

Degree Project

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Becoming British

**The Spaces that allow upward mobility and integration in Sam
Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* through the art of mimicry and Fetes**

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Introduction

In 1956 Sam Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners* was published, the first of a group of novels called the London Novels written by Selvon between 1956 and 1983. They largely focus on the migration of West Indians to Great Britain during the Wind Rush period (Donnell, Taylor 274). *The Lonely Londoners* uses humour to address the racism and discrimination migrants faced when they moved to Britain. It also fictionalizes some of the early experiences Selvon had with a group of black migrants whom he lived with when he first moved to London (Selvon viii).

The novel follows the lives of several West Indians and a Nigerian in London, with Moses Alloeta a Trinidadian, being the main character. As a veteran in London, he helps his fellow West Indian immigrants to settle in, informing them about where to find housing, employment and imparting an understanding of their status in society as toiling working-class immigrants. Ironically while Moses has a vast amount of wisdom to share, he has not managed to advance in life during the decade he has lived in London but rather increasingly ponders about moving back home. Other characters followed in the narrative are Galahad, a fellow Trinidadian and optimistic newcomer, Harris who tries to emulate being a legitimate English gentleman, Cap a charming Nigerian who formally came to study in London only to end up squandering his money on women, and Tanty, an older woman who arrives uninvited to London to live and take care of her nephew Tolroy and his family. Likewise, Moses' room acts as a meeting ground for the friends who often meet on Sundays to share their experiences and reminisce about life in their home countries.

To attain a full understanding of the characters and political atmosphere described in the *The Lonely Londoners* it is important to gain an understanding of the history of West Indian migration to Britain. From 1948 to 1971 more than half a million migrants crossed the Atlantic from the Caribbean to Britain on The Empire Windrush ship (BBC). During the Second World War thousands of West Indians had fought in the Caribbean Regiment of the British Army alongside their British comrades and now they answered to a request from their mother country to come and re-build the country (BBC). Like many West Indian novelists, Sam Selvon, a Trinidadian, made his journey in 1950 on a ship to London together with his distinguished writer friend George Lamming. In *Sea of Stories* (2002) Lamming describes their expectations versus how they were received when they travelled to England:

Migration was not a word I would have used to describe what I was doing when I sailed with other West Indians to England in 1950. We simply thought we were going to an England that had been painted in our childhood consciousness as a heritage and a place of welcome (Lamming).

Several texts have been written that emphasise on the familiarity the migrants had with Britain and how they perceived it to be their mother country and an extension of the lives they lived in the Caribbean. For example, Anna Grmelova notes that as British subjects the migrants had been educated in British culture, literature, history, and geography and that the colonisers had insisted that not only would English be spoken in the Anglophone Caribbean, but that the education system would carry the contours of an English heritage (72). It was therefore a

shock for them to arrive feeling British and yet be greeted by riots and disdain from the English and gain an awareness of their identity as black, West Indian and the Other. Additionally, Peter Fryer describes a newspaper headline describing the arrival of the Empire Windrush passengers as a return to 'the Motherland' and welcoming them home (Ellis 216). Initially there was an attempt to assist the new arrivals to find jobs and accommodation but beyond this initial attempt to integrate the migrants into the local community and economy the British government had no policies in force to maintain the process (Ellis 216). With no defined policies in place the influx of émigrés had to turn to their own informal networks with people such as Moses, the main protagonist in *The Lonely Londoners*, helping fellow Trinidadians to settle in and integrate.

Previous areas of discussion linked to Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* have dealt with race, identity, hybridization, discrimination and the style of the language used in the text. There lacks a well-defined study of how the characters attempt to integrate into the British Society and whether they succeed or fail.

Eliška Klanicová explores Caribbean immigration to Great Britain focusing on the relationships between Afro-Caribbeans and the white British population in *The Lonely Londoners*. She explores the phenomenon of unemployment and geographical distribution, then narrows down her analysis of *The Lonely Londoners* by examining the loneliness and racism experienced as well as the language used by the characters. Klanicová states that there are two reasons for the inadequacies in employment, housing and income faced by ethnic minorities. The first being that ethnic minorities choose jobs that place them at the bottom of the social hierarchy; the second being that white racism keeps ethnic minorities at the lowermost levels of society (Klanicová 13). Klanicová further looks at the

Race Relation Acts of 1965 and 1968 that intended to minimize discrimination based on colour, race and ethnic origin from employees (26).

As language in *The lonely Londoners* Klanicová states that the use of Creolized English is a means for Selvon to distance himself from the colonial culture (35). Language embodies cultural identity, and it is a significant theme and tool used by Selvon. Bently and Clement H. Wyke state that by creating a minority literature, political empowerment is achieved through the creation of an identity-forming narrative that rejects the cultural centrality of Englishness and proclaims the validity of marginalized voices (73). Selvon was thoroughly aware of his marginalized position in society and that of the characters he wrote of and he sought to illustrate this in his choice of language used to write *The Lonely Londoners*. Speaking in an interview about *The Lonely Londoners* Selvon stated, “I wrote a modified dialect which could be understood by European readers yet retain the flavour and essence of Trinidadian speech” (Bently 68).

Concerning the themes of space and movement in the novel Lisa Kabesh describes *The Lonely Londoners* as a text preoccupied with movement and a work on community building as it produces the community it describes in the act of writing and mapping its voices and movements (1). She adds that it maps a London transformed by West Indian immigrants as they search for work, try to find accommodation, and tour the city’s public spaces in search of women (Kabesh 1). As much as Selvon maps the freedom of movement the boys have, Kabesh points out that he also demonstrates their limitations by documenting the physical and social or economic barriers they encounter in their travels across the city (2). These sites of racist exclusion are charted alongside well-known landmarks like Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square (Kabesh 5). Sites of

national power such as the post office and labour office are viewed as sites of exploitation and oppression (Kabesh 7). Additionally, Tanty is painted by Kabesh as being a community builder who challenges forms of exclusion and oppression in her community on Harrow Road.

The purpose of this thesis is to pursue a gap in previous research undertaken on the novel through exploring what strategies used by the migrants in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* are most efficient in enabling them to integrate into the British society and to experience upward mobility. The thesis explores these strategies based on a framework of established approaches for the integration of migrants. Rinus Penninx, Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas, Kathleen Valtonen, Wolfgang Bosswick and Friedrich Heckmann provide this framework as well as the dimensions that social integration are based on. The argument presented is that for the migrants to fully and successfully integrate into society a combination of employment, mimicking the host, in this case the colonizer, in tandem with the creation of their own social spaces that are not governed by the colonizer must be achieved. The strategies used by the migrants to integrate can contribute to new perspectives when dealing with the challenges a vast number of present-day societies have with integrating immigrants.

The social spaces or environments are created in neutral settings in the colonial metropolis. The social spaces that have been identified in the text are the park, Harrow Road and the fete. A Fete in *The Lonely Londoners* can be defined as a party or celebration. The thesis also takes into account the role race and class structures play to enable or inhibit integration as most of the West Indians presented are black.

The thesis will first present an outline of the theoretical framework based on a Postcolonial perspective with aspects of language and mimicry being the focus.

Homi Bhabha and Franz Fanon have contributed notable theories studying colonial relationship and a number of these will be made use of in this thesis. Subsequently a clarification of the concepts of integration will be developed. Following this an analysis is presented through the exploration of the spaces created by the migrants and the strategies used by them to integrate and move up in society within these spaces in London. These will be Harrow Road, The Fete and The Park.

The concept of spaces is derived from ideas developed by Lisa Kabesh who explores space and movement, Setha Low who explores how different communities have an impact on urban parks and the wider society and finally, Arjun Appadurai's *The Production of Locality*. Arjun Appadurai discusses factors that mostly affect the production of locality, the nation-state, diasporic flows, and electronic and virtual communities (198). These depend on cultural, class, historical and ecological settings (Apparadurai 198). The importance of spaces in *The Lonely Londoners* is evident in the way the spaces work to define the identities and social classes of individuals. As Selvon states, "London is a place like that, it divide up in little worlds and you stay in the world you belong to and you don't know anything about what is happening in the other ones except for what you read in the papers" (Selvon 60).

Apparadurai further discusses how the production of locality produces local subjects, neighbourhoods as well as socializing space and time through practices called ritual (Apparadurai 180). Moreover, local knowledge is deemed as being important in producing local subjects and neighbourhoods. Moses plays a significant role in passing on local knowledge and in spreading out the new immigrants to create spaces where they can make inroads into.

Based on the characters presented by Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* focus will predominantly be on Moses, Galahad, Harris, Big City and Tanty who best exemplify the attributes analysed.

Integration and the Postcolonial Literary Theory

Two of the main objectives of post-colonial literature are the valorization of cultural identity and the exploration of societies and cultures that are marginalized and on the periphery. Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* was published in 1952 and was a significant influence on Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* which was subsequently published in 1956. Fanon's work in seminal texts such as *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin White Masks* examined the psychological wounds inflicted on indigenous people by the imperial relationship. Furthermore, it examined the role of a sense of one's own national culture in the resistance to empire (Ryan 217). The effects of racism on the colonized black subject are elaborated upon by Fanon, a West Indian from Martinique.

The use of Fanon's theories to interpret *The lonely Londoners* has been used in several studies. Simpson discusses the 'Fanonian moments' in which the central characters come face to face with the 'fact of blackness' (192). Moreover, *The Lonely Londoners* was written in the 1950s when there were increasing race riots and hostility against blacks in London. Levi argues that the black/white divide is there from the start, when Moses blows his nose on a white handkerchief and it turns black (33). Galahad is likewise conscious of his colour and how it inhibits him from opportunities in society and he expresses this as he looks at his black hand and speaks to it "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).

On the topic of language, Fanon sees two spheres for the black man. He states that the black man has two dimensions, one with his fellows and the other with the white man (Fanon 8). When one speaks a language, one assumes a culture and the weight of the accompanying civilization (Fanon 8). Using French as an example, Fanon describes how the greater the mastery of the French language one has, the whiter they become (9). In *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon opts to create and predominantly use his own dialect of creole that is understandable to the English speaker. The only exception is with the character Harris, who has mastered the English language and who leaves his fellow countrymen questioning themselves if they indeed know the English language well.

Homi Bhabha is a significant figure in Post-Colonial Studies and central to his work is the idea relating to cultural interaction between colonized and colonizer. In *Immigrants Identity Crisis in The Lonely Londoners*, Saman Dizayi explains that what Bhabha refers to as mimicry is where the narrator mimics the behaviour of the colonizers so that they can fit into the ways of their colonizer's motherland (185). Bhabha explains the effect of mimicry to be that of camouflage and not a question of harmonizing with the background (121).

One of Bhabha's significant works is in *Of Mimicry of Man* where he discusses how mimicry is the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power (122). Language and mimicry can be identified as methods that enable cultural and interactive integration. In *The Lonely Londoners* characters such as Galahad

and Big City are impressed by the London landmarks and locations such as Waterloo Bridge, Charing Cross and Piccadilly Circus. They emphasise the names in conversations as they believe it gives them prestige and makes them a part of the society. They experience a sense of belonging when they visit these places and speak of them.

Further ideas on integration that shall be used come from Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas who state that integration refers to the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration (11). In addition to having to find accommodation and employment they also emphasise the importance of finding a place culturally and socially through interactions and furthermore, becoming recognized and accepted in their cultural specificity (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas 11).

An additional layer of complexity is added to the topic of integration when it concerns the colonized and colonizer. For Valtonen integration is the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political activities, without having to relinquish one's own distinct ethnocultural identity and culture (Paudel 31).

Integration is not only about becoming an accepted part of society, it is also about being able to participate in everyday activities in the society while maintaining the culture of origin (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas 14, Paudel 23). The two definitions of integration will be used in the study. Heckmann outlines four interconnected dimensions that social integration should be based on. These are structural, cultural, interactive and identification and one cannot be achieved without the other (Paudel 25).

Structural integration refers to “the acquisition of rights and the access to position and status in the core institutions of the host society” (Bosswick & Heckmann 9). Migrants would need equal chances to accessing institutions such as the employment and housing market.

Bosewick and Heckmann define cultural integration as the processes and states of an individual’s cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change which are a precondition for socialization and promote participation and integration (9). It is a two-way process between the migrant and the host where interaction is necessary. Communicative competency is an example of cultural integration.

Interactive integration is the acceptance and inclusion of immigrants into the primary relationships and social networks of the host society (Bossewick and Heckmann 10). Social capital in the form of friendships and networks with the host make up interactive integration and impact upon the experience of migration.

Lastly, identification integration is concerned with the stage when an immigrant reaches a sense of belonging to groups within the host society (Bossewick and Heckmann 9). These concepts of integration will be used as a framework to determine how well and to what extent the migrants discussed have succeeded in integrating in London.

The Park

Hyde Park during the summer is painted as being green and warm with blue skies. This is in strong contrast to miserable, grey, and foggy London during the winter. The daffodils and tulips are in full bloom and the birds whistle. It is a place charged with sexual excitement and where all inhibitions are relinquished in the

summertime. The park is composed of different informal sections such as the Play Around Section where the boys can go sit with the girls and court one another (Selvon 92). Additionally, sexual acts including prostitution between the West Indian young men and white women take place. Conceivably Selvon uses Hyde Park as a space due to the history it has of tolerating free speech and demonstrations (Cheetham & Winkler 371).

For close to ten pages in *The Lonely Londoners* Selvon introduces and writes about the summers the boys spend in Hyde Park. He writes in an uninterrupted fashion with no punctuation, paragraphs nor regards to grammatical rules which in turn reflects the absence of rules in the park. The entire section is narrated in a stream of consciousness style which Bently and Clement H. Wyke argue Selvon utilises this as a liberating and empowering technique for the representation of black identity (Bently 72). Equally, Susheila Nasta describes these passages as an uplifting prose poem to London that is both a painful and lyrical love song (Selvon xv). Furthermore, she notes that Selvon generates new and fresh perceptions of the city and that its previously awesome spaces are transformed and creolized (Selvon xv).

Evidently social and racial equality are achieved in the park as the “boys coast lime while the pretty pieces of skin suntan as the old geezers watch and the English people smile and say isn’t it a lovely day” (Selvon 92). Indeed, social classes are erased, and the migrants seize the opportunity to integrate with those from social classes who are usually unreachable. This is demonstrated in the narrator reflecting “you does meet all sorts of fellers from all walks of life don’t ever be surprised who you meet cruising and reclining in the park it might be

your boss it might be some big professional feller because it ain't have no discrimination (Selvon 95).

In *Rethinking Urban Parks* Setha Low explains that parks are not neutral spaces but rather socially constructed spaces (146). Low further elaborates on how parks can play a role in providing a home for marginalized groups and are significant in carrying out and sustaining the process of cultural reproduction (147). The park represents a key site of integration and a liminal space where the boys court British girls and the rules of colonization do not apply and neither do those of hierarchy. As with the fete, there are no inhibitions for the boys at the park and all transgressions are conceivable. Mimicry is not required. "People wouldn't believe you when I tell them the things that happen in the city but the cruder you are the more the girls like you and you can't put on any English accent for them or play ladedda" (Selvon 100). Doubtless to say it is not only the boys who lose inhibitions and the desire to follow socially constructed rules. People higher up in society also spend time "coasting" in the park as the narrator expresses "don't think that you wouldn't meet real class in the park even in big society it have hustlers" (Selvon 99). Further in the same section Moses narrates how an upper-class woman picks him up and takes him to a club where they drink champagne and whiskey. When the woman and her high and mighty friends get high they shockingly, to Moses, dance the cancan unbecomingly flinging their legs up in the air (Selvon 101).

Undoubtedly, class structures play a predominant role in directing what type of British people the boys can normally integrate with. Working class women are viewed as being at the same socio-economic level so the boys can manage to date girls such as Daisy who works with Galahad. "It have a kind of communal

feeling with the working class and the spades, because when you poor things does level out it don't have much up and down" (Selvon 61). However during the summers in the park an atypical pattern surfaces where on one hand the upper class seize the opportunity to get a thrill from interactions with the West Indians and on the other hand the West Indians "wouldn't hit a spade when it have so much other talent on parade" (Selvon 99). This portrays the acknowledgement by the migrants of what they view to be their lower status in society and taking hold of the opportunity that the summer in the park brings for temporary upward mobility through frolicking with the upper class. A temporary success is achieved during the park summers with what Bosewick and Heckmann define as cultural and Interactive integration which promote socialization and participation and integration (9). For a while the migrants are included in both the upper- and working-class networks of the host society.

It is during these summers that Moses gains a sense of accomplishment and integration as well as upward mobility and abandons his thoughts on returning to Trinidad. "Oh lord Galahad say when the sweetness of summer get in him he say he would never leave old Brit'n as long as he live and Moses sigh a long sigh like a man who live life" (Selvon 101).

Harrow Road

Tanty and her family settle down on Harrow Road which is described as a working-class neighbourhood with a lot of West Indians. Moses describes the place as "the real world, where men know what it is to hustle a pound to pay the rent when Friday come" (Selvon 59). Harrow Road is painted as having old, grey and dilapidated buildings. The streets are dirty and everyone uses a galvanised

basin with boiled water when they need to take a bath (Selvon 59). The image portrayed of Harrow Road by Selvon evokes a village in a third world country in the midst of London. “Like how some people live in small village and never go to the city, so Tanty settle down in the Harrow Road in the Working Class area” (Selvon 68). However, when Moses uses the word village Kabesh clarifies that it is not to portray Tanty as being backward but rather to highlight her sense of community.

Kabesh explains that although Tanty is one of the most immobile characters in the text she works to challenge systemic forms of exclusion and oppression that act upon her community (12). Besides enabling a credit system from the store in their community, she fights for gender equality and progressiveness by supporting Agnes when Lewis physically abuses her. Speaking to Tolroy, Tanty tells him that she has advised Agnes to report Lewis for assault “you better advice Lewis that he better stop beating Agnes, here is not Jamaica you know” (Selvon 58). She also insists on living together with her family and taking care of them. Kabesh believes that on the one occasion Tanty leaves Harrow Road and decides not to do so again, Tanty demonstrates allegiance to her family and working-class neighbourhood (Kabesh 13). Tanty further demonstrates a level of cultural integration as defined by Bosewick and Heckmann as processes and states of an individual’s cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change which are a precondition for socialization (9).

Simpson argues that in *The Lonely Londoners* instead of making liminality and marginalization their final word on the immigrant condition, the characters negotiate space for themselves within, and challenge their exclusion from, the host nations (193). Similarly, Tanty refuses to leave Harrow Road except for on

one occasion where she sets out to prove to herself that she is capable of taking the bus and the tube. She represents the migrant who chooses to remain on the peripheries of society and creates a space for herself and others there. Similarly, to Galahad and Big City she is able to speak about the iconic London landmarks and transportation stations but unlike the other migrants never visits the landmarks and she is content in not doing so. Tanty and Ma who washes dishes in a restaurant are content with their world and make no effort to integrate across any of the dimensions. “Ma work in the back, in the kitchen, but she was near enough to the front to see what was happening outside of the kitchen. Only from washing up Ma form an idea of the population of London” (Selvon 68).

Alternatively, they change the world around them to be more like the one they come from in Trinidad thereby affecting change in the statuesque. “Tanty used to shop in this grocery store every Saturday morning, it be like a jam session there when all the spade housewives go to buy and Tanty in the lead” (Selvon 65). Using her own means Tanty integrates the English hosts into her own society and culture on Harrow Road. Kenneth Usongo states that blacks such as Tanty attempt to replicate West Indian values in London and that her initiatives symbolize an appeal for white Londoners to fraternize with blacks (Usongo). Further, she manages to convince the resistant storekeeper to start giving everyone credit or trust to take groceries on credit and settle the payment on a Friday. Tanty exclaims to the shop keeper “Where I come from you take what you want and you pay every Friday” (Selvon 66).

The Fete

The Fete or dance takes place at St Pancras Hall on a Saturday evening with a Steel band, bar and distinguished upper class guests who Harris has invited along with the boys. Some unexpected and unwanted guests such as Five Past Twelve and Tanty also appear. Harris stands by the entrance greeting the English guests politely as they pay for their tickets as they enter the hall whilst in contrast, the boys do not get such a pleasant welcome as they breeze in without paying (Selvon 104). It is true that the boys pose a risk of causing a brawl and disgracing Harris, and this is his worst fear. This is particularly true of Five Past Twelve and Tanty who dance unbefittingly and speak boisterously about Harris' humiliating past. The choice of St Pancras Hall for the fete is relevant as a space for social and cultural integration as it was previously used for the Caribbean Carnivals that were originally organized in response to the Notting Hill Race Riots in 1958 (Hinds). Moreover, the founder Claudia Jones was a journalist and activist born in Trinidad.

For successful social integration the four dimensions of structural, cultural, interactive and identification are required. A key tool of enabling integration is interaction through social activities between migrants and nationals from the host nation. This facilitates in gaining an understanding and familiarity to the other or unknown and it also allows individuals an opportunity to accept the differences in culture yet allocate them a space in society. In Selvon's personal case his success in integrating and upward mobility was enabled through a programme broadcast on the BBC named *Caribbean Voices*.

Apart from providing a regional forum for cultural exchange, the Voices producer, Henry Swanzy, also provided a point of first contact for the Caribbean writers as they emigrated to London (Ellis 220). David Ellis explains how

Caribbean Voices gave a platform to the West Indian writers to inform the British about their conditions both in the Caribbean and in Britain (220).

Harris is a prime example of how a migrant can be successful at integrating through the use of social activities or fetes. Harris not only manages to build a network with native British people, but he is also continually making a good income unlike his friends. Moses remarks “Harris moving among the bigshots, because of the work he does do, which is to organize little fetes here and there, like dance and party” (Selvon 103). Harris manages to integrate interactively through his social networks and friendships with the host society. He is the embodiment of being British for an immigrant as he has mastered the art of mimicking the host. Perhaps more importantly and evidently, Harris is the only member of the group who has experienced upward mobility since moving to London. Five remarks to Harris “You think you can fool me? You forget I know you from back home. Is only since you hit Brit’n that you getting on so English” (Selvon 106). Additionally, when Tanty arrives at the Fete she screams out to Harris thereby embarrassing him “Tolroy say how you are living in London for a long time and you are doing well for yourself, look at little Harris what used to thief fowl egg under the house!” (Selvon 106,107).

It is not Harris alone who benefits from the environment in the fetes. Harris establishes a space where rules can be transgressed similar to the behaviour in Hyde Park. The boys successfully benefit from this space through the leveling of the hierarchies and an opportunity to integrate with the more distinguished guests Harris has invited. “Harris Fete is a get-together for all the boys, wherever it happen to be, all of them leave the night work they have to hit this fete. Look Tolroy bring the whole family to Harris, it look like Saltfish Hall in London”

(Selvon 107). Another indication of the space the boys manage to create is when Big City says excitedly “lord what is happening in this London! This fete is like a real bacchanal in the Princess Building in Port of Spain!” (Selvon 108). During the convivial evening the guests dance to calypso, “jock waist”, play oil drums and some smoke marijuana.

Klanicová highlights how the character Harris is the only one who speaks English correctly (34). Moses comments on an encounter he had with Harris saying “Man, when Harris start to spout English for you, you realise that you don't really know the language” (Selvon 103). In *Happy in the Mother Country: Liminality in Samuel Selvon's The Lonely Londoners*, Anthony Joseph states that Harris's actions and speech signalize a form of mimicry, concerned with liminal states; of being almost the same, but not quite (112). He further states that in Harris's “camouflage,” there are revealing gaps that embarrass him by disrupting his performance of an assimilated selfhood. (Joseph 112).

Paul Valery understood the power one attains with the mastery of language, for he called language “the god gone astray in the flesh” (Fanon 9). Harris epitomizes mimicry as well as the mastering of the English language. For example he carries himself like a gentleman and is always smartly dressed. Moses describes Harris saying “Harris is a fellar who like to play ladedda, and he like English customs and thing, he does be polite and say thank you and he does get up in the bus and the tube to let woman sit down, which is a thing even them Englishmen don't do” (Selvon 103). Harris makes a show of being an Englishman carrying a briefcase and a *The Times* newspaper in a pocket and making sure the name is visible.

Elements of mimicry and mockery referred to by Homi Bhabha can be identified in the way in which Harris overly exaggerates in his English ways. Another example of mockery is at the end of the Fete he hosts when he ends it by having the band play ‘God save the Queen’ (Selvon 116). The narrator, Moses, however remarks that the only problem with Harris is that Harris’s face is black (103). This alludes to the point of interdiction discussed by Bhabha where Harris is almost the same but not quite (Bhabha 123).

Much like the boys in the park who would rather not fraternize with their fellow West Indians as they find this to be lowering their aspirations as compared to aiming for the upper-class English, Harris also equates blackness with negative qualities (Joseph 113). Joseph believes that Fanon explains this best with his theory on racial trauma where an individual experiences trauma due to the racial discrimination they have been subjected to (113). When Five Past Twelve starts dancing with his distinguished British guests at the Fete, Harris expresses “you boys always make a disgrace of yourselves and make me ashamed of myself (Selvon 111). This can question his level of integration as he has not maintained his cultural identity. Jiménez Fuentes, et al. state that in the case of Harris, who attempts to elevate himself and secure a social standing in the host community, there is the attempt to reproduce the language of the master and to deny his West Indian identity (31). An alternative view of the function of Harris in the novel is that he is used as a means of subversion by Selvon in mocking the British ways.

Conclusion

In *The Lonely Londoners* integration proves to be a challenge for Moses and his fellow West Indian and African friends and thus they find solace in their

companionship on the outskirts of society occasionally achieving temporary integration during the summer in the park or during parties. On Harrow Road Tanty acts as an agent enabling a cultural understanding with the host citizens that allows the West Indians to have a space where they can feel integrated and at home. However, no upward mobility is achieved in this space. Each character including Moses, Galahad, Harris, Tanty along with others find their own tactics to survive and participate in the British society. Like most migrants they have moved in search of a better life and upward mobility in their craft is the goal of their sojourn. This is similar to Selvon and Lamming's who intended to develop their careers as writers. For characters like Moses and Galahad living on social welfare is not an option. Characters such as Galahad, Tollroy and Cap consistently try to make headway in becoming a part of the English society and Moses frequently reflects on how he has not managed to make any progress in his life "...I just lay there on the bed thinking about my life, how after all these years I ain't get no place at all, I still the same way, neither forward nor backward" (Selvon 113).

Through his writing Selvon successfully created awareness of the West Indian identity in Britain and was one of the pioneers in enabling a place in society for the previously marginalized community. Selvon explains the different types of migrants that arrived in Britain during the Windrush period and the difficulties they faced trying to create a home and sense belonging in London. He explains that their priorities were to find employment, food and a place to sleep. Different techniques are used by the migrants to get by and survive. As Fanon writes "historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty years ago"

(Fanon 25). Harris understands the doors that have opened up to him on the grounds of the mastery he has of the English language. He succeeds in building social capital through his British network and through this he can progress and earn a substantial income. The downside to Harris approach to integration which entails mimicry, employment, and partying, is that he abandons and suppresses his culture and blackness which is partially disadvantageous. Although he acts British, as Moses points out, he is still black.

Selvon however demonstrates the power of embracing ones identity while trying to integrate and he does this by opting to write in creole. Levi reiterates that through writing in the continuum of West Indian language, Sam Selvon made the voice of the “Other” impossible to ignore or marginalize, thereby giving a preeminent place to Caribbean literature’s contribution to the postcolonial canon (33).

In the same way as Selvon created a space for West Indian Literature in the literary world so do the boys in London. They succeed in recreating spaces for themselves that flatten out socio-economic structures and where the rules of colonization do not apply. In these new spaces, the park, Harrow Road and at the fete integration can take place.

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