immigrants. If they were lucky enough to find a place to sleep, and could afford the high rents

of the landlords, it was sure that it was to be found in the poorest areas of London.

It is in the light of this historical contest that the literature of realism started, and especially that of Sam Selvon, a West Indian writer who told the story of a group of immigrants who get to know each other in different situations of everyday London life. Furthermore, Selvon explains the experience of immigrants; their struggles, their displacement and alienation; their first impressions, not only of the country, but also with language and the enormous discrimination as well as the difficulties that they face in London.

Moreover, Selvon's novel, *The Lonely Londoners* describes the process of black immigration from the beginning, namely, the moment when the immigrants leave their country until the moment they reach the destination country, and it goes on telling the way that they manage to get used to a new British life style. Above all, it describes how they experience the status of migrancy.

The novel itself, represents "a scale that marks twentieth-century migration from the periphery to the metropolitan world"⁷⁹. *The Lonely Londoners*, as well as the other two novels; *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Satanic Verses*, "chooses as his literary territory the in-between space of the

⁷⁹Shailja Sharma, *Salman Rushdie: The Ambivalence of Migrancy*, Hofstra University, "Twentieth Century Literature", Vol. 47, No. 4, Salman Rushdie (Winter, 2001), pp. 596- 618. December 8, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175995>

immigrant, with the bilingual, bicultural baggage this involves”⁸⁰. Moreover, *The Lonely Londoners* is written in a creolized form of language to render better the idea of the newcomer, the immigrant.

The world of the past century has been a metaphor for “where migrancy and travel become the tropes of the twentieth- century life”⁸¹. Thereon, it is still on a continuously changing, my aim and intention was to analyze and make comparison between previous and current forms of immigration.

Everyday we hear news and stories of people who go to make their living in a different country. America has been and it still is one of the countries with the highest percentage of immigrants. Europe seems to have a more recent immigration history than America, yet in the recent decades, Europe has been one of the most targeted areas to be affected by continuous inflows of immigration, coming mainly from the confining countries. People on the move who wants to improve their way of life.

People often tend to get a wrong idea, supposing they have an idea in their own relating to the issue of immigration. Not because they do not want to, but often times people limit themselves, for different reasons, to ready made news given from the Media, not worrying any further to discover or to make research if what Medias say is the right way, how do they portray or depict the situation of immigration.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*

What I wanted to focus on this thesis was exactly the experience of immigrants in the simplest way possible, by taking into consideration historical facts, than highlighting the feelings of alienation: displacement, discrimination, and racism. All this was possible from the literary point of view that of migration literature. It motivated me to read more and more because the shared feelings and ideas of different authors, such as Sam Selvon, Salman Rushdie, and Hanif Kureishi just to mention a few, who give voice to the profound human pain that these people experience.



Paul Gilroy, Black Britain: A photographic History



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