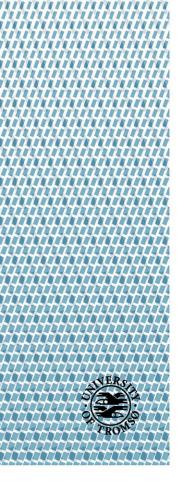UiT

THE ARCTIC
UNIVERSITY
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The New Barbarians Are Coming?

A Postcolonial Reading of the Hybrid Identity Construction of London Immigrants in Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners *(1956) and Rose Tremain's* The Road Home *(2007)*

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Master thesis in English Literature November 2016
ENG - 3992

UNIVERSITY OF TROMSØ

Abstract

This thesis performs a comparative investigation of the identity reconfiguration of the immigrants to London coming from the former British colonies in the 1950s, and those coming from the Eastern European states after the European Union integration respectively. It uses Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Rose Tremain's *The Road Home* (2007)*,* novels that are contextually connected to these two distinct social-historical periods. The analysis focuses on the immigrants' identity reconfiguration process that the contact with the diasporic milieu triggers. This study depicts characters who challenge the fixed categories of identification promoted by the colonial discourse, by demonstrating the possibility of developing a hybrid identity that bears the marks of both the ancestral and metropolitan cultures.

In order to perform a thorough scrutiny of the identity reconfiguration situations that the narratives depict, the investigation takes conceptual support in the Postcolonial critical theory. *Hybridity,* which represents the pivotal concept, is defined in accordance with the theory developed by Homi K. Bhbaha in *The Location of Culture.* Since Post-Communist literature proves to be an undertheorised field, the study proposes the use of Postcolonialism as a transferable theoretical platform serving the comparative investigation of these two areas.

The identity hybridisation in the diasporic space is illustrated in both novels through a series of figurative representations of mobility, space, and language. The thesis analyses mobility trope, considering both the voyages that immigrants take to, and inside metropolitan London. Since a journey implies a point of departure and a destination, the space in-between is perceived as the *third space* that develops between the cultural representations of the homeland and of the metropolis. This is a space that favours identity hybridisation. Mobility implies, however, its dialectic opposite, i.e. settlement. The immigrants depicted by Selvon and Treamain are constantly looking for a place to settle, a location that reproduces the mental home from the homeland. They therefore engage in a process of inscribing the metropolitan space with traces of the ancestral culture they bring along while simultaneously mimicking the local culture, which results into a new, hybrid identity. Language is in this context a major form of hybrid aesthetical representation. The study examines the linguistic strategies that immigrants employ in developing a hybrid identity through the use of creolised discourse, thus challenging the monopoly of the standard language.

By bringing forth an inconspicuous contemporary text to be compared with a canonical postcolonial novel this thesis intends to offer some insights into the similarities of the diasporic experience that immigrants from two distinct, yet comparable social-historical contexts undergo.

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1. Introduction

Never before has the term identity been so central to sociological research and cultural production as it is today, in the age of mass migration and multicultural coexistence. In this thesis I perform a comparative study of the 1956 novel *The Lonely Londoners* (Selvon) and *The Road Home* from 2007 (Tremain), works that represent historically heterogeneous literary frameworks, but employ migrant identity as a paramount trope of aesthetical exploration. My study demonstrates the connection between the works of Sam Selvon and Rose Tremaine by highlighting how the socio-cultural-economic environment impacts the subjectivity of characters who experience the migrant disorientation in two specific historical moments. At the same time, I promote a cross-cultural/historical approach that allows my study to go beyond the postcolonial paradigm of cultural and literary studies and employ this widely explored theoretical framework within the less examined field of post-communist literature. My intention is to prove that postcolonial theory and literature are not circumscribed to their traditional disciplinary boundaries, but they are rather flexible research areas, open to comparative analysis and creative transposition of methodological devices.

A pervasive attribute of the first generation immigrants, which informs the narratives of both novels, refers to specific challenges and opportunities accompanying their association with two cultures, allowing immigrants to continuously negotiate an intermediate position within and between two cultures. Inside the diasporic space, the protagonists of these novels become subjects that occupy a middle ground where they practice their original cultures, i. e. Trinidadian or Eastern European respectively, and equally mimic the British lifestyle and values.

This thesis sets out to investigate the thematisation and articulation of identity negotiations of labour immigrants to London in the novels *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home,* focusing on protagonist experiences that engender the hybrid condition of alien settlers in the metropolis. Moreover, I am interested in examining aspects of postcoloniality that occur at the contact of immigrants from both the former British colonies and former Communist countries and the British society. Instances of *Orientalism* and *Othering* depicted in the two literary texts contribute to (re)shaping the identity of the post-colonial/communist

immigrants to Britain, by trying to demonstrate the fixity and finality of a socially constructed identity that metropolitan natives tend to link with the category of immigrant. Furthermore, I address the questions of how the variation in meaning of the concepts *mobility* and *home* triggers immigrants' identity reconfiguration in a context of both physical and cultural displacement, and how the linguistic registers accompanying the immigrant experience impact the subject's identity.

In the Western tradition, each individual is expected to accept one's place within the system of identity categories, presuming that individuals have a *natural* or *true* identity that is entrenched and immutable. However, the poststructuralist approach of the study challenges the idea of stable identity structures by reversing the allegedly stable binary oppositions between cultural centre and periphery (Klages 54). This allows a reassessment of subjectivity as a category that is socially constructed through a series of discursive, political and cultural mechanisms. As Jerome Bruner contends, "there is no such thing as an intuitively obvious and essential self to know, one that just sits there ready to be portrayed in words. Rather, we, humans constantly construct and reconstruct our selves to meet the needs of the situation we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future" (Bruner 4). Identity is, thereby, a category that does not simply accompany us, humans, as an attribute granted inherently by our nature, but rather is shaped and motivated by personal choice and critical engagement with the proximate social environment.

My study firstly scrutinises the theoretical perspectives that explain the reconfiguration of immigrant identity, focusing mainly on Bhabha's theory of *hybridity,* who, in *The Location of Culture,* demonstrates the possibility of assuming a fluid identity in postcolonial context (Bhabha). On this theoretical basis, I explore the elements of postcoloniality at textual level in the ensuing analysis chapters. I employ Selvon's text as a representative sample of postcolonial literature in order to demonstrate how instances of border crossing and journeys (Chapter Three), the reassessment of space perception (Chapter Four), and linguistic ambivalence (Chapter Five) contribute to the construction of hybrid identity. I simultaneously perform a comparison with Rose Tremain's contemporary novel, focusing the analysis on the protagonists' analogous diasporic experiences and on the comparable mechanisms of identity reconfiguration they trigger.

My purpose is, however, not to investigate the terms Postcolonialism, mobility (both social and physical), and space *per se,* but rather to explore of how they contribute to the explanation of the main concept, i.e. identity. My main concern is therefore to examine how the trope of fluid identity is employed as an antidote to the essentialist theories that attempt to circumscribe human subjectivity within certain *naturally* established patterns of identification, which are allegedly predetermined and immutable.

2. Narrative Backdrop, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology

2.1 Contextualising the Diasporic Identity of London Labour Immigrants

> *"Hybridity is the sign of productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (...) thus, making the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different"* (Bhabha 158)

The historical context that informs this thesis relates to the major social mutations that occurred in the wake of World War II (1939-1945), which triggered the dissolution of the British Empire, and later the EU integration of post-communist countries following the fall of the Iron Curtain (1989). Both events have impacted British society, particularly London, reshaping its ethnic and social configuration, as substantial immigration followed from the former British colonies, and then from the new EU member states.

The austerity caused by the war effort changed into opulence and dramatic economic growth during the 1950s. This has triggered an acute labour force shortage that the *Mother Country* met by inviting subjects from the former empire to contribute to the post-war reconstruction (Prescott 19). Among them, many Caribbeans embarked the famed *SS Empire Windrush*, a boat that gained mythical status in the construction of the Caribbean immigrants' identity within Britain, some of them to work in factories, some in the transport sector, while still others in public services. Yet, many were dependents, following their family members who had migrated during the first wave of the 50s (McLeod 236). With the Commonwealth of Nations[1] emerging on the remains of the British Empire, a wide variety of diasporic communities were set up in London "transforming the heart of the empire into their new home land"(Wolfe 3). John McLeod contends in the introduction to *Postcolonial London* that "there is another London being created here, one which admits the times and places of overseas to the supposedly humdrum heart of the aged British Empire, creating a novel environment which also epitomizes the perpetually changing milieu of city living" (McLeod, *Postcolonial*

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[1] The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states that have previously been part of the British Empire, and which sustain a set of shared values as mutual respect, resilience, peace and prosperity, equality, and diversity as stated in The Commonwealth Charter. (Commowealth)

London: Rewriting the Metropolis 1). Therefore, the convergence of the metropolitan culture and that of the immigrants during the 1950s altered the English urban space by shattering such notions as cultural homogeneity and ethnic sterility. Hybridity thus became a common metaphor delineating factual social structures and ordinary forms of cultural and linguistic expression in the age of Postcolonialism.

The structural changes of the 1950s at societal level have triggered both popular and political reactions culminating with the "keep Brit'n White" campaign in the 1970s, which represented the response of the Conservative camp to the emergence of multiculturalism. Similarly, the *besieged fortress syndrome* recurred in the wake of the European Union extension in 2004, which entailed the enactment of the free movement of labour policy. Thereby, the labour immigration to Britain from the EU countries has boosted to an impressive 3,3 million people between 2011 and 2016, according to the Migration Observatory at the Oxford University (The Migration Observatory), of which roughly 70% originate from countries of the former Communist Bloc. Comparably to the 1950s, controversies over the distribution of social benefits and disturbances on the labour market escalated and precipitated the pro *Brexit*[2] outcome of the 23rd of June 2016 referendum.

However, this model of societal development reflects a broader cultural reconfiguration of the British ethos that concretised in expanded multiculturalism and substantial manifestation of hybrid identitary constructions. Interpreting the social context that *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home* reproduce, this study captures the different degrees of hybridisation of the characters and explicates the instrumental conditions that govern the variance of engagement in the hybridisation process notwithstanding both the textual and contextual similarities of the narrative situations.

2.2 Selvon, Tremain, and the Relevance of Comparing the Postcolonial and Post-Communist Immigrant Identity in Literary Texts

I draw Sam Selvon and Rose Tremain together in this thesis in order to compare complex migrant experiences that trigger the construction of immigrant hybrid identities in different literary/cultural contexts. Their juxtaposition is based on both the political

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[2] *Brexit* is a word that has become used as a shorthand way of saying the UK leaving the EU - merging the words **Br**itain and **exit** (Wheeler and Hunt)

convictions they carry and the thematic similarities, despite the distinct cultural backgrounds, stylistic *modus operandi* and critical reception.

2.2.1 Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners

Sam Selvon has enjoyed the attention of critics and the widespread recognition as "one of the most popular and internationally distinguished of contemporary Caribbean writers" (Nasta 1). His fiction has made him an influential voice in contemporary Anglophone literature, as it extends over a crucial period of the emergence of black literature in Britain, depicting in a personal manner the Postcolonial ethos in both his native Trinidad and his adoptive Britain. The preoccupation with questions of identity hybridisation has been identified as one of Selvon's central themes since the publication of his first novels. Biographical particularities – he grew up in Trinidad in a mixed East Indian and Scottish family that provided a creolised and multicultural formative environment – may be the backdrop of his concern for scrutinising identity tropes in literature and for his engagement with Postcolonial political thought as an overarching ideological narrative framework informing his fiction. In 1950, Selvon migrated to London, as many other compatriots did, in search of work (Nasta 1). He was already an aspiring author and London represented an attractive milieu for many soon-to-be major Caribbean writers, such as George Lamming, Andrew Salkey, Michael Anthony, Stuart Hall, and V. S. Naipaul, who would constitute what David Dabydeen designated as the *Windrush generation* (Dabydeen 64).

Among Sam Selvon's works that explore the trope of identity, I have chosen to focus on *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), which critics consider as one of the essential Caribbean immigration literary texts of the 1950s that explores the issue of postcolonial identity construction of West Indian migrants in London (Bentley, Nasta). The fictional world created by Selvon describes the emergence of a hybrid diasporic Black British community that exploits the immigrant experience in order to reinterpret the attributes of the European metropolis. Distinctively narrating the loneliness, anxiety, resentfulness, and cheerfulness of living in London, this novel depicts the emotional turmoil that the perpetual negotiation of a diasporic identity entails.

The Lonely Londoners is structured as a collection of mini episodic "ballads" (Selvon 107) that sporadically converge and overlap the biographies of a group of West Indian new settlers with different backgrounds and agendas who conjunctly experience the ordeal of racial discrimination and social exclusion. Each vignette may represent an independent

literary product depicting the escapades of one of the various characters that populate the novel's narrative microcosm. The narrative centre is Moses Aloeta, a veteran from the first generation of the Caribbean immigrants and allegedly the author's *alter ego*, who earns the position to integrate the narrative voices of the "boys", authorising them to tell their "ballads" (Selvon 107). He is both the community's confessor and the conveyor who brings into existence the individual stories of Henry Oliver (nicknamed Sir Galahad), Harris, Big City, Old Cap, Lewis, Bartholemew, Tanty Bessie and Five Past Twelve, just to name a few. By portraying this spectrum of characters, Selvon scrutinises the subject matter of self-identification and how the diasporic disorientation, be it either physical, linguistic, or institutional determines the emergence of diasporic hybrid subjectivity.

In this text, Selvon also challenges the metropolitan foundationalist mind-set that promoted the reductionist assumptions of racial and subcultural stereotyping. As Nick Bentley observes, the lack of political articulation within the black community and the reticence of the indigenous Londoners to cultural miscegenation have prevented the promotion of equivalence between the dominant culture and the marginalised discourse of class and race (Bentley 44). Instead of serving to foreground these group identity misconceptions, Selvon employs experimental stylistic and thematic techniques that liberate his fiction from the conventional representations of black identity in the Anglo-Western tradition (45). He therefore individualises and empowers his characters to negotiate their position in a power framework where, still, the pervading subaltern culture justified the marginalisation of black immigrants. The main innovation Selvon has introduced, argues Bentley, implies an "ambivalence of representation" (45) that allows the depiction of the metropolis from the perspective of the black immigrant community, which endorses the emergence of hybridised cross-cultural forms of identity representations (45).

2.2.2 Rose Tremain's The Road Home

The trope of immigration to imperial cosmopolitan cities that was intensively exploited by Postcolonial authors is revisited by contemporary Eastern European diasporic authors, most of them writing in vernacular (for instance Ioana Baetica Marpurgo in Romanian, or Grzegorz Kopaczewski and Daniel Koziarski in Polish). Their texts, in a sense, echo the immigrants' social mobility depicted by the *Windrush Generation* and equally describe migration as both spatial movement and cultural reconfiguration. However,

Anglophone literary representations covering this subject matter are scarce; one of them is *The Road Home* (2007)*,* coming from Rose Tremain, a contemporary Orange Prize winner of 2008. Tremain's insight into the experience of post-communist Eastern European immigrants in the UK - one of the largest migration waves in British history - has captured the nation's anxiety of a historical epoch of utmost turmoil caused by extensive transnational connections and inter-cultural exchange.

   The Road Home is a contemporary book about immigration and dispossession in early 21st-century London. It discusses a wide thematic array ranging from separation, loss and melancholia, to disorientation, exclusion and the redefinition of the self in a discursively and axiologically alienated post-modern milieu. Just as Selvon's Caribbean migrants have undertaken complicated migrant routes that have redesigned their subjectivity, in Tremain's text, Lev and Lydia, two Eastern European immigrants driven by bereavement and economical dire straits in their unnamed post-communist country, try to eke out a living in a bloated, sometimes hilariously superficial London. As Boyd Tonkin remarks, in his review of the novel from *The Independent,* Tremain's depiction of London is pervaded by paradox; the disposition of the characters throughout the narrative reveals the city's two-dimensional nature. The top down configuration (Tonkin) captures the sophisticated community of prominent chefs, salient musicians and infatuated avant-garde artists, who, in a milieu pervaded by material plenty and emotional dearth, engage condescendingly the working class representatives. The bottom up approach (Tonkin), physically setting off from a subterranean cole-hole in Earls Court, expands the narrative's topography from a neighbourhood kebab shop to luxurious restaurant kitchens and extravagant cultural venues. This is the environment that Lev, the focalising character, tentatively explores, weary and ignorant of his fate, defying the bewilderment of cultural disparity. Yet, he incessantly revisits his identitary parameters stimulated by societal challenges and personal decisions. Tremain seems to suggest, just as Selvon proposed when depicting the protagonists of *The Lonely Londoners,* that identity building ought to be bi-dimensional, materialising both at individual and community level. Even though, unlike his Caribbean counterparts from Selvon's novel who settle down in London, Lev eventually returns to the physical point of departure, as the novel's title foreshadows, to a home that enacts "a cautious salvation"(Tonkin). Throughout the journey initiated somewhere between the Baltic and the Balkans and bound for London, Lev's ex-Soviet backwater remains, producing a composite subject that ineluctably carries the labels of

both cultures. At the point of his return, Lev displays a metamorphosed agency, as his London experience has functioned as a catalyst of identitary hybridisation.

Experiences similar to Lev's are not alien to the contemporary Britain. *The Eastern European invasion* is a blatant leit-motif of the anti-immigration rhetoric that employs the reductionist mechanisms of mass blame and prevalent group-oriented prejudices. By customising her hero's narrative voice, Tremain succeeds in elevating Lev beyond his profile, without appealing to stylistic artifices that would excessively underscore the character's traits. She demonstrates that cultural hybridisation is a strategy that can liberate the protagonist from the tyranny of standardisation, thus granting his freedom to negotiate his identity in a self-chosen socio-cultural backdrop.

2.2.3 The relevance of the comparative literary study

In spite of an impressive writerly career that covers wide thematic areas, occasionally materialised in important literary awards, Tremain's fiction still has received minimal exposure in contemporary critique. Consequently, this thesis employs a methodological platform that facilitates the comparison of Tremain's *The Road Home* and Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners,* focusing on literary representations of identity hybridisation. I perform this comparison by transferring elements of critical theory that explicate the Postcolonial diasporic condition of Selvon's characters to situations that describe the diasporic experience of the post-communist immigrants to London in the aftermath of the 2004 EU extension. The similarities between the ideological contexts that inform the texts, namely Postcolonialism and Post-Communism, underpin the actuality of a comparative study of this nature.

As I have previously argued, the social-economic circumstances pervading the historical periods the narratives capture bear significant similarities, ranging from the comparable immigrant routes the characters assume, to the perplexities that the reality of the immigration experience entails. The constant engagement of the narrative with the metropolitan minority context reinforces the correspondence of the thematic approach. The *border crossing* experience and *exploratory journey*, pivotal tropes in the depiction of hybrid subjectivity, are recurrent motifs that inform the immigrants' engagement with the new, sometimes hostile environment that London represents. Whether it refers to the bureaucratic intricacies, inherent to the administrative process of integration, to the encounter with the coercive authority of the police, or to the ideologically triggered torpidity that impels the characters to cultural enclavisation, the encounter of borders, physical or mental, occasionally

brings the characters to a standstill position, an intermezzo that allows an introspective exploration of one's origin and becoming.

Another major thematic similarity between the novels, equally associated with the immigrant identity reconfiguration, refers to the (re-)interpretation of the concept of *space.* Both novels extensively deploy the trope of spatial and social exploration of London, as Wolfe (6) contends referring to Selvon's novel. In this context, the meaning of belonging and identification is inextricably intertwined with the concept of *home,* which becomes "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (Brah quoted in McLeod, 241), little dependent of any territorial articulation. Physical home is relocated in the mind of the migrant, thus becoming "discontinuous with its real location" (241), irremediably affecting one's perception of the self. Therefore, no act of physical return can entail the complete restoration of the subject's initial individuality. What seems to define the identity of the characters in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home* is a sense of nostalgia for a mystical, unreal homeland, where Moses confidently situates paradise, "somewhere between St. Joseph and Tacarigua, in a small village" (Selvon 125) where "a Portuguese fellar name Jesus have a rum shop in Paradise" (125). Moses remains basically a man from the Caribbean after ten years in London, and he is constantly haunted by the prospect of return. He, likewise the other protagonists, simultaneously engages in the desirable exploration of the metropolitan space, puzzling "what is it that a city have, that you get so much to like it you wouldn't leave it for anywhere else" (134). As residents of this new home country, they develop "a hybrid culture and identity or at the very least a comfortable bicultural competence" (Tölölyan 11), through a set of cumulative decisions that allow them to remain "bi- or multi-local, to care about others in diaspora with whom they share an ethnodiasporic origin, and also to care in some manner about the well-being of the homeland of the ancestors" (11). This is the subjectivity pattern that Lev follows in *The Road Home*, so he returns to his homeland basically a changed man.

Apart from to the tropes I have introduced above, the stylistic congruence of the novels is additionally reinforced by the authors' disposition to deploy *linguistic hybridity* as a strategy meant to facilitate the dialogue between two different linguistic and cultural systems. The migrants' linguistic experience becomes, in the Postcolonial and Post-Communist contexts, a metaphor that reflects the fluidity of subjectivity, an expression of the dynamic forces that regulate cultural interchange and the hybridisation of the migrant identity. Subsequently, through analysing Sam Selvon's and Rose Tremain's stylistic devices, I

suggest that the use of character-adapted linguistic structures that challenge the notion of standard language illustrates the characters' achievement of identity hybridisation.

The purpose of this study, however, is not to be an exhaustive exploration of the Postcolonial characters' identitary quandaries, but to perform a comparison that expands the research paradigm of Postcolonial hybrid identity, as reflected in the novel *The Lonely Londoners,* to diasporic experience of the less explored field, at least in Anglophone literature, of the post-communist labour immigration to London. By this means, this study is intended to bridge the communication between literary works from different traditions and historical contexts, as well as to reinforce the legitimacy of comparing two historical phenomena, similar by content, yet particularised by distinct instrumental features.

2.3 Postcolonialism, Post-Communism and Immigrant Identity. Theoretical Perspectives

The term identity has garnered considerable attention within the field of social anthropology as a loose theoretical category, susceptible to the risk of essentialism and politically motivated instrumentality. In this section I examine identity from a critical perspective, denouncing the expediency of the Euro-colonial reductionist approach that promoted a deterministic identity as immutable and anchored in fixed systems of signification, thus justifying the asymmetrical power system promoted by Colonialism. I explore the potentiality of fluid identity grounded in the poststructuralist approach with focus on the concept of *hybridity,* the deconstructionist strategy promoted by Homi K. Bhabha to challenge the fixity of colonial stereotypes. Moreover, I highlight the conceptual interoperability in the analysis of immigrants' identity both in Postcolonial and Post-Communist context.

2.3.1 Postcolonialism, or claiming the right to write back

Postcolonial theory has emerged in the academic sphere since the 1980s as a significant part in the field of comparative literature. The contributions of Edward Said, Gayatri C. Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha have had ground-breaking effects in challenging the mainstream approach in cultural and literary studies. They have questioned the colonial legacy of the post-war cultural canon that was made by and for the metropolis, highlighting and legitimising the perspective of the formerly colonised people (Klages 152) in terms of cultural production and augmenting the status of the oeuvres and authors of colonial descent.

There is a vivid debate among scholars about the origins and limitations of Postcolonialism. In historical terms, there is common agreement that it designates the epoch that followed the disintegration of the colonial imperial system. John Mc'Leod has nonetheless criticised the tenuity of this definition, insisting on the "disparate forms of representation, reading practices, attitudes and values" that entail "a way of thinking, a mode of perception, a line of enquiry, an aesthetic practice, a method of investigation" (McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* 6) rather than a strict historical or empirical periodization. Therefore, even though the term has particular relevance in historical perspective, as Mc'Leod himself admits, it more commonly refers to the power-structure, social, and cultural relations that informed the connection between the metropolis and the colonised space, both before and after decolonisation.

Major notions promoted by Postcolonialism are the themes of exile, displacement and (non)belonging, identitary disorientation, and the connection between cultural affiliation and the construction of identity. Postcolonial theorists are concerned with scrutinising the mechanisms that have facilitated the creation of the "colonised subject, the subaltern, through various discursive practices, and examine also how subaltern cultures both participated in and worked to resist colonisation, through various overt or covert, direct or subversive, means" (Klages 153). The ultimate agenda of the postcolonial project is to undermine the fictitious ideology of the colonial establishment that the Western modernity has imposed at the expense of other civilisations. The expansion of the colonial cultural and political hegemony was explained through the fabricated concept of *race*, and more specifically, through the binary opposition of *whites* and *others* (Klages 153), where the *white,* and everything it implies, is superior, and thereby legitimate to replace the cultures of the colonised. The Eurocentric essentialist perspective explains racism through the connection between physical signifiers, such as the skin colour, and ideological signifieds, thereby reinforcing the stereotyped association of unequivocal value judgements and mental particularities with artificially constructed communities. These themes are thoroughly articulated in the novels I examine. The Caribbean and Eastern European immigrants to London undergo a series of disruptive experiences that constrain them to negotiate their metropolitan affiliation. They often perceive London as space of "unrealness" (Selvon 1), which triggers social and personal alienation pushing them toward a state of cultural in-betweeness and identitary uncertainty. In this context, skin colour becomes a visible sign of identity designation that the Trinidadian immigrants cannot overpass despite the high degree of cultural mimicry that they perform. For

Lev race is a less relevant identitary category given his Caucasian appearance; language, however, embodies in his case a nearly insurmountable challenge, since he is a character whose agenda prioritises throughout the narrative language acquisition as a major hybridisation strategy.

A major artifice that Colonialism has employed to legitimise its presence in the colonised space was the persuasion of the colonised subjects that it was morally justified, and practically right to accept their "lower ranking in the colonial order of things, a process we can call *colonising the mind*" (Mc'Leod 20). Nguigi wa Tiong'o has reacted to this contrivance, by criticising the intrusion of colonial discourses that has entailed the internalisation of the colonial values, eventually leading to the dislocation of the indigenous cultures and their replacement with the Eurocentric ones. In his essay *Decolonising the Mind,* he claims that colonialism involved two major aspects: "on the one hand, a deliberate undervaluation of all aspects of the indigenous cultures (e.g. art, dances, religions, orature and literature) and, on the other hand, the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser" (Thiong'o 1135).

This process has reinforced the binary opposition between what Edward Said has termed as "the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (Said, *Orientalism 44*), contributing to the mental disparity between the centre, represented by the metropolis, and the periphery, which the colony became. Said's theory on *Orientalism* emphasises the idea that the West has developed a self-defining identification mechanism that builds on the perpetual antithesis between the two ethe; the Orient is conceived as being everything the West is not, "its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (2), its *alter ego*, ultimately, the epitome of *the Other*, something they would happily call "the land of the barbarians" (54). For Said, the West needed to build such an image of the Orient, which "in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived" (43), in order to strengthen its own identity and to create its own positive image in opposition to that of the Orient. The narratives of Selvon and Tremain are pervaded with episodes that portray the migrants as *The Other,* perceived through the colonial gaze. When, driven by hunger, Galahad catches a pigeon in the park, but "one of them geezers who does always wear fur coat" (Selvon 118) spots him and calls him a" cruel, cruel beats" (118), whereas Lev, whose telephone rings in the concert hall is labelled a "barbarian" (Tremain 98). However, the explicit delineation of the two worlds does not imply utter discontinuity, on the contrary; even though "the Orientals lived in their world, 'we' in ours, the vision of material reality propped each other up, kept each other going" (Said, *Orientalism* 44).

The observations made by Said are also intended to articulate the unreported political agenda of Colonialism, which Denis Walder captured in the ironical syntagm "the civilising mission" of the white race (Walder 1084). As Edward Said posits, the Western colonial powers have used significant resources to produce knowledge "based on commonly held *assumptions* about the Orient as a mythic place of exoticism, moral laxity, sexual degradation, political and economic backwardness, and so forth" (McLeod 24), meant to 'scientifically' justify the messianic nature of the European intervention that would extract the colonised space out of barbarism. Such an attitude is depicted in Lev's dialogue with Andy Portman, an "extremely famous English playwright" (Tremain 117) who posits that Eastern European societies "have a lot of catching up to do, art-wise" (121) thus insinuating their peripheral position in comparison with the metropolitan centre.

The creation of colonial subjectivity implies, therefore, a demystification doubled by a voluntary disavowal of the traditional cultures, a process grounded on the logic of the binary opposition perceived from Western perspective. As Stuart Hall notes in his article *Cultural Identity and Diaspora,* "…not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see ourselves as 'Other'" (Hall 225). In the process of cultural displacement, the coloniser employs what Said has designated as the creation of knowledge through discursive means (Said, *Orientalism 40*), which is elaborated and perpetuated within the colonised cultures until eventually it is viewed as real.

2.3.2 Hybrid identity; the colony's response to European essentialism

The ideology of Western modernity claims a unique identity for each individual, a core self that is consistent over time. Therefore, the colonial project starts from the premises that identity is constituted both through and inside culture, through perpetuation of discursive techniques. It thereby assumes the agenda of recasting the subjectivity of the colonised by replacing the local ethnographies with metropolitan values. Postcolonial scholars, however, have exposed the construction of the colonial identity to severe criticism, refuting in their critique the viability of an enterprise built on discourse. Homi K. Bhabha, one of the most widely quoted and influential theorists in postcolonial studies, investigates the concept of identity in his 1994 publication, *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha). This text is significant in the comparative analysis of immigrant identity construction in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home,* as it develops a poststructuralist paradigm that dismantles the essentialist assumption that every human being has a unique identity, immutable in time, and anchored in

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fixed systems of signification. Bhabha's *modus operandi* entails a sustained criticism of the main components of the essentialist model, among which the concepts of race, colonial discourse, and culture-power, which facilitates the reversal of the binary oppositions that grounded colonialism.

In *The Location of Culture,* Bhabha develops his celebrated theory on the hybridity of identity that interrogates the stability and conviction of the colonial discourses (McLeod 61). Departing from Edward Said's critique of *Orientalism* and racial discrimination, Bhabha demonstrates the futility of the term *stereotype* within the colonial discourse. In his interpretation, the concept *stereotype* describes identity as rigid and immutable, but at the same time uncanny, even deviant and which must be anxiously repeated (Bhabha 94). He criticises the instrumental utilisation of stereotype as something that is "offering, *at any time,* a *secure* point of identification" (94 his emphasis). He therefore denounces the fallacy of relying on stereotyping as a valid way of finding truth, even refuting the idea that there is such a thing as an objective, stable point of identification. The unreliability of the stereotype is additionally an effect of the instability of colonial discourse; on the one hand, the Oriental, or as Bhabha prefers, "the colonised subject", is perceived by the Western, or the "colonising subject", as its quintessential "other", or essentially beyond Western comprehension (McLeod 63). On the other hand, the discourse of colonialism attempts to make the colonised subject familiar to the coloniser by lessening this radical "otherness" (63), bringing the former within a comprehensible Western mental framework through stereotyping. In this way, the colonised subject falls simultaneously inside and outside the Western's sphere of comprehension, or, in Bhabha's parlance, "colonial discourse produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha 70). Therefore, the identity of the colonised cannot be pinned down through discursive artifices such as stereotypes, but it is rather continuously negotiated and reconfigured. Lev, in *The Road Home,* challenges the *barbarian* stereotype that is cast upon him when he succeeds in reading the original text of *Hamlet.* By doing so, he proves that he can make accessible what is considered an exclusively Western discourse. As Lydia suggests to him, "you will recognise something of yourself in the character [Hamlet]" (Tremain 184 my explanation), a recognition that defies the essentialist assumptions associated with social, geographical, or cultural origin. Bhabha goes on to argue that the stereotype is in fact "an impossible object" (116), a category that the colonised subject will always transcend; due to "the ambivalence on which the stereotype turns" (109), the colonised subject "is always in motion, sliding

ambivalently between the polarities of similarity and difference, rationality and fantasy" (McLeod 64).

The assumption that the colonised subject is governed by the dynamic of ambivalence reinforces the idea that identity is a fluid category, impossible to conceptualise or capture in speech. Bhabha contends that "identity is never (…) a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality (Bhabha 73). Therefore, the concept of *hybridity* is central in the Bhabhesque discourse of identity, referring to colonised subjects whose behaviour displays features derived from both cultures that inform it. Hybridity represents the articulation of an ambivalent cultural space, crystallising the polarised identitary features that either stem from the ancestral cultural conventions, or are a result of the *mimicry* of the metropolitan values. Bhabha considered mimicry as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (85), suitable to threaten the authority of the colonial discourse by exposing its predisposition to ambivalence. As the text of *The Lonely Londoners* makes obvious, Selvon's *boys* assume extensively a mimicking strategy through by adopting the metropolitan vestimentary code – "bowler and umbrella, and briefcase tuck under the arm" (Selvon 103) – or by "putting on the old English accent" (77), as of conventional acts of integration in the metropolitan cultural space.

The position occupied by the mimicking colonised subject places him/her in a "liminal space, which is situated in-between the designations of identity" (5). In other words, this is the space where the manifestation of power becomes free from any hierarchal pressure, designating the colonised, in relation to the coloniser, as "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 89), equal, yet not similar, capable to negotiate his identity from a privileged position that allows him/her to decipher the signs of both his/her original culture and of that of the coloniser. This interstitial passage between "fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5), determining the binary cultural representations to lose their legitimacy and calling into question the attainability of essential representations of culture and identity. As Bhabha contends, this hybrid *third space* is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representations have no primordial unity or fixity (Bhabha 56), thereby facilitating the processes of negotiating, translating, and integrating differences and similarities, within a perpetual movement of exchange and inclusion.

The asymmetrical positioning of colonial and colonised cultures within the structures of colonial power relations has artificially obstructed the communication between them for a long

period. In Said's terms, the colonised culture could not "talk back", or write about itself. In this context, hybridity functions as an antidote to essentialism, in accordance with Bhahba's definition in *The Location of Culture: "*hybridity is the sign of productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (159), thus, contradictorily making "the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different" (158). In this sense, both Selvon's and Tremain's novels enact the strategy of "talking back" to the metropolis by rendering the migrants' diasporic condition in metropolitan context in a hybridised language that challenges the standard colonial discourse and legitimates the subaltern voice to speak about itself.

Bhabha's contribution to the poststructuralist discourse on identity has undermined the colonial pretention of immobilising the identity of the postcolonial subjects within the margins of the colonial cultural framework, revisiting the essentialist, ethnocentric approach and opening the debate to scholarly interrogation and critical scrutiny. As Mary Klages asserts, "such hybridity is inherently deconstructive, as it breaks down any possibility of a stable binary opposition" (Klages, 159), hence allowing the postcolonial subject to express his/her subjectivity in terms of heterogeneity and fluidity, granting his/her privilege to construct a multi-layered self, grounded in diverse and, sometimes even contradictory discourses and ideologies, free of any authoritarian interference.

2.3.3   *A postcolonial reading of Post-Communism; perspectives and limits*

Bhabha's theory on the ambivalent function of stereotype that favours identity hybridisation bears significantly on contemporary multicultural societies. Immigrants and racial minorities are exposed to discrimination and stereotyping meant to legitimise and reinforce the distinction between the cultural *centre,* or, in Said's terms, "the familiar West", and the "peripheral *Other"* (Said, *Orientalism 44*)*.* Further development of my comparative study of *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home* requires an inspection of the compatibility of the theoretical concepts that inform the two novels.

The fall of Communism in Eastern Europe has taken the academic world by surprise, and contemporary scholars have not accomplished any self-standing critical theory addressing the structural changes that pervade the post-communist societies. Several academics, most of them coming from Eastern and Central Europe (Moore 2001, Kovačević 2008, Sandru 2013, Pucherová and Gáfrik 2015), have promoted the idea that Postcolonialism can be applied to the post-communist experience, based on a number of characteristics that both countries from

Eastern Europe and those previously colonised by the West have in common. A number of scholars share the conviction that postcolonial theory is a globally flexible discourse that can be used to analyse a variety of regions (Pucherová and Gáfrik 12). This analytic approach takes starting point in Edward Said's idea of "travelling theory"(Said, "Traveling Theory") , which posits that theories have no fixed political meaning, but take on different implications depending on where, when and how they are deployed. Ideas and theories, Said suggests, "travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another" even though the "circulation of ideas" takes different forms, including "acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation" (Said 226). While theories emerge from the specific contextual conditions of a geographical or cultural space, they are nevertheless mobile both in geographical and disciplinary terms. As a theory travels from one environment to another, Said claims, it will keep the mark of the historical and cultural conditions that have generated it, but it will also change being "to some extend transformed by its new uses and its new position in a new time and space" (227).

The degree of deploying postcolonial theory in post-communist context varies, however, from unequivocal advocacy of a thoroughgoing conceptual and descriptive overlap, to an instrumental approach that emphasises the interoperability of specific concepts and methodologies within the limits that delineate the common particularities of the two historical realities. Among the first noted scholars to apply the postcolonial paradigm in the post-communist space was David Chioni Moore, who, in the article *Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique* from 2001, promotes the argument that no difference can be traced between the mechanisms that underpin the two systems (Moore). According to Moore it is clear that "the term 'postcolonial', and everything that goes with it - language, economy, politics, resistance, liberation and its hangover - might reasonably be applied to the formerly Russo- and Soviet controlled regions post-1989 and - 1991, just as it has been applied to South Asia post-1947 or Africa post- 1958. East is South" (Moore 115). Moore takes starting point in the critique of Postcolonialism, which, he contends, seeks to impose its domination on the former Communist states, as well as on the entire world. Starting from the premise that "no corner of the planet was left outside the postcolonial compass" (Moore, 118), as every territory had been subject to colonisation at a point in history, Moore intends to broaden the applicability of postcolonial theory to a point when "Post-Communism ultimately becomes no more than a variant of Postcolonialism" (Hladík 3). In this context, it appears natural for Moore to conclude that the Eastern European countries controlled

by the Soviet Union since the wake of World War II until 1989 were exposed to a similar colonial regime as the former colonies of the Western powers "by most classic measures - lack of sovereign power, restrictions on travel, military occupation, lack of convertible specie, a domestic economy ruled by the dominating state, and forced education in the colonizer's tongue" (Moore 121).

Even though Moore's critique demonstrates the Eastern European states' colonial status in relation to their Soviet occupier, it fails however to explain the deviation of the Eastern European societies from postcolonial standard behaviour in terms of mimicry of the coloniser after liberation, as it was the case for most postcolonial societies. The centre-periphery dynamic is performed differently by Eastern European societies, as the desire to imitate is not directed toward the former Soviet centre, but towards the Western hegemon (Şandru 25). Şandru claims that this shift derives from the repudiation of the Russian-Soviet colonial values as alien and artificial, and the propensity towards embracing the Western values on account of common historical experiences, and in some cases, similar political and cultural traditions or religious compatibility that Eastern European societies and the West shared before Soviet colonisation. As subjects of the former Soviet empire, the protagonists of *The Road Home* perceive the homeland as a post-apocalyptic ground, as an outcome of the Soviet subjugation, where "the trees had all been cut down and never been replanted" (Tremain 60). Therefore, Lev legitimately states that "England is my only hope" (5). This attitude demonstrates the predisposition of Eastern Europeans to mimic the Western cultural hegemon, a phenomenon that is contextually favoured by the European Union integration of the former Communist countries.

The tendency towards adamant rejection of any Soviet influence and the bias for self-colonisation in relation to the West (Şandru, "Postcolonial Communism?" 157) was explained by Anca Băicoianu through the principle of "double centred peripherality", which contends a focus shift towards the values of the Western centre, while still bearing the marks of the Soviet colonialism (Băicoianu 51). This indiscriminate mimicry of the West was criticised in the Said-influenced 2008 study of Nataša Kovačević *Civilization's Wild East: Narrating Eastern Europe's Communism and Post-Communism* (Kovačević). Kovačević argues that by perpetuating the obstruction of dialogue and the unidirectional flow of directives, Europe is marked by "a long history of Western attempts to identify itself as 'enlightened,' 'developed,' and 'civilized' in distinction to Eastern Europe and as a result, to intellectually master Eastern Europe through description and classification, fixing it into stereotypes of lamentable cultural,

political and economic 'backwardness'" (Kovačević 3). Therefore, the enforcement of the colonial dialectic that splits the continent on the fault line of *Oriental/Orientalist* is meant to justify a new form of colonialism that is spread from the West and eastwards through the internalisation of the neo-liberal ideology, capitalist-legitimated hedonism, and a devaluation of the Eastern-associated intellectual manifestations, all contributing to the provincialisation and the domestication of the Eastern European cultural space (Șandru 26). Following this reasoning, Kovačević considers that Eastern Europe today unquestionably undergoes a postcolonial condition in relation to the West, which is reinforced by the spreading its ideology combined with an *Orientalist* demonization of the Eastern European ethos and economic and cultural dependency.

A less radical position than that of Kovačević is occupied by Cristina Șandru, who is less preoccupied with demonstrating the essential postcolonial character of Post-Communism, focusing rather "on how the two different *posts,* both marking the wake of empires, can successfully translate their methodologies, instruments and hermeneutic practices within the space of differential cultural contexts" (Șandru 10). Any comparative study that implies a juxtaposing of postcolonial and post-communist realities requires the construction of what Șandru called a "dialogic space" (8) that accommodates the essential categories of analysis informing this type of enterprise, such as:

> …the relationship centre-periphery and the theorizations of exclusion/inclusion and liminality; splitting at the level of both culture and subjectivity; structures of othering and representations of difference; the experience of collective trauma; issues of collective memory/amnesia and the rewriting of history; experiences of self-colonization and complicity; formations of nationalism; the phenomena of exile and emigration; concepts such as orientalism, epistemological violence, alterity, ambivalence, mimicry, internal colonization, dislocation, minority and subaltern cultures, neocolonialism and transnationalism (Kołodziejczyk and Sandru 114).

It is in this theoretical context, which considers Postcolonialism as an open and flexible paradigm, that I situate my comparative study of the identity reconfiguration of London immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home.* Even though the subjects depicted in these novels speak for different historical and geographical contexts, they likewise undergo the inconsistencies of the diasporic experience, oscillating between the successful mimicry of the metropolitan culture and the occurrences that reinforce their *Oriental* (self)perception. The novels reflect *Othering* situations referring to realities emerging both from outside and inside Europe, thus confirming the Westerners' propensity to stereotype immigrants irrespective of their cultural or geographical origin. Therefore, the narrative contexts imagined by Selvon and

Tremain invite both the Caribbean immigrants of the 50s and the Eastern European newcomers of the 2000s to engage in hybridisation starting from similar premises. They all struggle, and to a certain extend succeed, to challenge the fixity of stereotyped identity and thus disavow the stigma of contemporary barbarity that was attached to them.

2.4 Methods and design

The comparative strategy allows me to analyse the two narratives as analogous texts, thus attenuating the inconveniences caused by the undertheorisation of Post-communism and the paucity of critical investigation on Rose Tremain's work. Therefore, throughout the ensuing chapters I perfom a close reading of Selvon's and Tremain's texts, analysing, in the light of Bhabha's theory on hybridity, how the employment of figurative images and aesthetic mechanisms in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road* reflect the construction of hybrid subjectivity among the migrants from the West Indies and Eastern Europe in London.

This theoretical chapter is followed by three text analysis chapters that are structured similarly. In the first part of each chapter I discuss Selvon's work focusing on the Caribbean immigrant environment in London and the articulation of the characters' postcolonial condition in the metropolis. In the second part of each chapter I scrutinise the ambience of the post-communist immigrant community in *The Road Home,* highlighting the thematical similarities of the postcolonial and contemporary immigrant experience in London.

Chapter Three opens with an analysis of the various journeys the characters undergo, either those having London as destination, or shorter tours that they take within the limits of the city. The performative character of these voyages is doubled in both narratives by a symbolic value, as the characters' physical mobility generates the ground for the metaphorical expression of fluid identities. In this context, the routes the characters follow are translated as "the liminal space between the designations of identities" (Bhabha 5), the territory of ambivalence that allows the free flow between cultures, similar to the transit between the protagonists' original location and their destination. Mobility sometimes exposes the protagonists to situations that hinder them from moving on. Such standstill experiences symbolically depict the paralysing effect that physical and mental borders have on the dynamics of identity reconfiguration, but at the same time indicate the (self)reflexive character of these intermission moments. I analyse in this chapter figurations of mobility and border crossing, first in *The Lonely Londoners* and

subsequently in *The Road Home*, in order to capture the significance of the characters' *in-betweenness* and the realisation of their cultural ambivalence.

In Chapter Four I explore the function of *space* in the novels, focusing on the strategies of reconfiguring and inscribing the metropolitan space that immigrants perform in order to accommodate to the realities of the diasporic condition. I also scrutinise how the equivocal interpretation of the notion of *home* allows the characters to negotiate their identities. Caught between the strict physical locality of *home* and its reinterpretation at mental level, the characters of the novels challenge the fixity of their identity by constantly reinterpreting the meaning of the spaces they inhabit, which may refer to both a dwelling place and the homeland. Their frequent relocations in London suggest the idea that home is a mental construction that can be replicated in various topographies by transferring the values implied by the term, such as group solidarity, kinship, or belongingness. In this context, London, with its various locations, becomes a space of both familiarity and ambiguity, a blurry topography that equally welcomes and rejects immigrants. I examine in this chapter the figurative expressions of space in *The Lonely Londoners* and then in *The Road Home,* insisting on the ambivalent nature of locality, both at personal and group level, that denotes the characters' constant insecurity in terms of belonging to, and acceptance in a space permeated by contradictory attitudes and gestures.

In the fifth chapter I continue the exploration of postcolonial identity construction in the novel of Sam Selvon, and its equivalence in the post-communist context, by focusing on the function of linguistic hybridity, which develops as a result of the colonised subject's mimicry of the metropolitan culture. My arguments build on the postcolonial critique of the colonial project, which aimed at replacing the indigenous cultures with the Western ones. The subaltern's reply, however, has destabilised the colonial power structures by challenging the authority of the colonial discourse through "writing back" in a language that mimics the coloniser's, yet is not identical. Selvon, for instance, deploys in his writing a hybrid English that reverberates the orality of the Trinidadian culture and the rhythmicity of the calypso, thus formally dispossessing the English coloniser of the monopoly of the standard language. This phenomenon is reproduced in *The Road Home,* where Tremain endows her characters with the capacity to speak an adapted variety of English that captures the specificities of the Eastern European cultural experience. These strategies have the effect of raising questions about the efficacy of the Western attempt to construct a collective *Other*, and criticise the validity of its stereotypes that attempt to circumscribe the colonised subject to restricted linguistic registers. Therefore, the hybrid language used by Selvon and Tremain can be seen as an indicator of the

ambivalence of existing in-between cultures of the characters, and also a creative space, or what Bhabha might call a "third linguistic space" of enunciation wherein experiences can be expressed in a way that more standardized language might not permit.

The final chapter is conclusion that sums up the procedures developed by this study to answer the enquiry stated in the hypothesis. It also reinforces the significance of the comparative study that juxtaposes hybrid identities in texts representing heterogeneous literary traditions and historical contexts, emphasising the importance of the theoretical concepts' transferability between Postcolonialism and post-Communism as no critical theory was developed in relation to the latter. This conclusion will also feature suggestions for further continuation of the study.

3. Looking Ahead and Thinking Back: Travelling Between Spaces and Cultures as a Trope of Identity Hybridisation

> *"Well, Lev thought. I'm going to their country and I'm going to make them share it with me: their infernal luck." (Tremain 6)*

Immigrants have come to Britain in large numbers since the disintegration of the empire, in most cases driven by the aspiration to better material conditions. In most cases, whether the economic status improved or not, the immigrants were confined within the intricate social networks of the new homeland, drifting between the contrasts of integration and rejection, sometimes embodying the desirable vector of economic growth, and sometimes epitomizing the exotic *Other* that disturbs the cultural harmony of the metropolis. Within such trans-national and trans-geographical diasporic literary space, I identify the protagonists of *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home* as immigrants who challenge the fixities of identification favoured by indigenous Londoners, through the ambivalent practice of both the ancestral and British cultures.

The physical mobility of the migrants is a trope employed by both Sam Selvon and Rose Tremain in order to demonstrate the impossibility of the stereotype as an indicator of fixed identity (Bhabha 116). The protagonists of the novels are constantly on the move either towards or inside the city, exploring its streets in order to learn, describe, rename, and conceivably, take hold of the cityscape in an act that resonates Louise Bennet's notion of "colonisation in reverse" (Bennet in Ramchand 224). By doing so, they convey the physical space of the streets they wander into what Homi Bhabha has termed as *the third space* to refer to the space in-between that inscribes and articulates culture's hybridity (Bhabha 56).

3.1 The voyage to London and across the borders of culture

3.1.1 Going East: From Trinidad to London

Several episodes in the narratives of the novel depict transboundary journeys that represent a crux in the construction of the characters' diasporic identity. The manner that Sam Selvon chooses to approach the transatlantic voyage in *The Lonely Londoners* is insightful and unconventional. Instead of a specific description of the traveling experience, the author chooses to employ the metaphor of an absent ship voyage as an implicit symbol of the

passage across the sea, a transition that represents the mutability of cultures and identities between the colony and the metropolis.

The characters arriving to London, as the narrative unfolds, iterate the myth-generating experience of the first Caribbean immigrants who sailed the *SS Empire Windrush*. The boat trip is present only in the subtext of the dialogue between Moses Aloeta, a veteran immigrant from Trinidad, and the newcomer Henry Olivier, who defiantly enters winter London baggage free and wearing summer attire. His resistance to the conventions of travelling denotes a desire of liberation from the ancestral cultural ingredients and a self-induced disposition toward integrating the cultural standards of the "Mother Country" (Selvon 2) by filling the gaps suggested by the absent luggage: "What luggage? I ain't have any. I figure is no sense to load up myself with a set of things. When I start work I will buy some things" (13). Moreover, Henry neglects bringing on the boat potential gifts, such as cigarettes and rum, items that carry high symbolic value for the Caribbean identity as factors that underpin collectivism and group solidarity.

The transition across the physical border state, however, does not constitute a disruptive experience for most Caribbean immigrants, as Henry Olivier's entry might suggest. After landing in Southampton and boarding on the boat-train due to London, they all arrive at Waterloo Station, the place that accumulates symbolic value in Selvon's text through the designation of ambivalence and bidirectional movement. As Moses arrives at the station to assist Henry, "he hop off the bus, and right away in that big station he had a feeling of homesickness that he never felt in the nine-ten years he in this country" (4). As a place that facilitates transition through space, Waterloo Station becomes a trope for the fluidity of cultural borders, a mode of representation of the space in-between cultures and ontologies. The ambivalence of Moses' feelings suggests the possibility of free movement, both physically and mentally, in any direction the station connects, as "the old Waterloo is a place of arrival and departure, is a place where you see people crying goodbye and kissing welcome" (4).

By highlighting the bidirectional character of the transit routes the immigrants follow, Selvon reminds his reader of the importance of cultural transmission in a liberal space. The spontaneous encounters between Caribbeans in passage through Waterloo Station in their journeys to or from the imperial motherland depict specific situations of inter-cultural exchange. It is here that the "fellars" send messages, money, and information back home via the travelling migrants turned into liaison agents, and learn about the latest news from the homeland:

> It have some fellars who in Brit'n long, and yet they can't get away from the habit of going Waterloo whenever the boat-train coming in with passengers from the West Indies. They like to see the familiar faces, they like to watch their countrymen coming off the train, and sometimes they might spot somebody they know: 'Aye Watson! What the hell you doing in Brit'n boy? Why you didn't write me you was coming?' And they would start big oldtalk with the travellers, finding out what happening in Trinidad, in Grenada, in Barbados, in Jamaica and in Antigua, what is the latest calypso number, if anybody dead, and so on, and even asking strangers questions they can't answer, like if they know Tanty Simmons who living in Labasse in Port of Spain, or a fellar name Harrison working in the Red House (Selvon 4).

The exchange of goods and information that Waterloo Station facilitates is a marker of dilution of the colonial mental borders hindering intercultural communication, a symbolic act of "talking back" to the metropolis or, in Thiong'o's terms, a decolonisation of the mind (Thiong'o). The most prominent form of this process is, however, the physical mobility of people who enter the metropolitan centre with the purpose of settling, driven by the illusion of prosperity and "the rights to full citizenship" (Lamming 18) that the British passport would grant. It is what Louise Bennet, quoted by Kenneth Ramchand, called a "colonisation in reverse" (Bennet in Ramchand 224), when "extended families would materialise in the thin air of Waterloo station" (224). A disconcerted Jamaican friend of Moses, Tolroy, would experience such an unexpected family reunion while waiting for his mother to arrive and chatting with Moses:

> A old woman who looked like she would dead any minute came out of a carriage, carrying a cardboard box and a paperbag. (…) Then after she a young girl come, carrying a flourbag filled up with things. Then a young man wearing a widebrim hat and a jacket falling below his knees. Then a little girl and a little boy, then another old woman.
>
> 'Oh Jesus Christ,' Tolroy say, 'what is this at all?'
>
> 'Tolroy', the first woman say, 'you don't know your own mother?'
>
> Tolroy hug his mother like a man in a daze, then he say: 'But what Tanty Bessy doing here, ma? And Agnes and Lewis and two children?'
>
> 'All of we come, Tolroy,' Ma say (Selvon 8-9).

The journey across the Atlantic has long been associated by many Caribbeans with the unidirectional transference of colonial cultures and values towards the colonies and their imposition over the colonised subjects. In the scene describing the arrival of Tolroy's family Selvon executes a subtle subversion of the colonial power structures. The author's insistence on the symbolic value of the personal assets they carry transpires throughout the detailed description of improvised carryalls like "cartboxes" and "paperbags" and "flourbags". This

luggage hints at the ancestral culture that immigrants bring along from the homeland when entering the imperial terrain of modernity, thus displaying clear intentions of preserving what Thiong'o described as "aspects of the indigenous cultures, e.g. art, dances, religions, orature and literature" (Thiong'o 1135). By crossing the state border as agents equipped with a set of traditional culture traits, Tolroy's family reinforces the equivocal character of migrant identity, since these containers may also be completed with goods from the metropolis without losing their original content. Their mode of identification subscribes to Bhabha's claim that identity is governed by the dynamic of ambivalence, a form of representation that integrates elements of the original culture and the mimic of the metropolitan culture.

Selvon's migrants cope generally well with the experience of crossing the state border, with Tanty Bessy amenably giving an interview to a local reporter, or with Henry Olivier taking delight in the bitter London weather – "it not so bad, man. In fact I feeling a little warm" (Selvon 13). It does not take long until the picaresque character that has successfully undergone the overseas and over border transition is dubbed "Sir Galahad" by Moses, which suggests his similarity to the gallant and audacious mythical knight who achieves the Holy Grail in the Arthurian legend. By doing so, Moses denounces the fresh immigrant's haste to integrate himself into the metropolitan order of things: "Take it easy, Sir Galahad. London will do for you before long"(Selvon 15). Moses' prediction is meant to temper Galahad's enthusiastic approach of the space he has newly accessed, speaking from his proper immigrant experience. In the essay *Sir Galahad and the Islands,* E. K. Brathwaite contends that the construction of hybrid identity is an incremental process that involves negotiation and fluctuation: "At the start, there will be a loss of a sense of proportion, an absence of normative values leading to lack of direction, uncertain perspectives, (…) a feeling of hopelessness, disunified rhythms and forms" (Brathwaite 25). Galahad initially believes he can leap the stages of "exploration" and be a subject of the metropole simply by virtue of personal preference and deployment of mimicry. His attitude does not intimidate Moses, "a veteran" (Selvon 13), who is sympathetic towards the novice migrant who "behaving as if he think he back in Port of Spain or something"(15).

The opening section of the novel insists on mobility tropes, such as the voyage at sea or by train, and the transit via Waterloo Station in order to emphasise the intermediate position of the immigrants in-between cultures. Particularly the metaphors of the boat and of the train signify the distinct communities divided by the ocean; the Caribbean ethos, fluid as an escapade in the tropical sea, and the British character, systematic as a rail road. It is within this interstitial space that Selvon's migrants negotiate their identity, partly still insular, but

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halfway continental, partly peripheral, yet mimicking the centre; it is a space that, according to Bhabha, facilitates the connection between the locations of cultures.

3.1.2 Going West: From Eastern Europe to London

The voyage to London and the experience of border crossing have also been employed as tropes of the diasporic identity construction by Rose Tremain in *The Road Home.* Like Selvon's Caribbean immigrants, Lev and Lydia, the protagonists of Tremain's novel, travel to London from their unnamed Eastern European country, demarcating the transit between the original cultural space of their home land and the metropolitan environment of London. The comprehensive description of Lev and Lydia's bus trip captures sensitive details signifying the condition of the Eastern European immigrants who migrate to the West in the context of the post EU integration. Tremain chooses to emphasise the characters' disposition to identity reconfiguration by increasing the density of mobility figuration in the novel's opening section.

An early indicator of Lev's propensity towards the Western conventions transpires throughout the flash back story about the purchase of an old Chevrolet Phoenix by him and his lifelong friend, Rudi. The "Tchevi" (Tremain 13), as Rudi lovingly nicknamed the car, has represented in the homeland the embodiment of Lev's assumptions about the West; a territory of prosperity and glamour resembling the "sky-blue car with white fins and shining chrome trim" (12), but also affected by materialism and the capitalist cupidity, as the car's "greed" (14) for gasoline consumption suggests. The acquisition of the car, however, signifies the delusion of what emigration to the West might also represent; the "ancient Tchevi had its imperfections", which indicates the impossibility of attaining the allegedly flawless Western lifestyle. Lev's ambivalent perception of the Tchevi foreshadows the opportunity London offers him to enter the Western cultural space but never fully access it.

In the attempt to alleviate the havoc caused by the transition from Communism to democracy, Lev and Lydia decided that "England is the only hope" (5) to achieve a decent standard of life for them and the families they leave behind. The initial stage of the voyage across Europe discloses the protagonists' migration agenda and motivation that are encapsulated in the intertextual reference to *Hamlet*. The Shakespearean aphorism, "to be, or not to be" (4), resonates the existential crisis of the local community of Auror, as the sawmill closed down because "they ran out of trees" (4). The dispossession of means of survival and the natural and societal degradation triggered Lev's alienation from this community, as the insistence on domestic images in the improvised English lesson suggests:

’Stork’, said Lev. ‘Stork’s nest. Rain. I am lost. I wish for an interpreter. Bee-and-
bee’.
‘Be and be? Said Lydia. ’No, no. You mean “to be, or not to be”.’
‘No,’ said Lev. ‘Bee-and-bee. Family hotel, quite cheap.’
‘Oh, yes., I know. B & B.’ (Tremain 4)

The ambiguity that pervades the dialogue underpins the identity disorientation of the migrant who is forced to leave the “stork’s nest” (4) and inhabit a transitory residence in a “rainy”, unfamiliar location. The syntactic structure that describes Lev’s statement, embodies a synthesis of the process of hybrid identity construction. The two images of home - the “stork nest” designating the homeland and the B & B signifying the diasporic home, encompass a process that implies confusion, but also adjustment to the conditions of space situated in-between them, achieved in a social context under the guidance of “an interpreter” (4).

The journey to London, described as a fluid passage of the characters through the Western European space, becomes a trope for the transition from the fixed identity anchored in the ancestral culture of the home land, to the hybrid identity facilitated by the access to two cultures. Lev refers to England as to a destination that he is decided to make his new home and appropriate its culture and resources: “I’m going to their country now and I’m going to make them share it with me: their infernal luck. I’ve left Auror and that leaving of my home was hard and bitter, but my time is coming” (Tremain 6). What Lev and Lydia undertake through their journey is an iteration of the Caribbean “colonisation in reverse” (Ramchand 224) of the 1950s depicted in Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*. The Eastern Europeans, stimulated by the opportunities the recent EU membership grants, also attempt to enter London, a space of contradictory assumptions and ambiguous expectations, with the purpose to integrate in its geography and assume its culture.

The journey across the physical state border is depicted through the metaphor of sleep, which suggests the characters’ comfortable transition between spaces through an intermediate state of suspended consciousness. As “the coach pulled in to Victoria at nine in the morning” (Tremain 17), the bus passengers wake up to a reality that will take them “each to a separate future in the unknown city” (17). Similar to the Waterloo station in *The Lonely Londoners,* the Victoria bus terminal represents a trope of cultural in-betweeness, as “people arrive and depart in busses, taxis and cars” (21) from and to various destinations, thus facilitating the transition of people and the communication between cultures. The ambivalence of this space, “where the busses pulled in and drove out” (20), brings Lev to a standstill, an image which foreshadows his engagement in the liminal space delineated by the

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Eastern European and the British cultures. As if caught between these cultures, "Lev paused" (20), tranquilised by the effect of entering "the unknown city" (17). He craves the assistance of an "interpreter" to help him cross the cultural boundary that obstructs his further progress and his reflex dictates him to look back to the familiar environment of the homeland. Lev expects to meet "people with offers of work" (20) who recruit their co-nationals arriving at Victoria station, but as no such assistance materialises, he realises he must assume alone the responsibility of "moving always forwards and on" (10), similar to his Caribbean counterpart, Sir Galahad, half a century before. The need to find his way alone in London, as nobody waited for him at the station, foreshadows the absence in the narrative of a visible Eastern European community in which Lev, like the protagonists of *The Lonely Londoners,* may preserve and practice his original culture.

When exiting Victoria station, Lev assumes the disconnection from the ancestral culture of the homeland and the pressure of exploring a map of London that is completely blank for him brings him to a new standstill. Like a disoriented Sir Galahad who had to pause at the crossroad, Lev stops in a garden where "new trees had been planted and stood in the shade of one of those trees" (Tremain 21), a location that suggests the beginning of a new life, counterbalancing the deteriorated natural environment of the homeland. Lev "leans against a young plane tree" and drinks the last dregs of vodka from his flask, in a symbolic gesture that indicates the final moment of connection to the ancestral culture, then he falls asleep. Tremain deploys again the metaphor of sleep to signify the transition between cultures; the sleep functions as an intermission that facilitates the immigrant's immersion in the "liminal space, which is situated in-between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5). Being confronted with the intricacy of crossing cultural borders, as no help came from any co-national to approach the "unknown city", Lev, like Sir Galahad on his first day in London, is unexpectedly assisted by an English police officer who wakes him and halts his dream "about being lost in the enormity of a potato field, among its never-ending troughs and ridges" (Tremain 22). Suspicious about the vodka flask that lay on Lev's thigh, the officer demands to check the content of the "cheap canvas bag" (23) Lev carried. The display of the bag's content on the pavement raises Lev's awareness about "the fragility of his possessions" (23):

> The clothes Lev had taken off in the station lavatory, his grimy wash-bag, clean T-shirts and sweaters, a pair of new shoes, packs of Russian cigarettes, an alarm clock, two pairs of trousers, photographs of Marina and Maya, a money belt, an English dictionary and his book of fables, two bottles of vodka… (Tremain 23)

The association of articles signifying the ancestral culture he brought from the home land and elements meant to facilitate Lev's mimicry of the English culture suggests his disposition to developing a hybrid identity in a liminal space between two cultures. Lev, similarly to Tolroy's family from *The Lonely Londoners,* enters the metropolitan space of modernity equipped with a luggage that contains what Nguigi Thiong'o referred to as "aspects of the indigenous cultures (Thiong'o 1135). Vodka bottles, Russian cigarettes, and chiefly the photographs of his daughter and deceased wife foreshadow the strong connection to the ancestral culture that Lev would display throughout the narrative. But Lev also possesses a pair of new shoes that recommend him as a dynamic agent, prepared to explore the topography of an alternative cultural space. The association of the English dictionary with the book of fables represents a strong image of cultural hybridity; language and the metaphor of written text are tropes that Tremain employs extensively to designate the intermediate position between cultures that immigrants occupy.

A suggestive comparison can be traced between the luggage of the two protagonists and fellow travellers on the bus trip to London. If Lev displays clear intentions to negotiate his identity by moving back and forth between cultures, Lydia, a former English teacher who "became very tired of the view from her window" (Tremain 3) indulges in the exclusive exploration of the metropolitan culture. Her preliminary contact with the British culture, suggested by her profession, reinforces Lydia's excessive predisposition towards mimicry. She reads on the bus *The Power and the Glory* and keeps on eating eagerly "peeled hard-boiled eggs" (2), as if trying to unwrap herself of the ancestral cultural background and embrace a new life in *The Land of Hope and Glory.* The symbolic reading of Graham Greene's book foreshadows her later association with Edward Elgar music as she would become the interpreter and mistress of a co-national conductor involved with Elgar's work, thus achieving the glorious life she craves.

The voyage from Eastern Europe to London and the border crossing instances that Tremain depicts in the opening of *The Road Home* represent a subversion of the colonial order that the power structures of the European Union accommodate. The aesthetical representations of hybridity that pervade the text devalue the binary division between the culture of the European *centre*, represented by the old member states, and the alleged European *periphery,* as the newly integrated countries are perceived. The warrant of free movement and the practice of hybrid identification allow the protagonists of the novel to

challenge the postcolonial condition of Eastern Europe in relation to the West, postulated by Kovačević (3), and opens a space of free communication between coequal cultures.

3.2 Moving across the metropolitan maps of identification

3.2.1 Trinidadians Exploring London

The process of "mentally mapping London" (Wolfe 9) that Selvon's Caribbean immigrants perform can be seen as an act of cultural decolonisation that facilitates their access to the "liminal space, which situates them in-between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5). The mobile immigrants approach the new cultural space stimulated by "their own rights and responsibilities within the Commonwealth of Nations" (Wolfe 10), but also influenced by "the conceptual maps that contain the historical sites of London enforced by their colonial education" (10). Therefore, the various journeys across London equally imply instances of fluent movement and a series of disturbing episodes that constrain the characters to "slide ambivalently between the polarities of similarity and difference, rationality and fantasy" (McLeod 64). They have to cross mental borders that would open for them a cultural space of ambivalence, by transforming the physical territory they cover into the cultural liminal space where hybridisation becomes possible.

Following the model of gradual hybridisation postulated by E. K. Brathwaite (25), Sir Galahad's self-confidence decreases as he exits Waterloo Station. The contact with the city brings him in a state of confusion, and Selvon appeals to a powerful metaphor to depict his condition – "the fog like it getting thicker" (Selvon 16). The first impression of London is that of a blurry space that affects the ability of sensory perception for the inexperienced migrant, thus figuratively expressing the depersonalisation and commodification effect that the "lonely, powerful city"(29) has on him. On his first day in London, Galahad insists, however, on demonstrating to Moses the possibility of solitary exploration of the metropole. "I want to find out for myself" (22) becomes his slogan as he heads out of Moses' basement room in search of the labour exchange office. He will soon be experiencing one of his "disorienting *pauses* that are part of the imperial subject's constituting process within the city as he develops a map of London" (Wolfe 10, author's emphasis).

Galahad's overstated self-confidence turns into angst as he realises he got lost on the way to the employment exchange. He cannot move forward, as his mental map of London is still blank and what he had expected to be a familiar environment turns into a source of powerful disorientation (Wolfe 11), as even the sun, an intimate presence for a Caribbean,

appears "like a force-ripe orange" (Selvon 23) when the London "kind of fog hovering around" (23). Meanwhile, he cannot return either, as he "ain't even remember the name of the street where Moses living" (24). This means that his previous knowledge and assumptions prove unhelpful to decipher the coordinates of the new geography, which signifies that he is caught between cultures and the state of disorientation hinders him from moving towards either of them. This is for Galahad an incentive for a critical assessment of reality:

> Suddenly he stand up and look back. He wonder if he could find his way back to Moses room. Jesus Christ, suppose he get lost? (…) In panic he start to pat pocket to make sure he have money on him, and he begin to search for passport and some other papers he had. A feeling come over him as if he lost everything he have – clothes, shoes, hat – and he start to touch himself here and there as if he in a daze. (Selvon25)

The image of a man stripped of his clothing is suggestive for a person who has lost his roots and awareness of his own affiliation. The "passport and some other papers" (25) seem to have the potential to appease Galahad's identity crisis, but in his confusion he cannot find them, so even the act of formal identification appears to be disturbed. The image of nakedness signifies Galahad's rebirth as another individual, whose identity is re-inscribed in his body, rather than in his official documents or cultural heritage.

Standing helpless and disoriented on the pavement of Whiteleys street, Galahad's confusion turns into fear as a policeman taps him on the shoulder. This unexpected contact with the authority has a paralysing effect on him, "though he ain't doing nothing against the law" (24). The subaltern instinct makes Galahad "stammer" (24) in front of this metonymic representation of the colonial authority, as he, driven by the cultural automatisms he brought from Trinidad, assumes that the policeman will want "to look him up" (24). In this spot, Galahad voluntarily positions himself as *the Other*, in the sense described by Stuart Hall, as a subject culturally programmed to see himself as different (Hall 225). He places himself behind the mental barrier that keeps him trapped in his own mesh of prejudices, but, to his perplexity, it is the policeman who helps Galahad to cross this border. "Can I help you to get to some place? the police man say" (Selvon 25) is a phrase that acts as a door opener for the insular immigrant, an instrument that breaks down the force of stereotype and helps him understand that London is a propitious space for hybridisation.

The policeman's assistance helps Galahad to carry on the exploration of the metropolitan space. Moreover, Moses shows up "coming down the road" (25) and accompanies him to the labour exchange office, where Galahad meets another symbolic threshold when he attempts to register in the national welfare scheme. During the odyssey

through the offices of the ministry, Galahad is caught within the intricacies of the bureaucratic system, which bring him again to a standstill (Wolfe 11), so that "he had to stand up against the wall for a minute" (Selvon 27). Selvon depicts the British bureaucracy through the association of paradoxical images that generate mixed feelings and attitudes for both the protagonist and the reader: "It is a kind of place where hate and disgust and avarice and malice and sympathy and sorrow and pity all mix up. Is a place where everyone is your enemy and your friend" (27). These disorienting pauses Galahad undergoes, have an intermezzo effect that allows him the reflection time he needs for realising the ambivalence of his ontology. They, therefore, represent the intermediate passage "between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5) that allows a re-evaluation of the diasporic subject's identity in terms of hybridity, as simultaneously anchored in two cultures.

Having surpassed the stasis moments of the initiation stage, Galahad develops into a dynamic character, both in physical and narrative terms. He iterates the leitmotif "I want to find out for myself" (Selvon 22) as he cruises the streets of the city to discover places of mythical resonance in the insular culture of the immigrants, interpreting and incorporating successfully the meaning of each location he comes across during his London odyssey: "Lord, them places must be sharp. Then you get a chance and you see them for yourself, and is like nothing" (Selvon 73). The routes that Galahad marks off on the London map take him from the working class lodgings of Bayswater to the astonishing sites of Charring Cross where he "the first time take a craft out" (73) on a date, or Fifth Avenue, Times Square, or Oxford Street, and back in the Water, either with the "boys", or in the company of a "first class craft" (78). He is a character constantly in motion, "significantly moving from job to job, girl to girl, and room to room" (Wolfe 11), in order to satisfy his urge for "exploration into the social and personal conscience" (Brathwaite 25), to the point when he and the city's physical and cultural maps merge. Selvon emphasises Galahad's dynamism by permeating the text with movement tropes; he sometimes catches a bus, or takes the tube to Piccadilly Station to a date, or sometimes he just "walk like a king" (Selvon 75), alone or accompanied by a girl, "gone somewhere, to the theatre, or the cinema, or just walk around and watch the big life in the Circus" (73).

A particularly significant image of the mimicry Galahad employs is the episode depicting his date with Daisy. He reacts to the overrated price of the movie picture in a West End theatre, as the same picture would "come down in the Water and show for two and six" (80), thus placing Galahad's social identification in-between the immigrant working class and the British high class, or in Said's parlance, between cultural periphery and centre. He chooses, however, to

imitate the West End life-style, "even if it cost a pound" (Selvon 80). The evening continues in a restaurant where Galahad orders "big meal" (80) and "a bottle of French wine, telling the waiter to bring the best" (81), but inexorably ends up in "the yard" (81) of Bayswater, a location that makes Galahad "feeling sort of ashamed to bring a girl in" (81). This constant movement between physical locations and cultural spaces increase Galahad's awareness of his hybrid condition. He is a character who successfully negotiates his identity and can clearly describe the liminal space where he moves freely between designations of two cultures, assuming the ambivalent practice of both: "'That is where I come from', he tell Daisy, 'you see how far it is from England?'" (80).

The episodic structure of the novel and the recurrent adjustment of the focalisation confirm the narrative's construction around a collective character in postmodern sense, blurring the individual and emphasizing the social character of identity reconfiguration. In this sense, it is relevant to highlight, in addition to Galahad's experience, other similar routes through London that Selvon's "spades" follow as they negotiate their identity through a continuous interaction with the cityscape. This approach reinforces the overall image that identity hybridisation can be achieved through various strategies, which are adapted to personal circumstances and assumptions.

One of the novel's plots follow Bartholomew, known as Bart, a "fellar" who belongs "neither here, nor there, though he more here than there" (Selvon 46). His "too big" (46) ambition makes him move toward the exclusive districts of London, either to attend a party in West End, or for a meeting in Park Lane, but he always returns to the Water, where "all he could talk about was the amount of sandwiches he ate, and how he drank whiskey like water" (46). Such situations denote Bart's limited potential of mimicry, like in Galahad's case in the initial stage, supporting the incremental nature of hybridisation that Brathwaite posits. Bart, like the fellars, must assume mobility as a necessary condition for integrating in the cultural ambience of the metropole. He "moving from place to place week after week" (49) in search of a quick integration in the physical and cultural space, but, as "few doors slam in Bart's face" (48), he is constantly pushed back to "go mourning to the boys" (51). The trope of inter-racial marriage becomes in Bart's narrative an epitome of the impossibility to access the cultural centre. He proposes a white girl from Tottenham Court Yard, but when he calls to her family to meet the parents, the father chases Bart out of the house "because he don't want no curly hair children in the family" (51). He, therefore, returns in the "neither here, nor there" (46) space, that designates him as a hybrid subject caught between cultures.

The gap between the Caribbean and metropolitan cultures becomes evident in the narrative of Big City, a Trinidadian who grow up in an orphanage and moved to London after the war, displaying the ambition of rapidly covering the gap between cultures. The disposition of hyperbolic images throughout this ballad tends to amplify the distance between the periphery and the centre and hence widen the liminal space that the character inhabits. The metaphor of size is already encapsulated in the character's nickname, which signifies his obsession for disproportion: "'Big city for me', he would say. None of this smalltime village life for me'" (83). His desire to quickly cover the space between the peripheral culture of Trinidad and the "big life" of the metropole makes him buy a car that "he driving all over London" (85), thus performing a hasty mapping of the cityscape, which generates several both physical and cultural shortcuts. Big City is a character who emphasizes the significance of mimicry as he claims he possesses an exhaustive mental map of London that is more complete than that of the locals: "It ain't have a part that I don't know. When them English people tell them strangers where so and so, I always know. From Pentonvilla right up to Musket Hill, all about by Clapham Common. I bet you can't call a name in London that I don't know where it is" (Selvon 91).

Selvon inserts a hue of irony in the depiction of Big City's identity reconfiguration, as in the rush of accommodating in the urban space, the eager migrant learns the wrong names of the places he mentions. In this way, he places the house of a Lady he hustled one night near Kensington Mansion, instead of Kensington Palace, to the delight of the other fellars who never fail to correct him. In other circumstances, he seems to intentionally alter the locations' names by exaggerating the size of the designated place, as to him Notting becomes Nottingham in Notting Hill, and Gloucester Road becomes Gloucestershire Road. These inconsistencies between the signifiers Big City deploys and the signified locations suggest Selvon's intention to depict ironically the character's overstated pretence of integration through exaggerated predisposition to mimicry, which insinuates that Big City, alike his fellow Caribbeans, cannot escape his hybrid condition.

The Lonely Londoners is a novel that displays a misbalanced gender focus as most of the narrative voices are males. The immigrant women and men are depicted in radically different terms with respect to their sense of subjectivity and approach to the social space they inhabit. The exploration of the metropolitan space seems to represent the men's privilege, whereas the black woman subjects are constrained to the domestic chores and family obligations, and therefore unable to move outside the area encompassed by the conventions associated with the Caribbean culture. There is, however, a female character that captures the narrative focus in

several episodic instances, namely Tolory's aunt, Tanty Bessy. She has an early entry, in the opening scene, as she arrives to London by the same train as Galahad, uttering the intention to "look after the family (…) to cook and wash the clothes and clean the house"(11), displaying continuity with the Trinidadian lifestyle. In the episode describing Tanty's journey from her migrant community on Harrow Road to Lyons Corner House where Ma works, Selvon implies a double symbolic dimension in the interpretative register of border crossing, one ethno-cultural and one gender based. Tanty Bessy refuses initially to exit the domestic space, held back by the cultural inertia of her background, but one day she decides to explore on her own the obscure streets of London. She walks, takes the bus and the tube and completes successfully the venture, "after asking questions all the way" (Selvon 70), thus assuming full responsibility to navigate the physical and cultural map of London.

Even though Tanty is not a character that wanders the city on regular basis, her sense of achievement is strong. She "feeling good that she made the trip from Harrow Road at last" (71), thus proving the possibility of crossing the symbolic border of gender roles to which the Trinidadian culture confines her. Tanty proves to be a disruptive element in the rigid Trinidadian establishment who demonstrates that the construction of hybrid identity entails a suppression of the gender based prejudices. The trope of exploration journey through the city empowers female immigrants to access the liminal space and freely move between the culture of origin and that of the metropolis. This example demonstrates the validity of various strategies of inscribing the metropolitan topography. Some characters act unaccompanied, as Tanty and Big City do, whereas for most of the other male characters the initiation journeys represent true rituals of solidarity, as it is the case for Galahad or Bart, who often criss-cross the city either in the company of other "fellars" or alone, but always return with ritualistic regularity to Moses' room to share and debate their experiences and new knowledge.

3.2.2 Eastern Europeans exploring London

After the successful crossing of both the state frontier and the mental border that held him in stasis, Lev engages in the process of "mentally mapping London" (Wolfe 9). The police officer's instruction "on your way!" (Tremain 24), as well as the example of the joggers that "kept passing by" (25) as he "stood without moving" (25) urge him to overpass the lethargy of the incipient stage of hybridisation advanced by Brathwaite (25) and to start exploring the intricate topography and ethnology of the metropolis. The first site that receives a name is the Champions B & B hotel in Earls Court, a symbolic place that designates London as a diasporic home, an interim location where immigrants become aware of their alienation

and cultural ambivalence. It is from this spot that Lev embarks on an epic journey taking him to various lodgings, jobs or cultural venues across London, which corresponds to the process of cumulative identity negotiation that Brathwaite described when referring to Selvon's Sir Galahad (25). This negotiation can be described as a process ever-expanding in concentric circles; Lev starts in the working class district of Earls Court and explores gradually many of London's districts, cultural venues and social milieus, which facilitates his thorough "exploration into the social and personal conscience" (Brathwaite 25) and construction of a hybrid identity.

The temporary job Lev obtains takes him "all around the neighbourhood" (Tremain 38) in Earls Court distributing leaflets for a kebab outlet. This allows him to scrutinise the finite topography of the London district, which equates with the incipient stage of identity reconfiguration. In order to perform the job, Lev must bear the container with leaflets, which makes him symbolically question the meaning of the luggage he has brought from home. The bag" was beginning to bother him. Not just its heaviness, but the sight of it, containing as it did all that he brought with him from his former life" (34), hindering him from moving freely in the attempt to explore and interpret the physical and cultural signs of the unfamiliar topography. Like Sir Galahad of *The Lonely Londoners,* Lev gets lost while drifting through the streets of Earls Court: "He knew he was lost. He wished he'd left a trail of leaflets to guide him back the way he'd come" (42). He experiences in this stage what Brathwaite described as "a loss sense of proportion, an absence of normative values leading to lack of direction" (Brathwaite 25)*,* which indicate both his physical and mental disorientation. "I'm new", utters Lev apologetically to the group of mothers that become aggressive at the presence of a "foreign nutter"; "I'm only looking my way through many streets" (Tremain 42). This disoriented stance depicts Lev in the liminal space, caught between the impossibility of returning "back the way he'd come from" (42) and the puzzle of not attaining the goal that brought him to London.

Lev's voyage of exploration through London and his own conscious stimulate him also to "gain a sense of community" (Brathwaite 25)*.* He is blocked in the basement of the Kolawski and Shepard family where he took unauthorised lodging during the first night in London, with no prospects to find alone his way forward. The hybrid resonance of the family's name, indicating an Eastern European and English alliance, inspires Lev to appeal to Lydia's mediation in order to move out and away from his underground condition. Lydia promptly assumes the role of linguistic and cultural interpreter, leading Lev through the

intricacies of the metropolitan system, in accordance to the resonance of her name that contains the word *lead.* She therefore enacts Moses Aloetta' role in *The Lonely Londoners*, who, like his biblical namesake, guides the Caribbean "boys" to *the promised land.* The passage from "the hidden space under the road" (Tremain 43) to the extravagant Muswell Hill residence where Lydia takes accommodation at her friend's place, embodies Lev's abrupt transition through antithetical social spaces. It represents one of the "bottom up" movements (Tonkin) that, according to Tonkin, delineate the narrative configuration of the novel. Meeting Lydia again at the tube station equates his "coming out into the daylight" (54) of the legitimate existence that the regular residents of London enjoy, as the amphitryon's reception also suggests: "Tom shook Lev's hand and said: 'Welcome to London'" (Tremain 58).

Under Lydia's guidance, Lev manages to decipher the intricate language of the job columns in the newspaper containing various professions and locations, likewise navigating a geographical and cultural map of London. A job offer takes Lev eventually to Clerkenwell in GK Ashe's restaurant, acclaimed by the employees as "the next big thing in this city" (65). The kitchen work allows him to establish contact with London's state of the art culinary milieu, which comprises sophisticated chefs, opulent venues and pretentious clientele, and also to settle as a regular London resident, renting a room in Turnfell Park in an Irish divorcee's house called Christy Slane. In this context, physical and social mobility becomes a recurrent trope, as Lev commutes between his residence and the workplace assuming the ambivalent position denoted by the antithetical social locations he occupies. He becomes a diasporic subject in transit, inhabiting an area "where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha 1).

The multiple journeys Lev undergoes as the plot progresses, subscribe to the pattern of the immigrants' experience in the metropolis, similarly to the characters of *The Lonely Londoners*. He expands the cognitive map of the city, pushing the limits of his social condition when he accepts Lydia's invitation to a classical music concert in the exclusive *Festival Hall,* conducted by the celebrated compatriot musician, Piotr Greszler, for whom she works as an interpreter. The "bottom up" (Tonkin) movement in cultural term is considerable, as Lev confides to Lydia that "I've never been to a concert like this, Lydia, only folk music performances in Baryn" (Tremain 90). The ideological disparity between the familiar working class environment of the Turnfell Park house and the concert venue makes Lev subject to a dramatic journey between the cultural periphery, to which the migrant condition bounds him,

and the centre of the metropolitan culture. The Elgar and Rachmaninov music in the programme interpreted by the English orchestra and "a Russian genius soloist, Mstislav Rostropovich" (Tremain 90), under Maestro Greszler's baton, may epitomise a desirable environment of cultural hybridity, a space that Lev eagerly wants to access. He therefore needs to develop a keen sense of mimicry, "going with Christy down to Holloway Road" (91) and buying cheap conventional clothes to fit in the dressy event. The evening however ends up in fiasco, as Lev leaves the venue before the concert starts, due to the unpleasant disturbance created by his mobile phone ringing. The interruption of Lev's abrupt social ascent suggests that the way towards the metropolitan cultural centre is intricate for immigrants and it entails the enactment of complex negotiations.

The depiction of hybrid identity construction in *The Road Home* through the trope of metropolitan journey is done in the form of a round trip which takes Lev back to the space of the journey's origin in in Earls Court Road. The location of his country's embassy in the same area suggests the perpetual fluctuation between origins and the metropolitan cultural space that hybrid diasporic subjects undergo. In this space permeated by cultural ambivalence, Lev feels the desire to revisit the basement of the Shepard and Kolawski's premises, where he had slept on his first night in London. By asking himself rhetorically "were Shepard and Kolawski at home?" (312), Lev investigates the possibility of coexistence between the Eastern European and the English cultures that the symbolic juxtaposition of the names indicate. He finds himself the answer, before deciding to "ring the bell and announce his presence" (312), as the stasis he experiences allows him to reflect on his successful hybrid identity reconfiguration: "Something in him wanted to just do it [ring the bell], to say that he owed them a double debt, because that was when he'd first caught it, the scent of happiness in this city…But he didn't move, he just stayed where he was, half-way down the steps, watchful and calm" (312 my explanation). The trope of median positioning between cultures, some place between Kolawski and Shepard, suggested by Lev's halt midways on the stairs, designate his hybrid identity, accomplished through the exploration of London's topography and the perpetual movement between the original and metropolitan cultural spaces.

4. Making the Metropolitan Space Familiar

"Please, please! No Barbarians in here" (Tremain 98)

The depiction of identity hybridisation of both Caribbean and Eastern European immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home* also implies the exploration of the relation between migrant experience and the metropolitan space they inhabit. The tropes attached to the concept of space in the novels refer not only to the dwelling places, which mostly attempt to reproduce the atmosphere of the home land, but also to the public sphere in the city where immigrants equally decipher and inscribe the metropolitan culture. These spatial categories provide an auspicious arena for cultural exchange, thus allowing immigrants to engage in a process of identity negotiation that is strongly dependant on the space they inhabit.

In *Local Lives: Migration and the Politics of Place,* Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich and Catherine Trundle contend that, "even in a fluid world of movement" (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 1), the connection to a place is a central aspect of the identity construction of immigrants since "place remains a deeply contested and symbolically rich site in which to constitute the self through the micropolitics and everyday rituals of place-making, even for those on the move" (1). The protagonists of Selvon's and Tremain's novels are equally involved in the project of "place-making" (1) in the attempt to raise awareness of their selves and their new home land. As a result, the metropolitan London is rendered from the perspective of the newcomers as a place of both otherness and familiarity, difference and inclusion, a "third space" (Bhabha 56) in Bhabha's parlance that "inscribes and articulates culture's hybridity" (56). Therefore, there is another London that is constructed, as John McLeod claims (McLeod *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* 1), which provides and embodies a new, diasporic home for immigrants where identity hybridisation is favoured.

4.1 Reconfiguring the metropolitan space as a strategy of identity negotiation

4.1.1 Bringing the Calypso to the metropolis

The Lonely Londoners is built around a collective body of Caribbean immigrants that are still very much West Indian but at the same time show the intention to reconfigure their identity by negotiating the access to the metropolitan cultural space. Selvon's immigrants

perform a series of actions meant to neutralise the cultural gap generated by the colonial policy of "the familiar 'Us' and the strange 'Them'" (Said, *Orientalism 44*), which underpins the ideological disparity between the metropolitan centre and the colonial periphery. Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle argue that it is "through decisions about everyday migrant practices, in private homes and public streets or parks, that an uneasy sense of belonging (and exclusion) can be enacted" (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 9-10)This means that through the trivial acts that immigrants accomplish, such as the work they do, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the language they talk or the art they practice, they undermine the 'Us' and 'Them' dichotomy by creating "overlappin*g spaces* which are created when varied cultural forces come into contact" (Roldan-Satiago 132 author's emphasis).

Following Said's idea of binary division of identification, Selvon pervades the text of *The Lonely Londoners* with tropes that depict London as a space of explicit contradictions, a location that equally encompasses the culture of "the old Brit'n" (Selvon 2) and "justifies the reproduction of West Indian manners as a means of explaining cultural differences between West Indian and British characters" (Birgalsingh 154). This division recommends London as a liminal space where immigrants enact identity hybridisation as a strategy to subvert the colonial power relations. The novel's opening scene already foreshadows the city's antithetical representation, as Selvon employs chromatic figuration to render the antinomy between the cultural spaces that immigrants inhabit. On the bus to Waterloo station, "Moses take out a white handkerchief and blow his nose. The handkerchief turn black and Moses watch it and curse the fog" (Selvon 2). The white handkerchief, signifying the cultural map of London, seems to have its immaculate colour "contaminated" (Ramchand 224) by the presence of the Caribbean immigrants, turning into a "blur" (Selvon 1) terrain, as the metaphor of fog suggests, or a "third space" (Bhabha 56) where Moses can be two things at the same time, a subject caught between two cultures that merge and create a hybrid identity. The recurrent use of the metaphor of "fog", a trademark of London, suggests the powerful impact of the city on the subjectivity formation of immigrants, denoting it as a space that "blurs" the unambiguous identity of the newcomers.

One form of depicting the uncanny London's cultural space is through the image of "unrealness" (Selvon 1); for the colonial subject entering the metropolis, the city unfolds as a "strange place on another planet" (1), which triggers alienation and disorientation. This "unrealness" is reinforced by the pervasive paradoxical images of London; the "streets paved

with gold" (2) that excite the collective imagination of the West Indians motivating them to migrate materialise into a rough reality, being "always dirty except if rain fall" (60).

The physical locations that migrants inhabit is a major trope that indicates the social locus they occupy. The "dirty streets" accommodating the "a lot of spades" (59) designate the position of the "urban lower class or the lumpen proletariat (…) where the small islanders are transferred, and incomprehensively but hopefully, into the great metropolitan centre" (Gonzalez 45). Metropolitan London is "the powerfully lonely city" (Selvon 29) in which the logic of peripherality is present, triggering the polarisation of its inhabitants across dividing lines clearly demarcated by cultural and social disparities. "London is a place like that. It devide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world you belong to and you don't know anything about what happening in the other ones" (60). The mesh-like depiction of the city, with immigrants spread "all over London" (2) in clearly delineated groups, indicates a sense of inherent cultural discontinuity of the metropolitan milieu, where communication between heterogeneous ethnical groups is jammed.

London as an ambivalent space is also represented in the form of a city divided into the visible and the invisible (Wolfe 13). The figuration Selvon uses to depict this division is the vertical distance that separates the street from the upper floors of the luxurious buildings in the "plush" areas of London "where the high and the mighty living" (Selvon 61). Tropes of verticality pervade the description, as "the old fellars sometimes *walk up* the streets" (61my emphasis) that take them to West End, "and sing in *high* falsettos, *looking up* at the *high* windows, where the *high* and the mighty living" (61my emphasis). The physical distance between the "fellas" begging in down the street and the women "*up* in the fully furnished flats" (62 my emphasis) signifies the "liminal space, which is situated in-between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5) that separates the cultures of the immigrants from that of the metropolis. This is the space of ambivalent communication and exchange, where the "sort of musical noise, no song, no rhythm" (Selvon 62) conveys upwards the message of the people placed at the periphery of society, and allows "the tanner to fall *down*" (62 my emphasis) from the window where "the woman didn't even look *down*" (62 my emphasis). This image of invisibility shows that whereas the upstairs life of commercially successful Londoners remains invisible against the will of the immigrant on street-level, the opposite is not true. The rich woman chooses not to see life on street level. Such instances of identity negotiation marked by invisibility reinforce the contradictory image of London as a space of "belonging and exclusion" (Brednich and Trundle 10), forcing the immigrants to "familiarise themselves with the social expectations of the colonial society both in their coming to realise

their status as denigrated *Other* and as a member of the newly formed diasporic community" (Wolfe 14 my emphasis).

From this subaltern position, which places them "at the bottom of London society" (Roldan-Satiago 122), Selvon's immigrants emerge in the public space, inscribing it and negotiating the rigid boundaries that sever races and cultures. Moses, for instance, approaches the cultural space of the city from his basement room located at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove, which serves as a safe zone both for him and the new-comers from the West Indies. When depicting Moses' dwelling, Selvon focuses not on the imperfect condition of the basement space, but rather on the symbolic social function it has. The room represents a locus of transition for the newly arrived immigrants from where Moses diligently spreads them throughout London, seeking to avoid ghettoization and creating a wide network that facilitates the connection and communication between the various districts of the metropolis: "And so like a welfare officer Moses scattering the boys around London, for he don't want no concentrated area in the Water – as it is, things bad enough already" (Selvon 3-4).

From this location, Moses acts up to the biblical resonance of his name assuming a complex role of guide, counsellor, mentor, liaison officer, and convergent force for the emerging community of new settlers, aware of the way the diasporic subjects are influenced by their new homelands, but also of the fundamental social transformations that "old Brit'n" undergoes under the impact of postcolonial immigration. He functions as an institution of cultural initiation and social alignment for the younger immigrants; the leitmotif he characteristically invokes - "take it easy" (Selvon) - creates an intermission effect, suggesting his existence in the "liminal space. Moses, however, is a bad identity negotiator, and the recurrent refrain "take it easy" also denotes his incapacity to move in any direction. "He hardly have time to settle in the old Brit'n before all sorts of fellars start coming straight to his room" (Selvon 2), claiming Moses' time, experience, and patience.

In the process of "colonisation in reverse" (Ramchand 224) that unfolds in postcolonial London, Selvon's immigrants challenge the boundaries that separate the white and non-white societies, by inscribing the British cultural space with a hue of Caribbean exoticism, while equally incorporating the metropolitan values in perpetual process of redefining the space in-between cultures where hybridity develops. As the narrative unfolds, the immigrant community begins to act solidary and successfully "negotiate places and people" (Wolfe 14), thus transforming irreversibly the metropolis. An emblematic example of this conversion process is the manifestation of colonial culture in the hostel from where "in a

way most of the boys graduate before they branch off on their own and begin to live in London" (Selvon 29). The dining room of the hostel, occasionally converted into cultural venue where "a fellar would play the piano – first a classic by Chopin, then a calypso, then one of them funny African tune" (30), becomes a fluid social arena where colonial and imperial cultures cohabit, symbolically breaking down the rigid binary division of olden London.

Caribbean music and dance represent an important aspect of identity articulation that the immigrants transfer to London in order to preserve the cultural identity. Tolroy, one of the veterans among Selvon's "boys", when "he did left Jamaica he bring a guitar with him to old Brit'n, and he always have this guitar with him, playing it in the road and in the tube, and when he standing up in the queues" (Selvon 6). This act designates both a form of the preservation of the genuine ancestral cultural expressions that Nguigi Thiong'o mentions (Thiong'o 1135), but also a form of inscribing the metropolitan cultural space through dissemination of Caribbean values and practices.

Besides individual acts like Tolroy's guitar playing, Selvon insists on tropes of cultural transference during the fete that Harris, "a fellar who like to play ladeda" (Selvon 103) as he excessively mimics the British, organises in the St. Pancrass Hall. According to Wolfe, this event "is central to the novel because it brings together all the characters, both male and female, young and old, white Londoners and West Indians" (Wolfe 15) to breath the air of tolerance and "cultural conviviality" (16) in the exotic ambience created by the "steel band to play music, and a bar for the boys to drink" (Selvon 104). Despite Harris' effort to preserve the ethnical segregation at the fete, the "boys" defiantly mix with "the distinguished English guests" (110), chatting openly with the "gentlemen" (106) and flirting with the "white chicks" (104) while dancing the calypso. By virtue of the crowd's diverse composition, this event serves as the ideal setting for negotiation of the cultural space of the metropolis: the locale, a former reunion house of the local Anglican parish, also gains symbolic value in this context as foreign immigrants convert it into a venue for the display of multicultural forms of entertainment. An inspired Big City captures the spirit of the fete in a comprehensive exclamation: "Oh lord, what is happening in this London. This fete like a real bacchanal in the Prince Building in Port of Spain" (108). Therefore, by simultaneously reproducing the Caribbean atmosphere and including the indigenous Londoners, St. Pancras Hall becomes the allegorical representation of a cosmopolitan mini-London, or, as John McLeod put it:

"… a new kind of socially inclusive space which emerges from the creolising promise of the dancefloor; tolerant, racially inclusive, pleasurable, mobile, negotiating between past and present, inside and outside, the Caribbean and London. As Moses says to Galahad, 'the things that happening here tonight never happen before' (McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* 39).

The settlement of immigrants has not changed only the aesthetic preferences of the metropolis, but also the culinary practices. The local food market, monotonous "before Jamaicans start to invade Brit'n" (Selvon 63), starts to diversify its offer in the working class areas as "shops all around start to take in stocks of foodstuffs what West Indians like" (63). The benefit is reciprocal, "as long as the spades spending money" (63) to satisfy their culinary idiosyncrasies and the shopkeepers "don't care, in fact is big encouragement" (63) to meet the immigrants' needs. London's economic environment is becoming multicultural, pluralistic, and permissive as "all over London have places like that now" (64).

In this environment, Tolroy's aunt, Tanty Bessy, captures the narrative focalisation once again. She is for the most part confined to the domestic duties, "look after the family, cook and wash the clothes and clean the house"(11). Tanty is apparently a predictable character, but her deeds nevertheless depict her as "a disruptive force in the working class area she lives" (Wolfe 14) who challenges both the gender and racial segregation patterns of the emerging new metropolis. She "builds a community of women with a new cultural identity around her shopping expeditions" (15) as she goes shopping regularly in the local grocery together with "all the spade housewives, and Tanty in the lead" (Selvon 65). The pattern of shopping changes, as it becomes a community activity involving socialising "like a jam-session" (65) among the immigrants, but also with the local English, since Tanty "used to get big oldtalk with the attendants, paying no mind to the people waiting in the queue" (67).

The *calypsoisation* of shopping is not however the only innovation that Tanty institutes. She enacts the Caribbean women community's advocate when "she stand up and talk other people business, and it didn't take she long to make friend and enemy with everybody" (65). The paradoxical image depicting Tanty at the same time as "friend and enemy" is one of the most coherent images of the *liminal space* that Selvon employs in the novel. It expresses a position simultaneously marked by acceptance and rejection, by suspicion and trust, affecting in equal degree the agents that engage in the negotiation process. Tanty assumes responsibility to enter this territory, which no male character does, by changing the English shopkeeper's no credit policy, an act which epitomises the process of inscribing the metropolitan cultural space. The common trade policy in Britain is cash payment, and the shopkeeper signalises that by hanging

on the shop's wall a caricature signifying the advantage of cash over credit. Tanty, however, tries to negotiate this policy and explains to the shopkeeper that "where I come from you take what you want and you pay every Friday and that is called trust" (Selvon 66), but the result is only the Englishman's condescending smile. But one day Tanty decides to challenge the shop's rigid trade policy through a transgressive act that signifies the very deconstruction of the colonial tradition:

> Then one day Tanty buy a set of message and put it in she bag and tell him: 'you see that exercise books you have in the glasscase? Take one out and put my name in it and keep under the counter with how much I owe you. Mark the things I take and I will pay you on Friday please God'. And Tanty walk out the white people shop as brazen as ever. (Selvon 66)

Through this move Tanty destabilises the fix structure of the metropolitan society based on racial and cultural segregation. As a result, the shopkeeper replaces the caricature on the wall with a picture of "the coronation of the Queen" (66), an act that signifies reconciliation and inclusion of immigrants within the grand family of the Commonwealth. London becomes the centre of a new inter-cultural community, a space where the voice of the immigrants takes distinct shape and contribute to articulating its structural reconfiguration

Besides negotiating the access to the public space as a sign of inscribing the metropolitan culture, the "fellars" occasionally are constrained to cross ideological borders build around the notion of race. Selvon approaches this sensitive theme with great art, by skilfully operating a discourse that mixes humour and gravity, hence obtaining a high artistic effect which keeps the reader alert and entertained at the same time. London is depicted as a city segregated on racial fault lines, both in terms of cartography and ideology. The immigrants of *The Lonely Londoners* challenge the colonial order as they attempt to access the *white space* of the metropolis. Bart, who "have lighter skin" (Selvon 46) than the other "boys", tries to elude his racial condition by crossing the borders that preserve the city's ethnic hierarchy. He repudiates his Trinidadian community – "I here with these boys, but I not one of them, look at the colour of my skin" (48) – and tries a transgressive accession in the white community by "wanting to play gentleman" (50) and marry an English girl. But "few doors slam in Bart face, few English people give the old diplomacy, and Bart boil down and come like one of the boys" (48). Through the route that Bart covers between Moses' basement room, to the "white people house" (51) from where he is thrown out and then "go mourning back to the boys (51), he epitomises the existence of the Caribbean immigrants in a space situated *in-between* racial and cultural extremes of the metropolitan space. Even though Bart

tries to restrict the contact with the Caribbean community and "the time when he hold on to a English thing he hold tight", the "fellars" react sympathetically to his exaggerated "thirst for English woman" (Selvon 50), which indicates his desire for mimicry, and accept him back in the group.

If Bart's radical strategy to escape his racial condition fails, other integration mechanisms the "fellars" access in order "to get by "(77) in the metropolitan cultural space prove to be more successful. The *mimicry* of the British vestimentary codes is an important element of bodily figuration that Selvon deploys in order to depict what Bhabha considered as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha 85) meant to undermine the racial stereotyping of the colonists. Galahad understands the importance physical appearance, "for one of the first things he do after get a work was to stock up with good clothes like stupidness, as if to make up for all the hard times when he didn't have nice things to wear" (Selvon 73). Since Oxford Street is inaccessible, they buy replicas tailored by a Jewish manufacturer who claims to reproduce "West End" quality at accessible prices. Galahad "show no foolishness about clothes" (Selvon 74) in the public space, as he "cool as a lord, walking out to the road, with plastic raincoat hanging on the arm" (75). The imperfect imitation of the local aristocracy, with plastic raincoat as a surrogate for the original canvas coat, denotes Galahad's outright position as *mimicking subject* in relation to the coloniser. His location in the *liminal space* is reinforced by the attire he wears as he returns from his night shift work: "old cap that was brown one time, but black now with grease and fingerprints, and a corduroy trousers that would shame them ragandbone man" (74-75), while his shoes "have a big hole like laughing" (75), so that "you won't believe is the same fellar you did see coasting in the park the evening before" (74).

The antithesis between public and private designated by clothes, depicts Galahad as a successful negotiator of the superficial signs of the British culture. The high degree of vestimentary mimicry – "But when you dressing, you dressing "(75) – cannot nevertheless compensate for the perceptible racial features. A child in the park remarks "mummy, look at that black man", which demonstrates that despite flawless cultural mimicry, Galahad's identity is, however, inscribe on his body (Wolfe 9). The child's remark triggers Galahad's appetite for the philosophical exploration of the concept of race. Selvon employs apostrophe to allow Galahad negotiate his identity with his own colour: "Colour 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. Is not me, you know, is you!"(Selvon 77).

The dialogue indicates Galahad's disorientation; he detaches himself from his physical body rejecting the essentialist association between skin colour and subjectivity, thus claiming his position in the *liminal space* as a hybrid individual.

4.1.2 Bridging Eastern and Western Europe

The EU integration of former Communist countries has produced dialogic contact zones that facilitate the interaction between the Western and Eastern European cultures thus reducing the gap in the division based on the centre/periphery principle. A major trope that informs the narrative of *The Road Home* refers to the binary representation of cultures and societies built on the mutual assumptions of alterity. The novel's protagonist, Lev, engages in negotiating his identity in a space pervaded by the division between "the familiar 'Us' and the strange 'Them'" (Said, *Orientalism 44*) in an attempt to decode and internalise the uncanny signs of the local topography, while also preserving and promoting values and ways of his original culture. He tries to connect to the metropolitan space through the actions and decisions he takes, enacting what Brednich and Trundle described as the process of "place-making" (Brednich and Trundle 1). In this way he converts the cultural gap between 'Us' and 'Them' (Said, *Orientalism 44*) into an accessible "third space" (Bhabha 56) where identity hybridisation becomes an efficient strategy to undermine the metropolitan fixed cultural and meaning representations.

Lev perceives London in a similar way to Selvon's Caribbean immigrants, as a space pervaded by contradictions, whose inhabitants are disposed on vertical coordinates that delineate the city's ambivalence, as Boyd Tonkin noticed (Tonkin), thus creating a liminal space in which identity is negotiated. The weather trope that Tremain employs conveys Lev's impression of about the city. As he wakes up in the basement of Kolawski and Shepherd on his first morning in London, he hardly has time to notice when the "gentle rain that barely seems to fall" (Tremain 46) stops "and the sun begins shining on the wet leaves" (47). This image foreshadows the antithetical depiction of the metropolis, as a space pervaded by social and cultural inconsistencies that reinforce the polarisation of people in agents of centre and periphery.

Lev started his life in London under the sign of exclusion, as an outsider who was forced to improvise a dwelling in the basement of the Kolawski and Shepherd premises. As the evening came, "he went down into their basement and sat hidden in the space under the road" (43), contemplating the possibility of ascending "above in the streets" (43), in order to

access the metropolitan space "where he could hear people laughing and car doors slamming and the click of a woman's high heels on the pavement" (Tremain 43). Lev experiences a state of invisibility as he hides under the "unimaginable weight of the city above" (44) similar to the "fellars" in *The Lonely Londoners* who go begging in the rich districts of London. He goes unnoticed throughout the night, and as the morning comes, he becomes an active agent who starts to negotiate the space of the metropolis.

Exiting the underground space has a symbolic function; like the Caribbean migrants who enter London by transiting Moses' basement room, Lev accesses the surface of the metropolitan reality through a vertical movement that takes him straight to the opulent Muswell Hill apartment of Lydia's friends, which enacts the transition space corresponding to Moses' room. It is from this place that Lev, under Lydia's guidance, begins to explore and integrate the city's topography, a "city of mixed-up cultures, where people were who they pretended to be" (273). The various locations that Lev makes contact with throughout the narrative are depicted as polarised cultural environments signifying the social locus of the characters that inhabit them. Being granted access to these extremities of the British cultural manifestation Lev struggles to occupy a liminal position where he can negotiate his identity.

Christy Slane's house in Turnfell Park where Lev rents a room is a location that epitomises the values of the working class. He feels immediately attached to the unpretentious area around Belisha Road, a street "with choky little houses" (67) where "the pavement was cracked and lumpy and stained" (67). The house itself is a marker of the modest expectations of the working class, being inconspicuously situated "on the shaded side where a high privet hedge, overgrown to wide proportions, made the entrance dark" (67). The emphases on opacity attaches an attribute of peripheral invisibility both to the site and its residents. The house's interior is also humble, with "bare minimum of furniture" (68), and Christy's insistence on the curtains denotes a sense of privacy and security, keeping the inside safe from the gaze of others and any external interference: "At least Angela left these curtains. And this is the quiet side of the house (…). I like it when things are nice and quiet like that. Cuppa tea. Smoke. Quietness" (69). Lev's new residence is therefore an important site of identity management where he recognises himself as an insider within the metropolitan working class subculture, where the intimacy of the space and the class camaraderie generate a family atmosphere.

The job that Lev takes in Clerkenwell in GK Ashe's restaurant exposes him to a cultural environment that represents the antithesis of the Belisha Road house. Tremain insists on describing the interior of the kitchen in order to highlight the incongruity with Christy Slane's house: "Two sinks and two-point-five metres of steel draining top. State-of-the-art hygiene area. Racks here for service platters and plates. Multi-programme dish-washer here for glassware. Jet-scourers. Temperature-controlled rinse-faucet" (Tremain 66). The density of technical terms and the insistence on hygiene creates a contrasting effect between the two locations that impact Lev's daily life. The glossy restaurant kitchen represents an alternative cultural space to Christy's house, governed by a type of mechanical cohesion that develops among the staff members, motivated by the capitalist rationale of productivity: "This restaurant kitchen operates exactly like an orchestra. Everybody has to focus and keep up time. And there's only one conductor, and that's the head chef" (67).

The metaphor of the orchestra, as an image attached to the upper class environment of London, reoccurs in the exclusive *Festival Hall,* where the famous compatriot Piotr Greszler would conduct an Edward Elgar concert. The milieu of the concert calls for Lev's exigency to reflect upon the variations between the edges of identity he undergoes, thus realising his condition of existing in-between cultures. He buys "a cheap white shirt and a tie from a Saturday stall in Holloway Road" (91), which make him appear as the "contrasting image of the West" (Said 2), the unfamiliar *Oriental* who does not fit in "the great gleaming foyer" where "the audience was here as if to be cleansed or rebaptised" (Tremain 92) as metropolitan cultural quintessence. Aware that the mimicking strategy of dressing up to the moment was not successful, Lev experiences a moment of depersonalisation, when the trope of invisibility occurs again to delineate him as an outsider in an environment epitomising the metropolitan centre: "Now, in this bar, he just wanted to lie down and be carried away on some dark tide of sleep, to become invisible even to himself" (96). Such disorienting pauses are frequent experiences for immigrants inhabiting a *liminal space* situated between two cultures. The intermission suggested by Lev's need to sleep represents therefore a median passage "between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5), an ambivalent ontological space in which diasporic subjects reconfigure their self.

Guided by Lydia, Lev comes over his disorientation and continues to negotiate a position in the centre of the metropolitan culture. The parallel to Elgar's destiny is symptomatic in this context; trying to create a comfortable concert setting, Lydia briefs Lev on the biography of Sir Edward Elgar, who "was very important to English music in the

twentieth century, but the beginnings of his life were quite ordinary" (Tremain 93). Elgar's early life, just as Lev beginnings in London, had therefore been marked by the condition of invisibility, as suggested in Lydia's description. This image evokes Lev's experience of examining a twenty-pound note on the bus to London, when he admired the image of Edward Elgar printed on the paper, but was not able to decipher the name written on it: "The indicated lifespan of the man on the note was 1857-1934. Lev stared at his determined jaw, squinted at his name written out in a scrawl beneath the wing collar, but couldn't read it" (Tremain 6). The way Elgar's name was invisible to Lev in the beginning of the trip, so was him in the foyer of the concert of the Concert Hall, waiting to be introduced to the music imbued by" a big nostalgia, a longing for some time or place that is gone" (97) of the celebrated musician who emerged from obscurity. Lev enters the hall decided to overcome the nostalgia of his homeland and make London his new home: "There was nothing left for me in Yarbl. Here, I am starting again. I'm determined to have a life" (97). The atmosphere is solemn, "the lights gleamed and flickered, the applauds grew in passionate intensity" (97), and as "the beautiful music was going to begin" (97), so is Lev prepared to mark himself as an insider in the metropolitan topography. The inopportune sound of Lev's mobile phone, a Carousel tune "chosen for its rebalance to the fairground music in Baryn" (98), interrupts however Lev's negotiation of space in the Concert Hall. Maestro Greszler's vexed remark functions as a reality check to Lev: "'Mobile phones off'! he yelled. 'Please, please! No Barbarians in here" (98). Lev is therefore denied access to the metropolitan elite; he is recast as a peripheral agent, intended to flow ambivalently between the *orientalism* of the Baryn fairground music and the tunes of the prominent English composer, unable however to anchor his identity in either of these cultural locations.

The unsuccessful experience of integrating in London's elitist cultural space is iterated when Sophie takes him to *The Royal Court Theatre* in Chelsea to watch an avant-garde play, in the company of her coterie, whom to Lev embody "not only the modern day movie stars or sports stars, but also the once-beautiful, absurdly dressed aristocrats of another era" (201). The sense of displacement marks Lev in such a way that, again, "in the noise and deep darkness of The Royal Court Theatre bar he was striving to become invisible" (200). Attended by Sophie, he tries to integrate and "breath that rarefied, celebrated air" (201) of the London artistic elite, but ends up in the position of an oriental *Other* (Said, *Orientalism 44*) descended from "the land of the barbarians" (54). The fancy leather jacket he wears, in the attempt to mimic the community's vestimentary code, still has the price tag on it, which triggers Sophie's friends' derogatory remarks. The new jacket, signifying the new identity he

tries to assume, makes him feel uncomfortable as if "he was going to suffocate" (Tremain 206). In the hostile company of the sophisticated intellectuals Lev starts to "lose touch with where he was" (Tremain 211), slowly gliding in the position of "the man from a distant country who thinks that the *Picadillos* [the name of the play] is a piece of – "(210 my explanation). He ends the theatre night prematurely exiting the venue after a violent argument with Sophie, realising that "he was a stranger to this smart bit of London" (211). The negotiation of this space fails too and Lev feels that the metropolis begins to enact "a straightjacket he was trying to get himself out of" (206). For Lev, the suede jacket, denoting his disposition to mimicry is "impossible to bear"; yet he is "unable to take it off because of the handcuffs" (215) after he is arrested by the police for excessive alcohol intoxication, meaning that his subjectivity is inextricably inscribed by the metropolitan cultural environment he inhabits and he is transformed into an Eastern European/London hybrid.

Similarly to *The Lonely Londoners,* food is a trope that informs the negotiation of the metropolitan space in *The Road Home.* Tremain focuses on the immigrants' contribution to enhancing the quality and diversity of the food offer in the metropolis, depicting in detail both the exoticism of the kebab outlet in Earls Court Road, where Lev has received an occasional job, and the sophistication of GK Ashe's premium restaurant. Lev's fluctuation between these two food facilities reinforces the idea of the class division of London suggested by Tonkin, placing him within the liminal cultural space they symbolise. Food is therefore depicted in the narrative as "more than just something that's going to end up in the toilet in twenty-four hours" (281), as the head chef Gregory Ashe suggests; it has an implicit social value which is manifested in forms of socialisation and cultural expressions of various groups.

Lev's access to the premium British cuisine in GK Ashe can be translated in Bhabha's parlance as mimicry (Bhabha 85); his strategy of negotiating the access to the cultural centre has a practical purpose, namely to promote the values of the metropolis in areas where these are unavailable. After losing the restaurant job, Lev receives an offer to fill in the position left "absolutely without warning" (Tremain 313) by the sloppy English chef at Fernandale Heights elderly home. He transforms the kitchen of the institution that "had been infected with neglect" (324) into a functional facility that enhances the residents' comfort and contentment. Lunchtime becomes "one of the highlights of the residents' day", a detail that changes the sullen mood pervading the establishment before Lev's arrival. The innovations Lev introduces has a special significance in the context of the Fernandale Heights institution, which functions as a metaphorical representation of a decrepit English society, a mini-London

marked by invisibility and separation. Lev's effort to change the place signifies the contribution of the immigrants to "perpetually changing the milieu of the city living" (McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis 1*), to transforming the old, segregated, London into a space of social inclusion and cultural pluralism.

4.2 Homes as Markers of Identity

4.2.1 At home, between Port of Spain and London

      The Caribbeans depicted in *The Lonely Londoners* are, on the whole, mobile characters who move across physical and symbolic spaces of identification in order to investigate, inscribe, but also establish connection with the topography of the new home land. As Avtah Brah argues, "diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots elsewhere"(Brah 443). Therefore, Selvon's immigrants seem to crave a secure and stable place to settle in, searching for a sense of home and belonging that fluctuates between the exoticism of the Caribbean and the proximity of the metropolitan reality. They are subjects who have lived in London for a while, but they still retain original values and ways from the homeland. In Edward Said's opinion, "they exemplify at best the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the familiar world inhabited by the natives" (Said *Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals* 373), even though they sometimes claim the privileged positioning as "insiders who belong fully to the society as it is, who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance and dissent" (373). Such a perspective places the immigrants who negotiate their identity in the *liminal space* from where they are neither able to return to the stable situation of their original identity, nor can they fully access the condition of a new home.

      Home is therefore a central concept in the process of negotiating identity, and the protagonists of *The Lonely Londoners* are often in search of accommodation "with the intention of settling once more and making the new locality as meaningful site for daily life (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 96). Being able to get a dwelling place or not, sometimes indicates what in Said's discourse represents the immigrant's position *inside* or *outside* the world inhabited by the natives (Said *Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals* 373). As a veteran in London, Moses acts as a self-appointed social worker for the Caribbean community, helping the *boys* to "settle down, leading them to a minimum shelter, food and

welfare assistance of some kind" (Roldan-Satiago 121). His basement room enacts a transit and initiation institution from where "Moses send the boys to different addresses (…) scattering them all round London" (Selvon 3). The settlement in a new house represents a powerful image for negotiating the affiliation to the new home land and sometimes this procedure proves to be an intricate, as hostile landlords refuse to rent out rooms to black immigrants. Such passages in the novel illustrate the still binary division of the British society on the *outside/inside* fault line, which Said described, condition that forces the immigrants in the *in-between space* of identity designation. In the remarkable episode when Galahad talks to his colour, he denounces the absurdity of racism which hinders black immigrants to acquire a dwelling and establishing roots in the metropolis: "Black, you see what you cause to happen yesterday? I went to look at a room in the Gate, and as soon as the lady see you she say the room let already" (Selvon 77).

The frequent accommodation changes the protagonists experience underpins the idea of liminality as a physical and cultural space where the newcomers try to apprehend the meaning of the concept of home. The difficulty of being grounded to one place signifies the fluid character that *home* may receive; in metropolitan context the physical home is relocated as a mental category becoming, as Brah quoted by John McLeod contends, "discontinuous with its real location" (Brah quoted in McLeod 241). John Berger in the book *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos* (2005) also disconnects the concept of home from the physical space of the house when he claims that "home has little to do with a building. The roof over the head, the four walls, have become, as it were, secular: independent from what is kept in the heart and is sacred" (Berger 63). Berger's observation suggests that the home culture has a transcendent quality that can be accessed ritualistically or privately. As for the subjects of modernity the sense of sacred space has been liberated from its religious meaning, we are just left with the secular house and an ideal image of home that is sacralised through the intimate connection that the dweller creates to it. This way of perceiving home is inextricably linked to the sense of belonging to a cultural space of identitary comfort, which for Selvon's immigrants is often situated in-between the idea of original home that they take along and try to reproduce, and that of the metropolitan home that they try to access through mimicry.

A frequent trope that Selvon employs to challenge the idea of static home refers to the reproduction of an imagined extended family that either share a dwelling or just assemble for socialising. An early figurative representation of family reunion is rendered through the arrival of "two different sets of families "(Wolfe 7) at Waterloo Station. The one set rendering the conventional family refers to Tolroy's extended family: "All of we come, Tolroy" (Selvon 9) his mother exclaims. The family reunion image reinforces the British journalist's disposition for speculating on the invasion of immigrants: "The next day when the Echo appear it had a picture and under the picture it write: Now Jamaican Families Come to Britain" (12). They live together in Harrow Road, eagerly reproducing the culture of the home land, with Tanty Bessie shopping in "the grocery every Saturday morning" (65) and preparing "foodstuffs that West Indians like" (63) such as "saltfish and rice (…) and blackeye peas and read beans and pepper sauce, and tinned breadfruit and ochro" (63). The ritualistic act of living like a "closely-knit family as if they were 'at home'" (Wolfe 7) has the effects of transforming the home they inhabit into a transcendental space that carries a high spiritual significance. This strategy of reproducing the homeland in the metropolis allows immigrants to challenge the idea of static home and therefore relocate the space of identity construction in an abstract locus informed by both the ancestral and metropolitan cultures.

If Tolroy's family reproduces a "potentially nostalgic copy of the original home in the Caribbean" (7), the second family pattern that Wolfe refers to, "Moses' family of *boys*" (7), enacts a different strategy of building the mental home away from home. Their "definition of togetherness" (7) encompasses the identitary disorientation the young immigrants undergo since to them the concept of home is significantly more unstable than for the conventional immigrant families. The *boys* often change accommodation for personal or objective reasons, and Cap's instances of relocation are symptomatic in this context: "One day you would hear he living in Caledonia, another time he move to Clapham Common, next time you see him he living in Sheperd's Bush" (Selvon 34). They return however invariably to Moses' room either for a spontaneous private conversation, like Galahad "went to tell Moses this theory about Black" (77), or for the ritualistic community meetings:

> "Nearly every Sunday morning, like if they going to church coming together for a
> oldtalk, to find out the latest gen, what happening, when is the next fete, Bart asking
> if anybody seen his girl, Cap recounting an episode with a woman by the tube station
> the night before, Big city want to know why the arse he can't win a pool, Galahad

recounting a clash with the colour problem in a restaurant in Picadilly, Harris saying he hope the weather turns, Five saying he have to drive a truck to Glasgow tomorrow. Always every Sunday morning they coming to Moses, like if is confession. (Selvon 135)

Through the strong image of a collective character assembled in one place, Moses' "metropolitan basement room becomes the site at which a local West Indian landscape is conjured, offering a familiar territory, a communal reference point for conversation beneath the alienating streets of London" (Procter 41). By comparing the assembly to "going to church (Selvon 135) Selvon imbues the site with a mark of sacredness through the performance of ritualistic acts that remind of Christian religious practices. In this "strategically created homo-social community" (Wolfe 7), gestures of solidarity, such as the "pot of rice and peas they eat together" (Selvon 17) in Moses' room, sharing cigarettes or "put another shilling" (135) in the gas device to keep the fire stimulate the nostalgia of an idealised original cultural space which occasionally draws the immigrants close to the sacred space of the homes of their memory. Unlike the British dwelling places, which are depicted as opaque and inaccessible, as for instance "the white people house "(51) from which Bart is chased out by his girlfriend's father or the "fully furnished flat (rent bout ten or fifteen Guinee, Lord)" (63) that prove unreachable to the *fellars*, the homes of the immigrants are open social spaces that facilitate a symbolic connection with the homeland.

A significant trope that Selvon employs for expressing the ambivalent connection of immigrants to the cultures of the original and the new homeland refers to the representation of female bodies. The metaphorical representation of Britain early in the text as "the Mother Land" (2) is an indicator of the domestication of its space and stimulates the emotional attachment to the new homeland designating the immigrants' identity. The predominant male composition of the Carribean immigrant community triggers often the narrative focus on chauvinistic representations of female characters who are perceived as instruments of accession in the metropolitan space. The *boys* consider the possibility of social integration through engaging in inter-racial/cultural relations with local women. In this sense, the exploration of white female bodies can be paralleled with the exploration of the metropolitan physical and cultural territory.

The establishment of hybrid couples engenders the creation of hybrid cultural spaces of conviviality between metropolitan and Caribbean values and ways in which both identities are negotiated. Galahad is one of the *boys* who eagerly dates Daisy, and English co-worker,

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causing "loud tone in them people eyes to see a black man so familiar with white girl" (79). Selvon connects Galahad's experience of the first date with "first class craft" (78) with the Piccadilly Circus, a crossroad that is one of the most common meeting place in London. To Galahad, an eager negotiator of the metropolitan space, "that circus have a magnet for him, that circus represents life, that circus is the ending and beginning of the world" (Selvon 79). The road junction represents a symbolic intersection of destinies and cultures; its round form that facilitates a continuous traffic signifies the fluidity of a space where identity can be negotiated between immigrants and locals. The evening ends in Galahad's room where "there was royal battle" (82), as he recounts to a "knowing" Moses to whom "all of that is nothing new" (83). The circus metaphor can therefore be connected to the female body, which is often sexually represented through circular symbols. The occupation of an English female body through sexual intercourse is an indicator of Galahad's identity hybridisation achieved through the occupation of a specific metropolitan location. It is an act that represents for Galahad the "ending and beginning of the world" (79), an image that depicts him in-between worlds and cultural identifications.

Most *boys* similarly engage in interracial relations, some just "hustling in the blazing summer under the trees in the park on the grass" (101), whereas some, for instance Bart, proposes his girlfriend, Beatrix, thus triggering her father's violent reaction motivated by racism. The various approaches of the female bodies, varying from haphazard engagements in cursory coupling to long lasting, solid relations indicate the Caribbean males' different strategies of emotional and cognitive involvement with the metropolitan home. Moses, for instance, acts as "an old veteran" who "do everything for experience" (114), however never marrying any of the "cats" (100) he was involved with, and contemplating the idea of returning to the homeland.

If the text is pervaded with representations of white females symbolising the metropolitan space, the presence of Caribbean women correspondingly signifies the homeland's culture and the way male immigrants relate to it. In their rare occurrences in the narrative, Caribbean women are generally associated with the comfort and safety of the domestic space, which suggests the familiarity of the homeland, unlike the English women, who are depicted as enigmatic bodies ready to be explored. The scene of the fete in St. Pancras Hall, for instance, concentrates on representations of both categories of women who engage in dancing the calypso with the black Caribbean males. A symptomatic example of

negotiating the position between homeland and metropolis is depicted through the chiasmic image that has in spotlight four characters who epitomise the West Indian males in relation to the white English and black Caribbean women. Harris, who sees himself as "some Englishman, bowler and umbrella, and briefcase tuck under the arm, with *The Times* fold out in the pocket so the name would show" (Selvon 103), is a quick mimicker, now dancing with his "very special guest", conspicuously refuting any connection to the homeland. He pretends not to recognise Tanty who greets him enthusiastically, "giving her a push" (107), and avoids dancing with her, as if this could contaminate his *Englishness*. Tanty nevertheless forces Harris into dancing with her, and Five, a "fellar black like midnight" (102) who invariably finds pleasure in teasing Harris' "so ladeda" (104) behaviour, starts dancing with Harris' girl.

This exchange that disposes the characters in chiasma, confirms the liminal position of male immigrants in relation to both the homeland and the adoptive land, expressed through the metaphor of dancing to females epitomising these spaces. Tanty, a female who is represented as embodying the Caribbean homeland demonstrates that Harris' renunciation of the original culture is artificial. Through the act of dancing with Tanty, which implies an emotional connection with the female body, Harris reveals an ongoing, though inconspicuous connection to the ancestral homeland. In similar way, Five, a quintessential representative of the West Indian immigrants, as his exaggerated blackness suggests, proves the possibility of relating to the metropolitan home by engaging to dance with Harris' girlfriend. The dance floor thus becomes a space of cultural ambivalence, a terrain of identity negotiation surpassing the boundaries of gender, age and culture.

An ambivalent relation to home also informs Moses' existence, whose constant wavering between the homeland and the metropolitan life fluctuates in accordance with the flow of seasons: "Every year he vow to go back to Trinidad, but after the winter gone and birds sing and trees begin to put on leaves again, and flowers come and then the old sun shining, is as if life starts all over again" (137). It is this rootlessness that disturbs Moses, this existence "in-between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5), where he sometimes wants to act as an insider of the metropolitan culture, whereas his Trinidadian identity is however obviously manifest. He is an utterly hybrid character whose reality is defined by "a state of turmoil and change, where stress and pulls complete, where dialectic is always present, where struggles are constant, where one sleeps with his boots on. This is why Moses constantly shifts his ideas, his strategies"(Roldan-Satiago 130). He sometimes repudiates the

metropolitan lifestyle and its cultural manifestations confessing to the *boys* that he "don't want no ballet and opera and symphony" (Selvon 125), but yearns for the idyllic landscape of Trinidad, which in the migrant's nostalgic reminiscence epitomises paradise: "Boys, you know what I want to do? I want to go back to Trinidad and lay down in the sun and dig my toes, and eat fish broth, and all day I sleeping under a tree. I go and live (…) where Jesus have a rumshop in Paradise" (Selvon 125). When summer comes, however, London seems to develop a force that dissolves the immigrants' umbilical connection to the homeland making Moses wonder "what it is a city have that you get so much to like it you wouldn't leave it for anywhere else?" (134).

Therefore, the question of where is home triggers Moses' agonising dilemma. Despite this desire to re-inhabit the cultural, or even physical space of the homeland, he is aware of the impossibility to return to the original place. As John Berger contends, "every migrant knows in his heart of hearts that it is impossible to return. Even if he is physically able to return, he does not truly return, because he himself has been so deeply changed by his emigration" (Berger 67). Moses appears towards the end of the novel as an immigrant who knows everything and everybody in London, who "see some sort of profound realisation in his life, as if all that happened to him was experience that made him a better man" (Selvon 138). He is therefore stuck between two homes, and the end of the narrative finds him in a standstill position, "the thoughts so heavy like he unable to move his body" (139), which confirms the inexorable hybrid condition that describes him.

4.2.2 Constructing the European single home

The protagonists of *The Road Home* epitomise the increased mobility of people from Eastern Europe in the context of the EU free labour market, being depicted as migrants who redefine their identity also by struggling to negotiate a place of belonging. Lev reveals early in the narrative the intention to "go to their country and make them share it with me" (Tremain 6), which resonates Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle's idea that settling in a new location is "a process in which migrants often unwillingly and passionately engage" (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 10). The juxtaposition of unwillingness and passion the critics mention describes Lev's migrant condition, which implies a permanent equivocal positioning between the homeland that he reluctantly leaves, and the new homeland to which he wants to connect. In this context pervaded by ambivalence, Lev fluctuates between being, as Said described,

"never fully adjusted, always feeling outside" *(Said Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals* 373) the metropolitan reality, and claiming the position of an "insider who fully belongs to the society" (373). The act of having a dwelling in London or not represents in Lev's case an indicator of the immigrants' condition of being *inside* or *outside* the metropolitan cultural space. His experience of sleeping in the open on the day of his arrival, "leaned against the young plane tree" (Tremain 21) as well as spending the night in the Kolawski and Shepard basement, are images that depict the immigrant's placement *outside* the metropolitan space, a position from where he must continuously negotiate the access to the cultural centre.

Lev realises therefore the importance of finding an accommodation, as the physical home constitutes a pivotal prerequisite for "settling once more and making the new locality as meaningful site for daily life" (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 96). He has this epiphany during the lavish dinner in Lydia's friends' apartment where he experiences the safety and comfort of a settled life. Lev is however aware that "he wouldn't be in the paradise of Muswell Hill for long" (Tremain 59) therefore he is not an *insider* of the comfortable metropolitan lifestyle that Lydia shares with her friends. The uncertainty that Lev undergoes in Tom and Larissa's flat, foreshadows the instability of his identity throughout the narrative: "Well, never mind, Lev thought, the food is beautiful and the wine, and the light in the room is golden; I'll sleep under the apple trees" (Tremain 59) after going through the job ads in the paper and "I'll be out in the street on my own again" (59). Lev's reflection over the contradictory locations describing his condition at that moment anticipates his ambivalent position, being a hybrid subject both *inside* and *outside* the metropolitan culture.

The job in the restaurant makes Lev a "part of the British economy" (67) and facilitates his settling in Belisha Road in Christy Slane's house. He notices from the first contact striking similarities between the new residence and his home in Auror, such as "the multi-coloured rug, which reminded him of the rag rug in Maya's room" (68). The parallel between the landlord and Lev is also suggestive; he "recognised something of himself in the other man" (69) since they both experienced the dissolution of their marriages and are forced into a solitary existence away from their daughters. Therefore, the uprooted Lev, who has been separated from his family and homeland, finds in Christy Slane's house a place where he can settle, a terrain which allows him to reproduce the familiar environment of the homeland. The concept of home consequently retains a double existence for Lev as a diasporic subject;

in the physical world and in his mind. The liberation of the concept of home from the physical space of the building, as theorised by John Berger in *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos* (2005), facilitates the further construction of a imagined home that defies the boundaries of space and time and accompanies the mind in which it was created. The type of mental home that Lev designs is linked to the idea of belonging to a cultural space that informs his identity, which is pervaded by the nostalgia of the homeland but also by the propensity to mimic the ways of the metropolitan home. This existence in-between homes is depicted through the motif of miniature house representations. Lev's rented room still keeps the "Wendy house and the soft toys on the windowsill" (Tremain 106) after Frankie, Christy's daughter moved out, which he assumes Maya would like, thus suggesting the successful mental reproduction of the original home in his room. The occurrence of a clown among Frankie's toys (106), signifies a versatile identity, as he does not own the place and has no explicit authority to rearrange stuff that is not his. This image reinforces Lev's ambivalent identification that manifests in the space designated by the Wendy house and the drawing of the Auror house that Maya sends him in a letter.

Even though the conventional immigrant family is physically absent in the narrative of *The Road Home,* the text is pervaded by the evocations of the family in the homeland as well as the attempts to reproduce it in the diasporic home. The numerous references to Marina, Lev's deceased wife, are accompanied by the nostalgia of the time when "she had been alive, and he, too, had had a proper kind of life" (43). The termination of the comfortable domestic life hints to the devastating effects of Communism which cause the disintegration of the society in the homeland. This engenders Lev's necessity to replicate situations and persons that enact a new familial environment, such as entering in a relationship with Sophie, his co-worker at GK Ashe, or becoming friends with his landlord, Christy, who replaces his life-time friend, Rudi.

The strategy of reproducing a family away from home expresses the immigrants' inextricable connection to the original space of the homeland. A significant gesture in this sense is spending Christmas together with Sophie "at Fernandale care home, with the old people" (137). The image of a domestic community made up of heterogeneous agents, similar to what Wolfe described as "Moses' family of boys" (Wolfe 7) in *The Lonely Londoners,* suggests the idea of society as a home. In this environment Lev create strong emotional bonds to the care home through the act of making food and having Christmas dinner together with

the residents. He would later receive a permanent job in the institution, which suggests a symbolic reintegration that Lev enacts in a social context that successfully replaces the shattered society in the homeland.

Similar to Sam Selvon's employment of the female body trope for depicting the Caribbean immigrants' relation to their countries, Rose Tremain also makes use of metaphorical representation of women to depict Lev's connection to the original and new homeland. In *The Road Home* the Eastern European homeland and England are represented through the recurrent juxtaposition of Lev's former wife, Marina, and Sophie, his girlfriend in London. Lev is constantly haunted by Marina's image, and he is aware that this hinders him from developing a new life in the metropolis: "It was important not to start to think about her now. It was essential to Lev's survival not to lose himself in dreams of her" (Tremain 40). The analogy between Marina and the homeland is reinforced by the apocalyptic description of the ancestral space where "the trees in Baryn have all been cut down and never replanted" (60). Similar to Marina's death, the society of the fatherland has lost its vitality under Communism, and the inhabitants are compelled to emigrate in order to survive.

The bond that Lev creates to the British society is symbolically explained through his ineluctable attraction to Sophie: "There was nothing about her that resembled Marina. But this otherness, this *newness of form* fascinated him. It made her exotic like some far-away, sun-soaked place that smelled of sugar. And he wondered what it would feel like to go to this place and breath the candied air" (106 the author's emphasis). Sophie's appealing body, ready to be explored, epitomises therefore the metropolitan cultural space that Lev eagerly investigates and integrates. His passion goes even beyond control when Sophie suggests the termination of their relation: "It would've never worked, long term. Because we're all too different" (240). In the tension created by the separation talk, Lev molests Sophie, in a symbolic gesture of occupying her body the same way he had decided during the voyage to London to make England "his country and make them share with me" (6).

Despite of his eager to mimic the local culture, Lev's is however a character that, like Moses of *The Lonely Londoners,* is marked by the "spiritual uncertainties emanating from his underlying sense of exile and cultural rootlessness" (Birgalsingh 153). The end of the narrative describes Lev as a conventional economic migrant who longs to return to the physical and cultural space of the homeland, as human condition is inexorably marked by nostalgia and the consciousness of, if not the idea of home, then of an origin. Even though he

has never successfully become a fully-fledged insider of the metropolis, as the episodes of the concert and theatre suggest, Lev returns to his Eastern European country as a subject changed by the diasporic experience. He therefore acts in agreement with John Berger's claim that "even if the migrant is physically able to return, he does not truly return, because he himself has been so deeply changed by his emigration" (Berger 67).

Lev experiences the transition back to the original space as traumatic as the earlier adaptation to the metropolitan space. He confesses to Lydia in a telephone conversation that the contact with the homeland society brings him to a standstill, suggesting again his existence in a cultural liminal space: "He paused here. Then he said: 'I'd really like to talk to you. I'd like to know how you are … That's all, I guess. Except I feel … I don't know how to put this. It feels as though everybody from home has just … let me go. And this is … well, it feels unbearable'" (Tremain 331). Lev's identity has therefore been pushed in terrain marked by rootlessness, in Bhabha's "hybrid *third space*" (Bhabha 56) of ontological ambiguity where even his old friend, Rudi, cannot recognise him for a while as he drives past: "The Tchevi didn't slow, but came gently on up the hill. (…) He just stayed where he was and waited for the moment when Rudi would recognise him. The car slowed a little, but it was only a tiny diminution of its speed, a mark of courtesy to a stranger passed on the road. It didn't stop, but it drove on by" (Tremain 339-340).

Reintegration is therefore an incremental process for the hybrid returnee; Lev struggles to re-inhabit the space of the homeland which itself metamorphoses in his absence. The construction of a dam that floods the old village of Auror forcing its inhabitants to relocate to the nearby Baryn, signifies the revival of the place through the interplay between nature and humans. He tries to persuade his mother that accommodation is the viable strategy for meeting the future: "The world's changed. And all I've done is to try to adapt. Because somebody had to" (354). He is, in fact, a survivor, a hybrid able to transfer the culture he has adopted in London and make it "a part of the New Baryn" (351). Lev therefore decides to open a restaurant that "I will call *Marina,* after my wife" (284), thus contributing to the rebirth of a society which, like his wife, had been lifeless.

The way Lev has revitalised the society of Fernandale Heights care home by introducing a "a new menu where everything is fresh" (326), he now attempts to refresh the sombre community of Baryn by making "the same king of food. Very fresh ingredients. Meat never overcooked. Nice sauces and *jus*. Nice vegetables…" (280 author's emphasis). It is particularly relevant to compare the influence Lev has in the metamorphosis of these two

locations. The care home is initially depicted as an isolated place, disconnected from the main-stream life of metropolitan London, "infected with neglect, with indifference, like the shabby restaurants where he and Marina had gone, vainly hoping for a good meal" (234). The introduction of the innovative menu, inspired from GK Ashe's state-of-the-art cuisine, transfigures the institution into a cultural third space where the freshness of Lev's hybrid identity disinfects the long neglected place. When back in the homeland he decides to "come up with something to change it" (Tremain 330), as he confesses to his friend, Rudi. Lev therefore transfers a part of "his so fired up life in – London", reproducing through the new restaurant a third space similar to that of Fernandale Heights. The people from the town that "has never known good food" (281) have now the chance to experience a sample of London's food culture in Lev's restaurant, which "had no sign, no real name" (360) and came to be known by the people "just as Number 43 Podorski Street" (360). The lack of a distinct name also suggests the fluidity specific to a hybrid third space, the open character that Lev wants to confer to the restaurant.

Besides the new restaurant that revives the culinary life of Baryn, another symbol of the community's resurrection is Lev's engagement in a relation to Eva, whose name resonates a new life, as if meant to replenish the empty space left by Marina's demise. Despite the successful re-accommodation in the original space, Lev is however constantly haunted by Sophie's presence: "But the truth, in Lev's mind and in his dreams, was that she was still there, laughing, screeching, beating him with her fists. He could still taste her mouth on his, feel her skull pressing against his, bone to bone" (Tremain 358). Even though Lev moves on, unlike Moses in *The Lonely Londoners* who was "unable to move his body" (Selvon 139), he is ineluctably marked by the metropolitan experience and remains a hybrid subject confined to a liminal space informed by two cultures.

5. Linguistic Hybridity and Diasporic Identity Construction

'What's wrong with it?' Galahad ask. 'Is English we speaking.' (Selvon 82)

The articulation of postcolonial migrant identity has been mostly examined as a social and geographical phenomenon in the context of physical dislocation and diasporic cultural manifestations at the borderlines between the colonial and postcolonial worlds. Another important aspect that critical studies increasingly consider refers to the function of postcolonial discourse in explaining the mechanics of cultural exchange and hybrid identity construction of diasporic subjects. Through the act of travelling and settling in a new location, the immigrants inevitably bring along a set of cultural traits, language among them, which represents their background and the premises on which they start negotiating a new identity. In this context, the manifestation of a hybrid discourses in postcolonial literature represents an act of destabilising the fixity of colonial discourses by creating what Bhabha calls a "liminal space" (Bhabha 5) of cultural manifestation which "opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5). In this space, the subaltern, or colonial subjects as Bhabha prefers, receive a voice to talk back to the colony in a language that is comprehensible both to the coloniser and the colonised. It is a language of *mimicry,* which, despite being a painful mark of the expansion of colonial culture, Bhabha considered "an efficient strategy of speaking and subverting the authority of the colonial power and knowledge" (85). The employment of hybrid discourse demonstrates the unreliability of stereotyping and therefore contributes to the liberation of the colonial subject from the image "the Oriental Other" (Said, *Orientalism 54*) that the dominant Western discourse has attached to it, depicting "the colonised as a social reality which is at once 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha 70).

The Lonely Londoners is a novel that epitomises the employment of language hybridity, since Selvon allows most of its characters to speak an English dialect that they brought from the Caribbeans. This demonstrates that language, like migrants, has the ability to travel back from the colony, where it had been introduced by the colonial officials and transformed by the contact with local dialects into a new creolised form of English. The mixture of creolised and standard English in *The Lonely Londoners* functions as a trademark

of postcolonial literature, highlighting the cultural ambivalence of characters who live in the liminal space of identity designation. Since Selvon himself has lived the reality of physical and cultural dislocation as a diasporic subject, it becomes natural for him to employ a discourse that resonates with cultural ambivalence and present the diasporic experience from more than one perspective. In *The Road Home,* however, Rose Tremain, who is an English author, employs a type of discourse that allows the protagonist to manifest his linguistic hybridity in the form of language acquisition and internalisation. In the diegetic discourse Tremain uses standard English, but the speech of the immigrants is marked by the signs of their original linguistic patterns, thus creating an effect of language creolisation and exoticism.

5.1 Language and the consciousness of migration

5.1.1 Creating a diasporic Anglo-Caribbean linguistic identity

In the creation of a diasporic hybrid identity of the protagonists in *The Lonely Londoners,* the linguistic aspect performs not only an aesthetical function, but it also represents a vehicle in the development of a diasporic consciousness of identity. Many critics, such as Chinua Achebe, have considered the use of English in depicting postcolonial realities as a form of betrayal or adherence to the colonial values (Achebe 62), since it is regarded as the language of colonisation. Edward Brathwaite, in *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (1984) challenges Achebe's perspective, contending that English, in its Caribbean creolised version, could be considered the national language of the archipelago since it no longer is the standard English of the metropolis, but had been transformed and adapted to the local conditions. He posits that "it may be [English] in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them, might be English to a greater or lesser degree" (Brathwaite 13). Therefore, the use of the Caribbean dialect in postcolonial literature by diasporic writers may represent a strategy of depicting the distinct migrant identity which is marked by agent mobility and cultural hybridity.

As Bruce F. MacDonald contends with reference to Sam Selvon's work, the linguistic hybridity of the characters and the thematic registers employed create "the possibility that the alternative consciousness is real to a large number of characters" (MacDonald 173). This type of

consciousness is moreover favoured by the possibility of transferring the Caribbean culture to the imperial centre. Through being able to practice the creolised English of the homeland with and among the metropolitan residents, Selvon's immigrants pose a threat to the monopoly of standard English; they consciously reject using it in order to destabilise the power system of colonial control, and express the awareness of belonging to a distinct cultural group. When travelling to London, these "boys" bring with them the new form of English and introduce it in the former colonial centre. In the beginning of the narrative Selvon employs standard English to depict the city's "unrealness (…) as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet" (Selvon 1). The atmosphere is pervaded by fog creating the sensation of a "blur" (1) milieu, which signifies the ambiguous identity of the characters emerging from the fog on the platform of Waterloo station. When Moses occupies the centre of the narrative, Selvon shifts the language to Creole English allowing him to recount the "ballads" of the Trinidadian "fellars" in a credible language that resonates the hybridity of the characters throughout the novel.

The hybrid language forms that Selvon employs are conspicuously rendered through the frequent shifts of the narrative point of view, making the conversation seem exotic, yet natural whenever the narrative voice is given to characters that use an adapted creole language in order to mark their linguistic hybridity. Not all the Caribbean protagonists in *The Lonely Londoners,* however, are eager to negotiate their linguistic identity, and some adhere indiscriminately to the local linguistic conventions. One of them is Harris, "a fellar who like to play ladeda, and he like English customs and thing, he does be polite and say thank you" (Selvon 103). Harris does not only exhibit exaggerated mimicry in terms of behaviour, but, unlike the other Caribbeans, "when he start to spout English for you, you realise you don't really know the language" (103). Irony is present again in Selvon's text, as he employs an utmost form of creole English when describing Harris, which contrasts the character's proclivity for standard English. It is interesting to notice the juxtaposition of the terms "fellar" and "ladeda", which denotes the overstated sense of mimicry of a characters who is still part of the Caribbean community, a "fellar". In a dialogue with Moses during the fete, Harris expresses in standard English his position towards, what he considers, the "boys'" misbehaviour, which represents an implicit critique of their hybrid ways: "You boys always make a disgrace of yourselves, and make me ashamed of myself" (111). Harris' attitude and language choice denote a form of diasporic consciousness deeply pervaded by the sense of voluntary assimilation and instrumental mimicry; despite this strategy, the

description concludes with a comprehensive remark that demonstrates Harris' ineluctable hybridity: "Only thing. Harris face black" (Selvon 103). Selvon has therefore depicted this character through extensive use of irony both to create a humorous effect and to outline the ambivalence of the cultural space that immigrants inhabit, which in terms of language stretches from Caribbean creole to standard English, according to situations and characters' disposition.

In many instances, the immigrants are depicted in conversation with local Londoners, thus demonstrating that diasporic literature captures the complexity of diasporic social structures in a bi-directional way, as a continuous dialogue between cultures. In this sense, postcolonial texts can also be perceived as acts of negotiation of the borderline separating the colonial and the metropolitan cultures through the choice of language use. When Galahad is confronted with a child's racist remark, he immediately changes discourse to standard English trying to alleviate the effect of racial differentiation:

> 'Mummy, look at the black man!' A little child holding on to the mother hand, look up at Sir Galahad.
> 'You mustn't say that, dear!' The mother chide the child.
> But Galahad skin like rubber at this stage, he bend down and pet the child check, and the child cower and shrink and begin to cry.
> 'What a sweet child!' Galahad say, putting on the old English accent, 'What's your name?' (Selvon 76)

This dialogue demonstrates the diasporic subjects' predisposition to linguistic ambivalence, which represents a privileged position for identity negotiation. Galahad manifests this predisposition already at his arrival at Waterloo station, as he claims he "ain't have any luggage" (13), thus inspiring Moses to change his name from Henry Olivier, an archetypal Caribbean creole name, which resonates both English and French cultural influence, to Sir Galahad, a quintessential image of English attributes and tradition. Through the procedure of changing his name, Moses inscribes Galahad with the sign of linguistic hybridity: "Thus it was that Henry Olivier Esquire, alias Sir Galahad descend on London" (15), ready to fill in the gaps of the cultural luggage that he claimed to have intentionally left in Trinidad. He develops as one of the most successful mimicking subjects within the Trinidadian community, as his engagement in interracial relations and vestimentary adaptation prove, but his linguistic practice remains predominantly Caribbean. When dating Daisy, his English girlfriend, Galahad's way of speaking English sometimes creates confusions. "What did you say? You know it will take me some time to understand everything you say. The way you West Indians

speak!" (Selvon 83) Daisy claims, delineating a conjectural cultural border that the difference between standard and creolised English represents. Galahad's reaction demonstrates his consciousness of the linguistic hybridity's function in the process of negotiating identity: "'What wrong with it?' Galahad ask. 'Is English we speaking'" (82). Beyond the irony that the dialogue implies, Galahad's insistence represents a form of negotiating the position of Caribbean English in the cultural space of the metropolis, a claim that standard English is no longer the single vehicle of communication in an environment that has visibly become multicultural.

The form of linguistic discrepancy experienced by Galahad was explained theoretically by Henry Louis Gates in his essay *The Blackness of Blackness* (2004), in which he examines how the difference between the colonised and the coloniser's traditions of signifying hinders communication between these communities. He employs the metaphor of the lion and the monkey to express the interaction of cultures in colonial context: "the monkey and the lion do not speak the same language; the lion is not able to interpret the monkey's use of language. The monkey speaks figuratively, in a symbolic code; the lion interprets or reads literally" (Gates 991). In linguistics terminology, this situation depicts the discrepancy between the Western tradition of signifying rooted in Ferdinand de Saussure's theory which posits a rigid, arbitrary, and direct connection between one signifier and one signified (de Saussure), and the tradition of the colonised for whom "signifying means modes of figuration itself" (Gates 988). Therefore, in Gate's allegorical representation, the lion, or the metropolis, is not able to interpret the language of the monkey, who represents the colony, since in the monkey's language words can have more than one meaning, or in De Saussure's parlance, have more play, due to the predominant oral character of the colonial discourses.

A significant episode in *The Lonely Londoners* when these two traditions of signifying clash depicts Tanty Bessy debating with the local shopkeeper the significance of the concept *trust.* The hallucinating dialogue between the two characters illustrates the preeminent function of language in the creation of hybrid identity both at personal and community level. Tanty's comprehension of *trust,* depicting in the Trinidadian tradition a form of trade based on credit, differs from the shopkeeper's who understands the word according to European tradition, therefore in its original meaning. In the attempt to change the shop's policy, Tanty enters the negotiation of language on the premises of her tradition of signifying:

It had a big picture hand up on the wall of the shop, with two fellars in it. One is Mr Credit, and he surrounded with unpaid bills and he thin and worried, with his hand propping up his head. The other is Mr Cash, and he have on waistcoat, with gold chain and he have a big bell and laughing and he look prosperous. Tanty used to look at the picture and suck she teeth. One day she ask the shopkeeper he don't know about trust.

'Trust?' the shopkeeper say.

'Yes', Tanty say. 'Where I come from you take what you want and you pay every Friday.'

'Oh, credit', the shopkeeper say as if he please that understand Tanty. 'We don't do business like that in this shop'. And he point to the picture on the wall. (Selvon 65-66)

The shopkeeper, however, interprets Tanty's discourse according to the European tradition of signifying; for him, the concepts *credit* and *trust* are mutually excluding. He anchors his argumentation in the symbolic picture that hangs on the wall, thus emphasising the privilege of the written text over oral language. He therefore epitomises the essence of the European way of doing trade, which is strictly regulated by objective laws inscribed in the form of written contracts. Nevertheless, Tanty showa herself to be a strategic negotiator and she puts the shopkeeper in the situation of a *fait accompli* when she "buy a set of message and put it in she bag" (66) telling him to "mark the things I take and I will pay you on Friday please God" (66). Through this transgressive act, Tanty not only compels the English shopkeeper to implement the credit policy, but moreover makes him change the way of interpreting language; the replacement of the caricature with a picture of "the coronation of the Queen" (66) symbolises the acceptance of the Caribbean English as a valid form of discourse in the metropolis.

The episode above depicting a successful strategy to destabilise the fixity of colonial discourse functions as a metaphor for what the novel itself represents in the wider context of postcolonial literature. By choosing to write in a creolised language, or a hybridised form of English, Selvon puts in practice an alienating strategy of *mimicry* that allows the subaltern to talk back in a discourse comprehensible to the coloniser. *The Lonely Londoners* presents itself as a novel of aesthetic hybridity not only by virtue of language employment, but also with respect to the narrative structure and the thematic discussion of the aesthetic forms that it embodies. It displays the quality to both depict characters and narrative situations and to speak about itself. The novel therefore subscribes to the category of literature that Henry Louis Gates designated as "a self-reflexive text, which comments upon the nature of writing itself; (…) a

narrative within a narrative, (…) a fiction characterised as a speakerly text, which privileges the representation of the speaking black voice" (Gates 996).

In terms of structure, the novel has the aspect of a collection of "ballads" (Selvon 107) that seem disconnected from each other. Moreover, the extensive practice of spoken discourses reinforces the apparent arbitrariness of the text, a characteristic specific to productions of oral literature. The centre that gives discursive unity and contributes to the literary configuration of the text is the main narrative voice, Moses. He "envisions events, people, and ideological structures through memory" (Wolfe 11), assuming the role of being "simultaneously the father figure" (11) that leads his people to the Promised Land and the collector of "ballads" about the "boys" he guides trough the intricate topography of the new mother country. The intertextuality with the Bible alludes therefore to Moses' role as an authorial figure as well; the way the biblical Moses wrote the book of Genesis, so Moses Aloetta writes the history of the genesis of a hybrid people that emerges on the fault line where the Caribbean and British traditions meet. The final scene in the novel finds Moses flirting with the idea of putting down in words the ballads he has in possession, thus enacting "the ironic portrait of an older migrant as the artist who is still looking for a Promised Land" (Wolfe 17):

> Still it had a greatness and a vastness in the way he was feeling tonight, like it was something solid after feeling everything else give way, and though he ain't getting no happiness out of the cogitations he still pondering, for is the first time that he ever find himself think like that. (…) He watched a tugboat on the Thames, wondering if he could ever write a book like that, what everybody would buy. (139)

Looking beyond the text's primary interpretation, this quote suggests a historical shift from the oral narrative form, the speakerly text that informs the culture of the colonised subject, to a new form, the speakerly written text, which entails elements of both the colonised and the colonisers' traditions. The convergence of these traditions become evident in Moses' different way of expressing in conversation, where he employs the Caribbean dialect, and his narrative thoughts, where he favours standard English. As Roland-Santiago observes, "his conversation and dialogue appear to be camouflaged in humour and jest, and yet there is a more sombre and serious view in his thoughts. Perhaps, like Selvon, Moses is not any kind of immigrant; he is an oral poet" (Roldan-Satiago 126). Through the symbolic depiction of the hybridity of discourse, structure, and representation, *The Lonely Londoners* therefore functions as a text of transition between literary traditions and contributes to the mapping of a hybrid consciousness of Caribbean immigrants in London.

5.2.2 Eastern European diaspora and the Anglophone aspiration

The EU integration of Eastern European states that ensued from the fall of Communism has created the premises of increased physical mobility in the fronteerless European topography. The migration phenomenon has triggered a dilution of cultural boundaries and the literary representations of diasporic linguistic experiences depict a world where cultural boundaries are no longer easily identified. Like the Caribbean migrants in *The Lonely Londoners,* the characters in *The Road Home* develop a consciousness of the linguistic particularities accompanying the immigrant experience, which allows them to continuously evaluate the linguistic adaptation to the use of English in comparison to their original cultural heritage. The context that informs Lev's linguistic hybridisation implies, however, a major difference in comparison to Selvon's protagonists, since he comes from a country where English has not been the language of the coloniser. As pointed out by Cristina Şandru, the migrants to Britain coming from the former Communist space display a high propensity to mimic the Western culture as a reaction to the imposition of the Soviet colonial values (Şandru 25) following the logic of "double centred peripherality" (Băicoianu 51) that explains the creation of an ambivalent cultural consciousness pervaded by both Western and former Soviet influences.

Lev's linguistic hybridisation is depicted through a series of metaphors that imply a dynamic movement from an initial stage, marked by unfamiliarity and the eagerness to acquire communication proficiency, towards a destination that signifies the accomplishment of cultural and linguistic initiation. The trope of inter-national and intercultural voyage is therefore a strong representation of this process that depicts Lev "moving always forward and on" (Tremain 10) through a textual journey from one cultural context into another. The linguistic premises Lev starts from imply a sense of confidence, as he mentions in his first dialogue with Lydia: "'My English isn't too bad,' Lev said. I took some classes in Baryn, but my teacher told me my pronunciation wasn't very good'" (3). His confidence is quickly shattered as his display of English creates confusion:

> Lev said: 'Lovely. Sorry. I am legal. How much please. Thank you. May you help me.'
> 'May I help *you*,' corrected Lydia.
> 'May I help you,' repeated Lev.
> 'Go on,' said Lydia.

> 'Stork,' said Lev. 'Stork's nest. Rain. I am lost. I wish for an interpreter. Bee-and-bee.'
> 'Bee-and-bee?' said Lydia. 'No, no. You mean "to be or not to be".'
> 'No,' said Lev. 'Bee-and-bee. Family hotel, quite cheap.' (Tremain 4)

This exercise the protagonists perform on the bus trip is representative for the relation that develops between them throughout the narrative. Lev becomes aware of his deficient linguistic competence and acknowledges the exigency of an interpreter. Lydia assumes this role correcting his expression "may you help me", which, despite grammatical inaccuracy, implies Lev's sincere demand for assistance in the process of deciphering the intricacies of English. The different interpretation of the same phonetical signs – "Bee-and-bee" – both revolving around the verb *to be,* suggests that Lev and Lydia have dissimilar levels of language proficiency and awareness, which vary from the basic of surviving by finding accommodation to the scrutiny of the most advanced form of English in the Shakespearean text. The focalising verb in the dialogue, *to be,* expressing the basic sense of existence, indicates therefore the importance of language in the survival on migrants in the diasporic space.

Under Lydia's pedagogical guidance, Lev embarks on the symbolic journey of language acquisition that contributes to his identity reconfiguration. The metaphor of eating hard-boiled eggs that Lydia provides represents a strong image of the language initiation process, indicating the similarity between nutrition and language proficiency as strategies of survival. The analogy between words and eggs, a symbol of rebirth, represent Lev's emergence of a new identity marked by linguistic hybridisation. As the coach "crossed the border of Germany and Holland, Lev had surrendered himself to it; to his small space by the window; to the quiet presence of Lydia, who offered him hard-boiled eggs" (10) and new English words. Lydia's knitting of a jumper, a new word she introduces to Lev, is a metaphor that indicates the incremental character of language development, similar to an expanding mesh, a process that informs Lev's continuous exploration of the metropolitan culture throughout the narrative.

As the journey concludes, Lev is left alone in London, and he thus tries to survive the challenges caused by his language deficiency. The episode when the policeman investigates his luggage exposes his liminal position between languages and modes of signifying, represented by "his book of fables and an English dictionary" (23). The cultural baggage he

brings from his homeland is therefore marked by orality, since the fable is an essentially oral genre that implies transference of knowledge through figurative language, whereas the dictionary is a paragon of written language, a vehicle that confines words to a fixed meaning. This image resonates Henry Louis Gates' theory on the different modes of signifying in colonial and metropolitan tradition (Gates 988). Lev soon becomes aware of his inaccessibility to written language as he tries to read the job ads in the paper: "*Hod carries req Croydon; commissioning mangrs build serv mech or elec exp; dryliners and ceiling fiexers Sydenham; LUL traffic marshal perm pos; plumber own tools Corgi red…*" (Tremain 50, author's emphasis). The intricacies of written English bring him to a standstill so that "his brain yearned for rest. He lay down" (Tremain 50). In his confusion he "thought longingly for Lydia's hard-boiled eggs" (42), which metaphorically renders his craving for the words required to understand the meaning of the text. Lev is still in the position when he "wishes for an interpreter" (4), therefore he contacts Lydia "who would decipher everything for him" (53).

They meet in the agreeable environment of Tom and Larissa's Muswell Hill flat, where Lev "was comfortable in his own language again" (59). Lydia, now a professional translator between "Pyoter Greszler and his orchestra" (57), steps once again in her role of language and culture interpreter for Lev, helping him to find a job and accommodation. The episode of reading the ads together is significant in Lev's development of linguistic awareness, as he introspectively iterates the motif of the verb *to be* for designating his ambivalence. Not certain about having a place to lodge after the dinner is over, he considers "to ask to be found another B & B" (59). The semantic ambiguity of the B & B structure in this sentence suggests Lev's positioning "in-between the designations of identity" (Bhabha 5), oscillating between the two representation of existence and cultural belonging embodied by the doubling of the verb *to be*. He is caught between being an insider in Tom and Larissa's flat and implicitly inside the British culture, and an outsider as "when he'd be gone through all the jobs in the paper, he'd be out in the street on his own" (59).

The narrative takes Lev finally to the point when he becomes proficient in written English. Lydia helps Lev undergo the transition to written speech, as she guides him towards creating awareness of the value of reading. The trope of food is again connected to the process

of language learning and the iteration of the metaphor of eggs as rebirth suggests that the linguistic initiation moves to another level, that of the written text.

> 'Why don't we order some lunch,' Lydia said.
> 'I'm not hungry, Lydia.'
> 'Ah,' said Lydia with a smile, 'but I remember this in the bus. At first you said you weren't hungry and then, after a while – after not a long time – I'm sharing my eggs and rye bread, and soon it was all gone. You remember this?' (Tremain 132)

Lydia senses Lev's hunger for learning more and she offers him a paperback copy of *Hamlet* in English as a Christmas present. The fact that Lev "once saw some Russian film of this, but I have never read it" (Tremain 133) indicates his connection to both the ancestral culture of the Eastern European space and that of the West, as indicated by Băicoianu's theory on the double peripherality of postcommunist subjects immigrating to the West. (Băicoianu 51). The film, a spoken form of art expression suggests Lev's disposition to orality, which Lydia counters by challenging him to read the original text: "I didn't expect you had [read it], Lev. Who has read Hamlet in Auror? But this edition has very thorough notes to help you understand" (133). Lydia's choice of *Hamlet* is not fortuitous, since the book can be regarded as an epitome of canonical texts in English literature. Therefore, the ability to read it implies being able to read any king of texts in English.

Lev's reading is arduous, as he confesses during their next meeting: "Hamlet is difficult for me. My progress is very slow" (184), but the failed relationship with Sophie turns his attention to Shakespeare's tragic hero. In his argument with Howie Preece about the representation of the *Peccadilloes*, a pretentious postmodern play written by a friend of Sophie's, Lev proclaims that his proficiency in oral English is adequate to understand and critique the performance. "'You know, even the names are ridiculous. I know English enough to know this'" (208). As the events degenerates, causing his breakup with Sophie, Lev experiences being an outcast comparable to Hamlet, as Lydia had mentioned when giving him the book. Back home in Belisha Road, "Lev heated a tin of beans and ate these ravenously, then he lay down in his room, and began to read Hamlet" (236). The employment of food trope is suggestive again, since Lev associates the reading of *Hamlet* with eating beans, a typical English dish which signifies the multitude of words and meanings that Lev is to find out in the text. He experiences an epiphany when arriving at Hamlet's soliloquy that contains the celebrated line *to be or not to be,* as he "remembers with a smile how, on the bus, Lydia had confused the words with the term B & B" (261). The juxtaposition of these two meanings

of the phoneme *be* are revelatory for Lev's progress in language acquisition; he is able to understand the ambivalence of the term, thus becoming aware of the value of mastering the oral and written aspects of language. "And he wrestled with the thought that if only language could always be as simple, as sweet and unambiguous as this, then life itself would somehow be less complicated. *To be or not to be*. He said over and over. Tried to translate it into his language" (Tremain 261).

The intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a highly significant literary device that Tremain employs, recommending *The Road Home* as "a self-reflexive text" (Gates 996), which, similarly to *The Lonely Londoners,* "comments upon the nature of writing itself" (996). Lev's desire to translate the quote into his native language indicates that he, like Lydia, has become able to translate texts and cultures, moving freely in the liminal space developed in-between, thus demonstrating his achievement of a high degree of linguistic hybridity. When in conversation with Mrs McNaughton, the manager of Fernandale Heights care home, Lev recognises a quote from *Hamlet,* he becomes aware of the nature of written texts as living items, who do not simply have an existence in itself, but become a part of reality through the interplay between text and reader. "Lev, standing in the sunlight, knew there was a smile on his face. Not only had he recognised the line, but now he felt as if he'd understood why Lydia had given him the play to read; she was to show him that words written long, long ago could travel beside you and help you at moments when you no longer see the road" (Tremain 314). Therefore, the Shakespearean pensée *to be or not to be,* expresses, through the chiasmic positioning of the two verbs, a space of liminality between two cultures, two modes of signifying, and two ontologies, a condition that Lev becomes aware of at the end of an arduous and instructive journey from an Eastern European identity to a hybrid Eastern European and British identity.

5.2 Language use as representation of cultural migrant identity

5.2.1 Selvon's linguistic strategies; between creole and standard English

The language used by Sam Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* represents a significant aesthetic innovation in the postcolonial literature, as he builds the text by employing a mixture of standard English and modified creole English in order to depict the cultural hybridity of the protagonists. This constant negotiation between the two linguistic codes that the characters undergo expresses their hybrid identity features, demonstrating at the same time the possibility

of conveying the diasporic reality of London immigrants in a new aesthetical form of expression that is liberated from the rigid cultural standard of the metropolis. The use of hybrid language in *The Lonely Londoners,* which builds on the colonial English heritage and adds Caribbean accents and rhythms, therefore proves to be a dynamic feature pervading the text since it facilitates the creation of authentic voices and establishes new perspectives on the postcolonial literary canon.

The innovative character of Selvon's aesthetic consists of integrating structural and linguistic forms specific to the cultural sites that inform the narrative. The predominant discourse, both at diegetic and dialogic level, resonates the Trinidadian Creole English that the protagonists bring with them from the homeland. The text is however infiltrated with insertions of standard English, mostly in the beginning and the end of the novel, and partially in the dialogues that characters engage when a high degree of mimicry is required, such as the child's racist remark episode about Galahad or Harris' ongoing integration strategy. The opening scene also illustrates the mixture of standard and creole English, as the descriptive paragraph "with its slow rhythm provides information, fog included" (Fabre 217) about the narrative setting, and then gradually moves towards a more dynamic style through the insertion of creole linguistic structures such as the elision of verbal compounds, the changing of *there was* into *it had,* the omission of articles, and the use of the specific term "fellar" (217), thus setting the course of the text toward a predominant dialectic discourse:

> One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if not London at all but a strange place on another planet, Moses Aloetta hop on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to go to Waterloo to meet a fellar who was coming from Trinidad on the boat-train. (Selvon 1)

The language blend in the novel illustrates the variations in the characters' identity similarly to the metaphor of the journey from the Caribbean linguistic and cultural terrain to the metropolitan space, and Selvon's linguistic innovations function in this context, as James Procter observes, as "a site of dialogue or negotiation between Caribbean and metropolitan landscape" (Procter 48) placing the characters in a field that favours a hybrid identity.

As Michel Fabre indicates, the episodic structure of the novel as well as the rhetoric of the discourse are strongly influenced by the style of the Trinidadian calypso ballad (Fabre 215). The employment of this technique is remarkable in Selvon's text as it provides an alternative way of narrating the migrant experience of Trinidadians in London and depicts the linguistic hybridisation of the characters. Referring to the effect of this literary strategy, John McLeod contends that calypso "embodies the principle of creolisation in its combination of Anglophone

and Francophone traditions with African influences" (McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* 31), thus providing a means for representing an "utopian vision of a hybridised and multicultural London" (26). The calypsonian writing, Fabre points out "is preoccupied with race, especially with racial stereotypes. Its major themes are sex (women being defined from a male chauvinistic point of view) and the strategies used in the struggle for survival. The calypso delights in melodrama and in a vivid, exaggerated rendering of humorous anecdotes" (Fabre 215).

Racial stereotyping is generally treated humorously by Selvon, and the use of self-irony creates an inter-group feeling and enhances the awareness of belonging to a separate ethno-cultural group. This becomes obvious in the introduction of Five Past Twelve's ballad: "It had a fellar call Five Past Twelve. A test look at him and say, 'Boy, you black like midnight.' Then the test look a second look and say, 'No, you more like Five Past Twelve.' (Selvon 102). The maintenance of a mild, humorous tone in the dialogues between the "fellars" has therefore the effect of "endearing the West Indians to the reader" (Fabre 217) as well as conserving the spiritual atmosphere inside the migrants' group. The calypso humour functions for them as a figurative mode of signifying, in the tradition described by Henry Louis Gates (Gates 988), sometimes connoting meanings that might escape to the un-initiated reader, for instance the use of derogatory remarks with opposite effect: "Fellars like Bart and Cap, you can't insult them, no matter how you try. You tell Bart to get out he would look at you and laugh. You tell Cap he is a nasty, low-minded son of a bitch, he would ask you why don't you put the kettle on the fire to make tea" (Selvon 49).

The rendering of anecdotes and the playing of pranks imbue the text with melodramatic effect, thus maintaining the orality tone that is specific to calypsonian writing. Moses does not hesitate to engage in such cynical acts that denounce the *boys'* naivety or infatuation. He deceives Lewis, Tolroy's brother in law, that his wife, Agnes, cheats on him while he works night shifts, thus causing their separation:

> 'Moses', he say, 'you think is true that it have fellars does go round by you when you out working and – your wife?'
> (…) 'How you mean,' Moses say. 'That is a regular thing in London. The wife leave the key under the milk bottle and while you working out your tail in the factory, bags of fellars round by the house with the wife.'
> Half an hour later Lewis come back worried. 'You really think so, Moses? I have suspicions, you know.'
> 'I telling you,' Moses say ruthlessly. 'You think if I was married I would ever do night work? You don't know London, boy.'
> And after another half hour, Lewis gone to the foreman and say he have headache, that he can't do any work, that he have to go home right away. And as soon as he get home he starting to beat up Agnes, though the poor girl don't know what for. (Selvon 53-54)

As this episode demonstrates, sexual allusions with comical effect are among the most favoured themes in calypsonian texts. The farce Moses plays on Lewis subscribes to an archetypal sexual humour that depicts conflicting situations between vacuous husbands and innocent, however cynically victimised wives. This manner of undermining the women's position is pervasive in the novel; female characters are either confined to the domestic space, "to look after the family (…), cook and wash the clothes and clean the house" (11), as Tanty affirms at her arrival, or are depicted as commodified sexual partners for the male protagonists. This perspective is articulated in the ten pages long lyrical passage of the narration without any punctuation marks, where Selvon experiments with mixing features of Caribbean calypso and the modernist stream of consciousness.

> Oh what a time it is when summer come to the city and all the girls throw away heavy winter coat and wearing light summer frocks so you could see the legs and shapes that was hiding away from the cold and you could coast a lime in the park and negotiate ten shilling or a pound with the sports as the case may be… (92)

The musicality of the fragment depicting this "rhapsody of Spring in London" (Fabre 218) can be paralleled with the rhythm and rhyme of the calypso music that informs the style of the entire novel. Several narrative moments, nevertheless, concentrate a higher degree of musical figuration, for instance the episode of the St. Pancras Hall fete, where a heterogeneous audience comes together to dance on the rhythms of the steel band playing calypsos. The highlight of the evening is the scene when Tanty dances with Harris to the calypso song "Fan me Saga Boy Fa Me", which visualises calypso music by metaphorically connecting it to the Caribbean female body, which may also suggest a connection to the cultural landscape of the homeland. Tanty enacts the ineluctable presence of the calypso culture within the Trinidadian community, as she literally haunts and hunts Harris throughout the dancing hall and "when she spot him dancing, she get up and push away dancers as she advance to Harris" (Selvon 109). The negotiation of the dance floor that the two undergo signifies the conflict caused by Harris' reluctance to practice the Caribbean values to which Tanty reacts, and symbolically forces him to abandon the English "young lady" (Selvon 109) and dance with her:

> 'Well,' Harris say trying hard to keep his temper, 'will you kindly wait until I am finished? We shall dance the next set.'
> 'You too smart, when the next set come I wouldn't find you,' Tanty say, taking firm hold on Harris. 'Tell this girl to unlace you: you know what they playing? "Fan Me Saga Boy Fan Me", and that's my favourite calypso. These English girls don't know how to dance calypso, man. Lady, excuse him,' and before Harris know what happening Tanty swing him on the floor, pushing up she fat self against him. The poor fellar can't do anything, in two-twos Tanty had him in the centre of the floor while she swinging she fat bottom left and right. (Selvon 109-110)

As a female character epitomising the Caribbean cultural expression, Tanty apparently does not match in the modernity of the city, where Harris struggles to partake through his mimicking attitude. These characters therefore embody the conflicting ideologies of the calypso and metropolitan bourgeois values; in this context, their dance represents a negotiation between cultures and ways of signifying, in the sense described by Gates (988), a dialogue between the tradition of the Caribbean, for which Tanty stands as an agent of orality expressed through music and dance, and the written tradition of the metropolis rendered through Harris' use of standard English.

Apart from the calypsonian resonance of the style, another significant strategy for depicting the characters' linguistic hybridity refers to the use of modified grammar. As Selvon confesses, he committed himself to this type of language in order to capture the genuine expression form of both the narrative voice and characters: "I had wonderful anecdotes and could put them into focus but I had difficulty starting in straight English. These were entertaining people but I could not move. Then I started both narrative and dialogue in dialect and the novel just shot along" (Selvon in Fabre 218). Selvon is aware that his version of Trinidadian English may be mistakenly taken for improper English, but he insists on adapting the oral Caribbean dialects and merge them into a "composite Caribbean folk speech, easily understood by the average English reader" (Roach 117). The employment of specific techniques does not hinder the comprehension of the meaning, keeping at the same time the essence that differentiates the Caribbean Creole from the standard English. The deletion of the auxiliary verb in the progressive form and the use of infinitive when conjugating the verb are some of the most frequent grammatical adjustments. This is present in the dialogue between Moses and Henry Olivier, alias Sir Galahad, during their first meeting at Waterloo station.

> 'You not feeling cold, old man?' Moses say, eyeing the specimen with amazement, for he himself have on long wool underwear and a heavy fireman coat that he pick up in Portobello Road.
> 'No,' Henry say, looking surprise. 'This is the way the weather does be in the winter? It not so bad, man. In fact I feeling a little warm.
> 'Jesus Christ,' Moses say. 'What happen to you, you sick or something?'
> 'Who, me? Sick? Ha-ha. You making joke' (13)

The creolised grammar that Selvon prefers to use is an efficient method of introducing the characters as genuine Trinidadians. Instead of the standard forms *you are not feeling cold* and *you are making jokes,* Moses and Galahad say "you not feeling cold" and "you making joke", which recommends them as agents of the discourse's orality. Selvon himself impregnates the narrative passages with deleted grammatical constructions, omitting

the *s* termination in the third person singular as in "Moses say" or replacing the past tense with the present tense simple, as in "he pick" instead of *he picked.* Another example of creole grammar refers to the replacement of the object and possessive pronoun with subject pronouns throughout the narrative. Instead of writing *You can't see this gentleman from the newspapers came to meet us by the station* he writes "You can't see this gentleman from the newspapers come to meet *we* by the station (11 my emphasis), or instead of *Tanty bought a set of messages and put them in her bag,* Selvon writes "Tanty *buy* a set of *message* and put it in *she* bag" (66 my emphasis). The affinity for subject pronouns over object pronouns and present tense over past tense have the effect of depicting the characters as dynamic agents who are proactively involved in negotiating their linguistic identity in the metropolis.

The use of subject pronoun is also a vehicle for depicting the identitary ambivalence of the immigrants. In the dialogue with Daisy, Galahad uses the pronoun "we" in order to emphasise the West Indians' affiliation to the English speaking community of the metropolis, despite the linguistic inflections characterising their dialect. His identitary quandary, enounced in genuine Caribbean parlance – "'What wrong with it?', Galahad ask. 'Is English *we* speaking'" (82 my emphasis) – implies a subversion of the exclusion policy manifested by locals through the standardisation of language. The emphasis falls on the pronoun *we,* which in this context receives a double meaning; *we* refers equally to West Indians and to British, thus suggesting the ambivalence of the migrants' identity, whose allegiance is split between their community and the British motherland. "We is British subjects" (21), Moses reminds him at his arrival. This ambivalence is however reinforced by instances when the Caribbean immigrants try to resist the racial inequality of the metropolis and use the object pronoun *them* to designate the British people. Affected by the child's racist remark, Galahad reflects on his subjectivity: "Lord, what it is *we* people do in this world that *we* have to suffer so? What it is *we* want that the white people and *them* find it so hard to give? A little work, a little food, a little place to sleep. *We* not asking for the sun, or the moon. *We* only want to get by, *we* don't even want to get on" (76-77 my emphases). The juxtaposition of the subject pronoun *we* and the object pronoun *them,* echoing Said's distinction between "the familiar West and the strange Oriental" (Said, *Orientalism 44*), creates a liminal space where immigrants position themselves as distinct subjects described by hybridity.

The textual linguistic hybridity is most comprehensively conveyed through Moses' discursive technique. As a veteran who "didn't come to London yesterday" (113), he skilfully shifts from dialect to standard English. In the dialogues he enters he uses creole English, but his

innermost thoughts are in a language closer to standard English, as in the final scene when the narrative focus is on him contemplating the prospect of writing "a book that everyone would buy" (Selvon 139). The use of elevated locutions suggests Moses' access to the standard language that is specific to written texts:

> 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 now he could draw apart from any hustling and just sit down and watch other people fight to live. (…) Still, it had a greatness and a vastness in the way he was feeling tonight, like it was something solid after feeling everything else give away, and though he ain't getting no happiness out of the cogitations he still pondering, for is the first time that he ever find himself thinking like that. (Selvon 138-139)

The mixture of high English terms, such as "vastness", "cogitation" or "pondering", with creolised grammar, as in "he think", instead of *he thinks* and "it had", instead of *there was,* epitomises Moses' availability to two types of discourse, as an accomplished immigrant who "do everything for experience" (114). He is therefore a complex character, both a practitioner and a promoter of hybridisation through his routines, and a symbol of the textual creolisation that Selvon advocates as a viable literary strategy for depicting the hybrid identity of Caribbean immigrants.

5.2.2 Tremain's linguistic strategies, or who's English is it anyway?

The characters in *The Road Home* undergo a process of identity reconfiguration which involves a series of linguistic hybridisation strategies highlighting the specific character of the immigrants coming to London from the former Communist countries. Even though the proficiency level of the protagonists Lev and Lydia is significantly different, they both display propensity toward mimicking the language of the locals, which represents an efficient procedure of reconfiguring their identity. Rose Tremain, a native speaker of English, employs a series of strategies to depict the characters' linguistic particularities and their development of hybrid forms of speech. The diegetic discourse, as well as most of the dialogues involving locals are rendered in standard English. However, these sometimes capture the dialectic particularities of English varieties designating regional differentiation, as in Christy Slane's use of Irish English. "I'm Christy. I'm Irish, in case you hadn't noticed. Baptised Christian, but that was too much to bear, too much of a yoke" (Tremain 69) Lev's landlord explains himself, noticing the tenant's confusion: "hadn't understood all of what Christy Slane had been saying" (69). A similar situation occurs in the kitchen of the Fernandale Heights care home, where Lev has difficulties in understanding the cockney English of his co-workers: "'Bet 'e don't 'ave no visa,' said Jane. 'E's illegal.' 'That's it?' said Mrs Viggers. 'Asylum-

seeker, innit?' (…) 'Show 'im the joint, Jane. He doesn't want to talk, and I know why…'"
(196). The type of discourse practiced by the kitchen workers indicates language
particularities associated with social class, which trigger Lev's linguistic disorientation
similarly to Christy's use of Irish English.

Such disorienting situations represent a recurrent strategy that Tremain employs in
order to depict the protagonist's language deficiency, especially in the narrative's initial stage.
While struggling to practice the didactically standardised language that he had learned in the
English course in Baryn, Lev confuses his interlocutor in the kebab outlet. He asks Ahmed
"Excuse me, do you have anything to give me?" (35), using a conventional phrase that he had
learned in order to ask for a job, but the meaning that transpires to Ahmed is different and he
offers him food:

> 'You ask me if there was anything I could give you. Well, I give you food and
> water. Where you from? Eastern Europe somewhere, uhn? So eat. My kebab is
> very good. And for you it is free.'
> '*Free.*'
> Lev knew this word very well. His English teacher had explained to him that the
> West described itself as the 'Free World' and these words had fascinated him
> across months and months of time. (Tremain 36 author's emphasis)

Even though Lydia had introduced Lev to the connotative meaning of language,
when she explains him the second sense of the word "jumper" as "sweater" (12), he fails
however to interpret of the word "free" as gratis, connecting it contextually to the social-
political system that the West represents in the Eastern European's mind-set. This linguistic
confusion places Lev in the typical position of a diasporic subject, in a liminal space situated
between cultures and societies.

The gradual progress that Lev achieves in understanding colloquial language proves
insufficient in the context of the GK Ashe's kitchen. His first dialogue with the restaurant's
manager exposes Lev to the idiomatic language specific to high class cuisine, which he fails
again to understand.

> 'Damian told you I run a tight ship?'
> 'Tight ship?'
> (…)
> 'The word failure pisses me off. I don't want even to contemplate it, right?
> Everybody in this space has to cut the mustard, right?'
> 'Mustard, Chef?'
> (…)
> 'When you've scrubbed up a roasting pan, I want to be able to drink a cocktail out
> of it. OK?'
> 'Cock tail, Chef?' (Tremain 75)

Lev's response when exposed to the specialised language used by GK Ashe comes in the form of rhetorical questions echoing the lexical and grammatical structures that trigger his confusion. The repetition of these idioms indicates Lev's interest in deciphering and internalising the meaning of figurative language. He will "have to get the *glossary* into his head" (Tremain 77 author's emphasis) in order to acquire the linguistic proficiency that would facilitate his integration in the work environment and in the metropolitan cultural space.

Tremain employs the same device in the dialogue between Lev and Andy Portman, "an extremely famous playwright" (117) from Sophie's coterie who has authored the "ground-breaking play" (118) named *Peccadellos.* Andy explains Lev his "the thesis on theatre" (119) which refers to "forcing people to look at their dark side" (120). Lev gets confused and replies rhetorically "Dark side?" (120), but Andy continues his condescending exposition about "the cutting edge" (121) character of the British art. Lev's evident perplexity makes Andy draw the hasty conclusion that "in your country, you've got a lot of catching up to do, art-wise" (121). Andy's supercilious attitude toward Eastern European culture makes Lev reflect over the perception of his condition as an immigrant: "And he thought. This is how these people see me – as a turnip with no intelligence and no voice" (120). He therefore realises that the Westerners misinterpret his insufficient proficiency in understanding the English used in specific fields as a sign of cultural subordination, which justifies the stereotyped perception of immigrants as "the Other", descending from "the land of the barbarians" (Said, *Orientalism* 54).

Despite the fury that raises his "desire to spit on the polished surface of the bar" (121), Lev continues to explore new strategies that develop his linguistic hybridisation. A suggestive image that Tremain employs refers to the menu that Lev creates at the Fernandale heights care home together with Simone, a co-worker of African origin. The language they use in describing the courses implies a juxtaposition of terms that Lev fetches from GK Ashe's high class kitchen jargon and colloquial words that make the meaning of the linguistic structures accessible to all the residents.

> Wickedly lovely free-range chicken breast stuffed with mushrooms, shallots and herbs, served with a totally brilliant juice, or
>
> Chef's fantastic fish gratin with zero bones and non-crap crumb, and
>
> Choice of non-frozen broccoli or beans or both if you want
>
> Crème brûlée jacket by Chef from a recipe at GK Ashe, or
>
> Watermelon sorbet with no black seeds or rubbish in it (Tremain 325)

The employment of creolised language in the home care represents an eloquent image of the positive effect of multiculturalism in the metropolis; the residents of the institution, which symbolises the decrepit nature of a culturally homogenous metropolis, find the use of this type of discourse as "a lot of fun" (327). The atmosphere in the institution becomes more cheerful and "the more extreme the language, the more the ancient occupants of Fernandale Heights liked it. It was as if the language gave the dishes savour" (325). Lev captures in a very inspired sentence the ethos of the group: "in the new menus we try to describe how everything is fresh" (326). Freshness and innovation can therefore be considered specific elements of hybridity; by employing again the trope of food in connection to language, Tremain depicts the creolisation of language as an efficient strategy to challenge the monopoly of standard English in literary production, and as a strong marker of identity hybridisation and multiculturalism in metropolitan London.

6. Conclusion

The reconfiguration of immigrant identity is the pivotal concept around which this study revolves, focusing on the strategies of identity construction in the diasporic context of modern London that the novels *The Lonely Londoners* by Sam Selvon and *The Road Home* by Rose Tremain depicts. As indicated by Jerome Bruner, identity cannot be discursively encompassed in conformity with any political agenda, but it is rather delineated by the subject's choice and constant engagement with, and response to social stimuli (Bruner 4). Starting from this position, I have developed a theoretical platform of analysis that builds on several central concepts of the Postcolonial critical theory, such as *hybridity* and *third space,* terms that Homi K Bhabha has developed in response to the essentialist colonial model. His discourse attempts to detach the allegedly stable discursive constructions, such as *stereotype*, from the representations of human subjectivity. As Bhabha indicates, identities are "ever changing and impossible to fix" (Bhabha 73). Therefore, postcolonial subjects engage in an ongoing process of identity negotiation and reconfiguration, challenging the policy of exclusion developed on the fault line established between the metropolitan *centre* and the colonial *periphery*. Edward Said's theory on *Orientalism* is another important vehicle that I have employed in order to demonstrate the futility of the ideological separation of social groups in, what he described, the binary of *us* and *them.*

By comparing the reconfiguration of diasporic identities represented in the works of Sam Selvon and Rose Tremain, I have attempted to demonstrate the structural similarities of the immigrant experience of subjects emerging from different historical and socio-political contexts. Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* has benefited of extended critical attention, being regarded as an essential text in immigration literature (Nasta). In his novel, Selvon explores the patterns of emergence of a diasporic London based Caribbean community, whose members struggle to challenge the prescriptive norms of affiliation to a separated social group that the colonial mind-set of the local Londoners promotes. The historical context that informs the narrative is marked by the disconcerting climate that the immigration of former colonial subjects has triggered. The metropolis was experiencing for the first time a wave of immigration that would trigger major societal transformations.

This anxiety was iterated in the wake of the European Union integration of former Communist countries, and *The Road Home* captures comprehensively the experience of Eastern European immigrants to contemporary London who. These immigrants, like their Caribbean counterparts, enter a terrain of identity negotiation pervaded by the binary division of cultures and ideologies. Though Tremain's novel has limited readership and critical exposure, it nevertheless occupies a relevant position in the literature exploring the contemporary representations of immigrant identity, especially given the political and social configuration of Europe today in general, and of the British society in particular.

The methodological merging of identity studies and political contextualisation that I perform allows me to explore these two works based on the correspondence of the thematical approaches, cultural contextualisation, and political advocacy. As a number of contemporary critics promote, elements of Postcolonial critical theory can supply a platform for the analysis of recent post-communist literature, since this lacks a coherent theoretical foundation. This conceptual transference can be based on the circumstantial similarities of these two ideological and historical realities. Discrimination and rejection are currently experienced by immigrants and cultural minorities arriving to Britain from the former Communist countries similarly to the ethnical minorities of the first wave of immigration from the former colonies. As a consequence, I employ the postcolonial theoretical framework in the comparative examination of the novels, on grounds of the common analytical and thematic background. Edward Said's argument that theories can "travel", taking different implications both in geographical and disciplinary terms and serving different epistemological contexts (Said 226) supports this operative mode.

The construction of hybrid identity, which is the main trope employed by the authors in question, is explicitly politicized in both novels by operating with a binary of the metropolitan culture vs immigrant subjectivity, as an expression of the *centre/periphery* division. Therefore, both narratives intend to promote identity hybridisation as viable strategy of cultural co-habitation in a metropolitan topography pervaded by pluralism. My investigation focuses on explaining how the complexities of contemporary multi-cultural affiliations and the increased physical and social mobility of diasporic subjects contribute to developing a hybrid identity in the liminal space emerging from the contact of the metropolitan and original cultures.

The study is performed by scrutinising major tropes of identification that the two narratives have in common. As I demonstrate in the third chapter, diasporic journeys have a significant impact on the reconfiguration of immigrants' identity. In this context, the relocation from the original space to the metropolis is not perceived strictly in term of geographical displacement, but it is also interpreted at figurative level as a social movement between distinct cultural spaces and frameworks of identification. My focus on the literary metaphors of diasporic voyages, both to and inside the metropolitan space, illustrates the authors' concern with connecting the diasporic identity construction to the predisposition to social dynamism that immigrants display. Selvons' and Tremain's protagonists are constantly compelled to negotiate their affiliation to the multiple cultures they explore in the movement between sites of departure and arrival, most of the times falling in the space in-between which recommends them as agents of hybridity.

While the metaphorical voyages display the diasporic subjects' propensity to a dynamic reconfiguration of identity, the destination site also represents an important trope in the creation of identitary hybridity. The protagonists of *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Road Home* display an ambivalent connection to the cultural spaces they inhabit. On the one hand, the integration in the metropolis implies an acculturation process that is manifested through the propensity to mimic the main aspects of the local lifestyle, from wearing the same clothes and accessories, to eating similar food and copying the speaking manner of the British people. On the other hand, the immigrants inscribe the space they inhabit with elements of the ancestral culture they brought from the motherland, in the attempt to reproduce the original cultural environment. The space that emerges between these antinomical cultural manifestations was defined by Homi K. Bhabha as *the third space* where the cultures merge and favour the development of hybrid identity. The ongoing oscillation between these cultural polarities expose the diasporic subjects to the manifestation of an ambivalent positioning in relation to the concept of home. Even though migrants coming to London are ultimately dynamic subjects, home, as a place of belonging is a significant aspect of their identification, as they always manifest the intention to settle in a meaningful site of identification. Therefore, the diasporic disorientation they undergo triggers a reinterpretation of the concept of home, which is released from the connection to the physical house and transferred at mental level,

thus allowing the diasporic subjects to reinterpret their identity in a space pervaded by fluidity.

The fifth chapter in my thesis articulates two perspectives of exploring the trope of hybrid linguistic representations. Firstly, I highlight the strategies the authors have employed in order to render the emergence of an immigrant hybrid consciousness through the practice of hybrid discourse. By doing so, they destabilise the fixity of the colonial power system, which claimed the monopoly of the standard English in the field of aesthetical manifestation. Selvon and Tremain create subaltern voices who speak about their experience in a creolised language that mimics that of the coloniser's but also adopts elements from the local languages, thus adding nuance of authenticity to the text. Secondly, I examine the techniques the authors have implemented in order to create the hybrid discourse that reflects the hybridisation of the protagonists. In Selvon's novel, the Caribbean immigrants speak a language that resonates the rhythms of the calypso, impregnated with specific grammatical constructions reflecting the orality of the local dialects from the West Indies. Selvon has experienced himself the diasporic dislocation, therefore his strategies appear more authentic in comparison to those employed by Rose Tremain. Being an English author, she approaches the strategies of linguistic hybridisation as an outsider; biographical details reveal her contact with Polish immigrant workers as part of the fieldwork for writing the book, which provided inspiration for a thorough depiction of the socio-cultural details of an Eastern European diaspora. The linguistic representations are however limited to the process of language acquisition and the linguistic disorientation that the protagonist experiences in contact with idiomatic constructions and discourse varieties.

As my examination of the selected oeuvres by Selvon and Tremain reveals, both authors attempt to challenge the boundaries of geographical, cultural, and linguistic representations of postcolonial and post-communist diasporic identity, through the depiction of literary themes that embody a globalised culture in perpetual motion. The study is however circumscribed by a number of delimitations, firstly out of spatial concern, but also caused by certain structural and thematic dissimilarities at narrative level. In my focus on registers of identitary designation I have highlighted similarities between these two immigrant experiences in order to emphasise areas in which the discourse of postcolonial theory can be used for post-communist texts. However, I also recognise that there are structural differences

which are excluded from the focus of this paper, as for instance the dissimilar manner of handling the racial differentiation experience. For the Trinidadian immigrants of *The Lonely Londoners,* the skin colour represents a critical signifier of difference that in some cases cannot be overcome through successful cultural mimicry, whereas this is not the case for the protagonists of *The Road Home,* who are not subject to racial discrimination owing to their Caucasian external traits. Language use is also a major aspect that distinguishes the two narratives; Selvon depicts characters who speak a creolised English that is, as E. Brathwaite claimed, the national language of the Caribbean (Brathwaite 13), or one of the many varieties of English that exist today. For the immigrants in *The Road Home* though*,* language functions as the clearest external indicator of difference from the English-born Londoners, since speaking English for them represents a faux act of instrumental foreign language use.

This study has also the potential to be continued and improved. A broader understanding of the phenomenon of identity hybridisation could be attended by extending the of inquiry to larger number of works. A comparative study juxtaposing *The Road Home* to the sequels of *The Lonely Londoners* that Selvon produced at a later stage would make an ideal thematic extension of this thesis. The inclusion of *Moses Ascending* (1975)*,* and particularly *Moses Migrating* (1983) for further examination would allow a relevant comparison of the way subjects that have undergone the experience of diasporic hybridisation react at the return in the homeland. As my study captures, Lev returns to his community as a metamorphosed individual who struggles to reproduce the metropolitan values and create a cultural third space in his home town. Moses undergoes a similar experience in *Moses Migrating* as a returnee to his native Trinidad who attempts to relocate himself into his old world, but experiences a deep sense of disorientation, since his native Trinidad has changed and he himself is a changed subject.

A final question this thesis implicitly raises refers to the undertheorisation of literary production dealing with specific themes of migration in the context of the European Union integration of post-communist Eastern European countries. The increased social mobility in this context has triggered radical societal changes in the Western societies that a number of literary works committedly depict. My research of the topic has revealed the lack of an authentic theoretical scrutiny in the field of post-communist EU literature, which has represented a major challenge in the development of my project. By transferring essential

concepts from the Postcolonial critical theory in the analysis of a post-communist literary text, my study attempts to make a first step in filling this theoretical void by testing the boundaries of Postcolonial theory's applicability to this new Euro-discourse. This situation calls in the exigency to develop an exhaustive critical theory to reflect the realities of the new Europe, either entirely original or grounded on the methodological stratagem that I have employed in my study. The contemporary academia must therefore react promptly given the actuality of the topic in the social-political context of a world pervaded by social mobility and inter-cultural communication.

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