

OUR WORDS ARE BRICK AND MORTAR: MASCULINE
RECONSTRUCTIONS OF HOME AND COMMUNITY IN WINDRUSH ERA WEST
INDIAN MIGRANT LITERATURE

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TITLE: Our Words are Brick and Mortar: Masculine Reconstructions of Home in
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Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of home in West Indian migrant literature of the Windrush Era. The analysis focuses on home as a series of reference points which construct inclusions and exclusions in a given society. I postulate that the non-white, male West Indian migrant's idea of home endures a double disruption (in the shift from the colonial patriarchal paradigm within the West Indies and in the act of migration to England) which forces him to reconstruct a notion of home within England. In the investigation, I discover that West Indian men must learn to adapt to the concomitant societal pressures of racism, imperialism, colonialism and nationalism in England, in order to build a sense of home which can withstand such pressures. In the process of this investigation, I also discover that use of the West Indian language and the pursuit of male community building is indispensable to creating new forms of masculinity which can exist in a diasporic community without necessarily reaffirming the previous colonial patriarchal paradigm.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Networks of Home and Gender

Home often appears as a fixed point in the past from which we advance, and so it often does not seem as important as where are we are going. Often we forget the fact that where we go, and how we get there are deeply influenced from the point from where we start. In that way, home should be imagined in a similar way to how Sara Ahmed imagines *orientation*, that is to say home “is about how we begin, how we proceed from here” (Ahmed 545). Home is not only a physical dwelling (whether it be house, hut, tent or compound) in which one lives. It exists simultaneously as a material and psychic space. Its dimensions extend outward in concentricities from the self, to the family, to the community, to the nation, and perhaps even others not as yet defined. What all of these concentricities share, however, is that they are also a collection of fundamental ideologies which direct us and indirectly influence the way we act and the way others act upon us. This collection of ideologies also influences how we define ourselves and, therefore, it comes to affect how we define others. Home cannot exist as a place for everyone, because otherwise how do we come to differentiate ourselves from others? Home is nothing if not “a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions...a way of establishing difference” (George 2). In acts of inclusion and exclusion, home sets a network of ideologies as reference points for its residents that decides what is inside and what is outside; what is self and what is non-self.

In these ideological divisions, home reveals its political nature. What ideological reference points are used to separate *us* from *them*? The main ideological reference points

used to separate one people from another are culture and ethnicity.¹ As for culture, this study will focus on what can be termed *national culture* in the sense of the culture shared by a nation. Language, as a subset of culture, plays an important role in this study, as an individual “who possesses a language possesses by indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language” (Fanon 2). Hence, language is intrinsic and inseparable from the culture which uses it and I will treat it as an expression of a cultural way of life. Ethnicity also has a particular place in this study as it one of the most explicit ways residents of a particular home decide who belongs to their group and who does not. It becomes even more ostensible when the residents of a home use racism as an ideological principle by which they form their inclusions and exclusions.

In this study I am concerned specifically with how West Indian migrants conceptualize home, and the inclusions and exclusions by which they define themselves and by which others define them. I want to examine the ways in which institutionalized forms of racism are employed in the slavery plantation system, imperialism, colonialism, and nationalism as ways of marginalizing and excluding the West Indian and how that employment has affected migration from the colonies to England. As we know, the institutionalization of a system of racism has had a lasting effect on the descendants of former slaves and indentured labourers in the West Indies. Consequently, it has the unfortunate effect of colouring the experiences of non-white West Indians wherever they

¹ For this study, I will use the Oxford English Dictionary definition of culture to mean “[t]he distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc. I will also use the Oxford English Dictionary definition of ethnicity to mean “[s]tatus in respect of membership of a group regarded as ultimately of common descent, or having a common national or cultural tradition”.

emigrate outside of the West Indies. Those same intersecting systems of power and oppression also produce societal structures that have influenced what the West Indian imagines as *home*. Although this process begins in the era of the plantocracy and evolves through to the emancipation, one of the first time when the idea of home began to be thoroughly questioned in West Indian minds was in the post-World War II era. In fact, it may have been one of the first times that the islands of the West Indies thought of themselves as West Indians, as a part of a group of peoples with a similar cultural history.

On the domestic level, acts of exclusion not only define who is interior and who is exterior to home, but also define the roles residents play within the household and within society. Exclusions within the home are just as often about gender as about race or culture, but these reference points tend to intersect in complex ways, especially when we consider the West Indian conception of home. No period in West Indian history was more revealing of this intersectionality than the nationalist period:

The West Indies in this period may be described as a region in search of itself, so that the crucial issues as seen by intellectuals were freedom, identity, race, class, colour, society and the implication of these for the nation. ‘Nation’ meant the distinctive political and cultural identity both of individual territories and of the region as a whole, the search for the latter being most clearly seen in the movement toward West Indian Federation in the 1950s. (Forbes 4)

Yet, nationalism, with its “totalizing world view” (5) elided the gender issues of the age, even though gender roles were undergoing rapid transformation during the period. Within the classical patriarchal paradigm familiar in Euro-American countries, women were

relegated to the private domestic aspects of home. On the other hand, the masculine role was that of the breadwinner, who leaves the home in order to provide for it. Their role as breadwinner usually entitled men to higher levels of education and literacy. Although men in this paradigm are often distanced from the home because of their status as breadwinner they retain executive authority over the decisions made in the home and are considered the head of the household. The patriarchal paradigm thus places men in a position where they are expected to decide the strictures by which the home includes and excludes certain individuals and cultures, while at the same time being unfamiliar with the experience of being included and excluded themselves. Even when they must confront the inclusions and exclusions in wider societies and communities, the household represents the refuge to which they can always return and re-establish the sense of their executive power and the comfort it confers.

Yet, in the West Indies from the 1950s onward (According to Errol Miller's study *Men at Risk*, published in 1991), there was an increase in female-headed households (Miller 69), a faster increase in the literacy levels of women as opposed to men (75), an increased enrolment of girls and women as opposed to men in both high-school and higher education institutes (76-78) and women made the "greatest progress in the most coveted, prestigious and highest paying occupations" (84). Moreover, Forbes asserts that "in day-to-day lived experience, women... wield considerable authority" in the household, and thus "male authority as a fixed, gender-specific category is often more ideological than practical" (64-65). Forbes' and Millers' findings support the conclusion that in the West Indies the authority which men may previously have possessed exclusively began to

be assumed by women more and more. When the West Indian man returns to the household, then, he confronts the fact that his role is no longer unchallenged. Even further, this reversal of power dynamics unseated his comfortable position as ruling patriarch of the home. Miller noticed, from the 1950s onwards, a descent in the respective position of men in both educational and employment contexts. It appears that while women in the West Indies were showing signs of a rejuvenated flexibility, the disruption of the exclusive patriarchal power of West Indian men had left them marginalized and uncertain about their role in the patriarchal paradigm. Outside of this protective paradigm men were forced to reconsider their place in the home—not only in the household, but also within their community and within their nation. Without the patriarchal ideological structures of the home to protect them, West Indian masculinities were newly subjected to social and psychological damages. If masculinities in the nationalist period (as implied by Forbes and Miller) were plagued by certain social and psychological damages, then from where did these damages come? Why were they becoming evident during the era of nationalism?

Before I proceed, I want to make clear that my focus on masculinities is not aimed at reaffirming masculinist or patriarchal ideologies. Rather, I believe that, just as migration disorients the migrants' other ideological reference points, it also disrupts the male migrant's understanding of the masculinity which was established *at home* (both in the culture of the family arrangement in which he was raised and in the larger culture of his community and nation). This means that the male West Indian migrant, whose masculinity has already been unsettled by the changes in gender roles in the West Indies

is forced to reconstruct his home and its attendant gender practices. Under societal pressures of racism, imperialism and nationalism faced at arrival in the host country, many of these reconstructed masculine ideologies collapse in on themselves and ultimately fail. These failures reveal certain flaws in types of masculinity which can prevent the male migrant from existing contentedly as a member of the diasporic community. By examining the disruption and disorientation of West Indian masculine ideologies, therefore, perhaps I can find ways to help the development of more malleable masculinities that are capable of constructing healthy associations within the diasporic community.

In order to address these problems and possibilities I must first understand what historical events might have affected masculine ideologies during the nationalist period. The emergence of modern perspectives in West Indian thought (although it is more of a process than an event) may have been somewhat responsible for the refiguring of masculinities. An effective way to term this perspectival shift during the period of nationalism is to call it by Dilip Gaonkar's term *alternative modernity*. As Gaonkar puts it: "modernity always unfolds within a specific cultural or civilizational context and ... different starting points for the transition to modernity lead to different outcomes" (17). I want to suggest that the modern West Indian perspective emerged as a new way of conceptualizing the place of West Indian collectivity in a global context. In other words, nationalism, modernity and global perspective in the West Indies developed concomitantly as ways of responding to "cultural and civilizational context" (17) which is only partially represented by the Western modernity of the British Empire. It was perhaps

at this point, more than any other, when West Indians challenged the idea that the West Indian national culture was a descendant of the British Empire. During this time West Indians expressed clearly that the British Empire built and supported racist, imperialist, colonialist ideologies into the political and cultural structures of the colonies. At this point, West Indians explored the possibility that the West Indian community (to an extent) exceeded those political and cultural structures. The concept that the West Indian cultures grew out from under the pressures of these structures means that a West Indian cultures had come to enunciate and claim responsibility for its own existence.

One event which helped to develop this type of enunciation was the migration of many West Indians to England in the post-World War II period. Though “the British Empire emerged territorially intact in 1945, Britain’s position was considerably weakened both financially and militarily.” Furthermore, after World War II, “the UN appealed to member countries for ‘friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples’” (Karatani 107). Countries under British dominion (such as India, Australia and Canada) had begun to assert their independence and rights as nations with their own citizenships. These factors influenced the British Empire to reassess its position as a world power, and change how it was viewed in international politics. In order to satisfy the demands of the Dominions and amend its position as a world power in the eyes of the UN and the Colonies, “the British Empire and the British Commonwealth ... had to undergo a constitutional transformation by discarding its empire-like features based on imperial supervision and control and by stressing instead its multiracial and multicultural aspects” (108). To that end, the British

government proposed the 1948 British Nationality Act which replaced the colonial connotations of the epithet *British Subject* with the much more inclusive and flexible title of *Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies* (116). The fact that people from the colonies shared this title with born and bred British citizens seemingly brought all peoples of the Empire into the fold of *Britishness*.

The enactment of the 1948 British Nationality Act may have appeared, at the time, as an act of inclusion of the colonies and of the global community, but it was really an attempt at “imperial realignment” that would incite immigration and offset the connected crises of population decline, deficient labour force and financial difficulties (Paul 7). In June of 1948, before the British Nationality Act commenced officially in January of 1949, the arrival of 492 Jamaicans on the *Empire Windrush*, indicated the beginning of a surge in immigration from the British West Indies (111). In spite of the seemingly serendipitous immigration of new labourers to England, the English government was hostile to the growing West Indian presence, implying in public statements that “upheld the legal right of West Indians to migrate while hinting they would be better not to do so” (119). These public statements fostered hostile relations between the new migrants and English society as well as exposing the truth that “they were seen as outsiders both by officials and fellow subjects, regardless of the culture that had taught them to regard England as the ‘motherland’ and themselves as members of the British Empire” (120). One of the causes of this shock was a response to the “the autonomy of the colonials’ behaviour” (121). The Attlee administration (elected 1945-1950) did not anticipate what they perceived as “a

premonition of a limitless, uncontrollable invasion” (121). The unregulated migration of colonials to England signified, for the English government, a loss of imperial control.

The hostility the Attlee English government showed to West Indian immigrants was not solely because of their unprecedented autonomous immigration. It was racist in nature:

Specifically, the MPs feared that ‘an influx of coloured people domiciled here is likely to impair the harmony, strength and cohesion of our public and social life and to bring discord and unhappiness among all concerned.’ These Labour MPs assumed a ‘uniformity’ in the British ‘way of life’ and assumed also that their color placed colonials outside of this circle. (Paul 127)

The Attlee administration (and administrations through to the late 70s) produced a social setting that was inimical to the arrival of the non-white West Indian immigrants; an environment which inhibited the integration or assimilation of the West Indian migrants. West Indian immigrants were contracted to perform only the most menial labour (despite the fact that most of the immigrants were skilled or semiskilled labourers) and were often refused lodging on the basis of their skin colour (120). Racism made it nearly impossible for West Indians to construct a satisfactory sense of home in what they were taught to consider the motherland. It also forced West Indian men to re-evaluate their role in the host society. Being marginalized by racism and yet under pressure to appear self-sufficient and unfazed by their environment led to a cognitive dissonance. This dissonance was only furthered by the advent of public icons of West Indian nationalism who were held to be “uncompromisingly male/masculine” (41).

George Lamming and Samuel Selvon, both writers and migrants from the Windrush era, address these intersecting pressures of racism, nationalism and overbearing masculinity in their works. What makes the investigation of these two authors worthwhile is the way they use characters and spaces in conjunction to expose the theme of disorientation in migrant psyches. If home is psychic space which orients itself on the basis of these established networks of ideology as I have posited in my opening passages, then the analysis of spaces as symbolic extensions of mental states in the narratives should help to identify the properties that make the construction of home possible.

One of the properties I postulate as one of the foundations of home is what Victor and Edith Turner call *communitas*. Victor Turner defines *communitas* as “the egalitarian ‘sentiment for humanity’ ...representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship between person and person, a relationship with nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness” (Victor Turner 274). *Communitas*, then, can be a method of connecting the differences of personal identities through reconciling those differences with the commonalities within a specific group. Victor Turner’s *communitas* also posits that cultural structures² are not always constant nor cyclical but rather, they evolve through people’s participation in *communitas*. In effect, *communitas* is both a method of exceeding cultural structure, and of creating new structures that are not dependent on previous ideologies. *Communitas* is

² Cultural structure, as defined by Victor Turner: “By structure I meant, roughly, social structure ...a more or less distinctive arrangement of mutually dependent institutions and the institutional organization of social positions and/or the actors which they imply” (Victor Turner 272).

important in this study of black West Indian men because it thrives under conditions of “liminality, outsiderhood, and structural inferiority” (231). Non-white West Indian migrant masculinities, as they embody the intersections of such positions may be a group of people who can access *communitas*. For Victor Turner: “*liminality* represents the midpoint between two positions, *outsiderhood* refers to actions and relationships which do not flow from a recognized social status but originates outside it, while *the lowermost status* refers to the lowest rung in a system of social stratification in which unequal rewards are accorded” (237). Non-white West Indian men are *liminal* in that they have been accepted into English society on the basis that they perform menial labour, yet are not allowed to integrate with any English social class on the basis of their race. They are *outsiders* in that their actions and relationships are not wholly defined either by West Indian or English set of cultural norms. Although non-white West Indian men may not at the very bottom of the English social hierarchy, they are certainly one of bottom most in the hierarchy.

While non-white women may be classified lower than non-white men in the English social hierarchy, and they have certainly endured gender marginalization in ways non-white men would never face, men have a very specific relationship to *communitas* which women may not experience in the same way. Victor Turner argues that:

[s]ince *communitas* has a strong affectual component, it appeals more directly to men; but since structure is the arena [e.g. in the classically patriarchal paradigms of the workplace] in which they pursue their material interests, *communitas* perhaps even more importantly than sex tends to get repressed into the

unconscious, there to become wither a source of individual pathological symptoms [i.e. in the need to connect to others] or to be released in violent cultural forms in periods of social crisis. (266)

Since men have been culturally conditioned to “*master* every threat” (40), and hide any sign of weakness, they repress many forms of affectual expression. As I will attempt to show, repression of *communitas* will sometimes manifest itself in the form of a narcissistic withdrawal which is altogether damaging to the formation of community and thus to construction of home.

I will be focusing on two novels from both each of Lamming and Selvon in an attempt to gauge the aforementioned pressures which disorient the male West Indian migrant and inhibit him from rebuilding home in England. Alongside the analysis of these pressures I will investigate the possibility that despite these pressures the West Indian man can reconstruct home after migration to England through *communitas*. In chapter 2, I address George Lamming’s *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953). I argue that the semi-autobiographical rewriting of his boyhood before his migration to England is a reimagining of home imbued with a post-migration perspective. His disoriented perspective permeates the narrative with an understanding of how home is divided into separate but corresponding concentricities (particularly the self, the community, and the nation), and how those concentricities coalesce and suggest the importance of being in harmony with a community who share one’s struggles. Chapter 3 looks at the role nation formation plays in constructing home among male characters in Lamming’s *The Emigrants* (1954). The third chapter also addresses how the pressures of migration to

England produce dysfunctional masculinities which inhibit the characters from building a satisfactory sense of home or community. Chapter 4 examines the role of language in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and how it can help to form a diasporic national culture and build a diasporic community in the alienating atmosphere of London. It also investigates how the effects of racism and colonialism predispose black West Indian migrant men to create escapist, performative masculinities as a way of defending themselves against those pressures. Chapter 5 explores how Selvon's *Moses Ascending* (1975) parodies the emulation of white British masculinities by bourgeois black West Indians. I will also argue that *Moses Ascending* portrays mimicry as a technique which threatens to overcome the individual who engages in its performance.

Chapter 2: The Inside/Outside Divide in George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin*

If *home* is effectively a network of inclusions and exclusions, it is important to think of it as a psychic space with an inside and an outside. Moreover, when discussing this inside/outside divide, it is necessary to conceive of an imaginary geography of home in order to signal where the boundaries stand. I must first point out that the common conflation of the dwelling (house, compound, hut, or tent) oversimplifies a concept which, although “usually identified with a particular physical space” (Porteous 385), is also a psychic space. As John Hollander puts it: “Construing ‘home’ often entails considering concentricities radiating outwards, starting from the smallest central point—in modernity it is the body as home for the self” (32). These concentricities extend from the self, to the family, the dwelling, the community all the way outwards to the home-country and, in some theories of cosmopolitanism, even the planet. In terms of *In the Castle of My Skin*, however, its capaciousness is balanced by the factors which limit it. These limitations are captured in the dichotomy of home and non-home, and if we follow the Jungian idea “that explicitly reads an individual’s home as the ‘universal archetypal symbol of the self’ ” (George 19), then it supports Porteous’ idea that home is “a major fixed reference point for the structuring of [that individual’s] reality” (386); home and non-home are as psychically formative as self and non-self. I want to keep Porteous’ statement in mind as I take a closer look at what this means for migrant and diasporic literatures.

This chapter examines the loss of home as it pertains to the individual West Indian migrant in George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* and Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. I will be working with the hypothesis that migration often results in the traumatic loss of home and that a loss of *self* and identity follows. The loss of home affects West Indian men, in particular, because of the upheaval of their patriarchal positions and ideologies in the West Indian household, family and society during the nationalist era. Therefore, what was a "fixed reference point for the structuring of reality" (Porteous 386) becomes disrupted. Given that Lamming wrote *In the Castle of My Skin* within five years of his immigration to England I gather that this disruption is still fresh. In this first novel after Lamming's migration from Barbados, it becomes clear that the (re)writing/ (re)constructing of home is a process born out of that loss. As Lamming explains: "[the Caribbean], in spite of its long history of deprivation, represented the womb from which [the Caribbean writer] himself had sprung, and [it is] the richest collective reservoir of experience on which the creative imagination could draw" (*Castle* xxxvii). *In the Castle of my Skin* then represents both a personal and psychological loss for Lamming and a concerted effort at (re)constructing home in an imaginary space.

The disruption of Lamming's point of reference, caused by his loss of home, reinforces Rosemary George's contention that "The subject status of the immigrant, especially that of the non-white immigrant to the west, forces another literary reinscription of the self and home" (George 8). I believe this project of reinscription that reveals "fictionality [as] an intrinsic attribute of home" (11) encapsulates the migrant's response to that loss and ultimately cultivates a relationship with home that can assist the

migrant in responding to the disruption that migration entails. Given the closeness of the home to the identity of the individual which it houses, I believe that by looking at George Lamming's fiction we can learn to anticipate and respond to the loss of home. This response, returning to the idea of fictionality, should be a reconfiguring of the divisions and the points of reference of which the psychic aspect of home is constructed.

The possibility of reconstructing home overturns the conventional categorization of the nostalgic home as an ideal. The individual may hold onto the illusory belief that home is a lost paradise of familiarity, comfort, security and community rather than accepting its unsettled nature and realizing the necessity "of struggle and of embracing the unfamiliar" (George 27) inherent in the process of homemaking. It is also the space where the resident is witness and subject to the network of divisions (exclusions and inclusions) intrinsic to the home. In other words, home is not solely a space of belonging, but also a space where we witness or become subjects of acts of exclusion, often perpetrated by the head or ruler of the household. By the same token it is the place where a resident may witness the inclusion of others which he/she may feel should be excluded. It is by the negotiation of these "select inclusions and exclusions" (George 2) that home becomes a site of anxiety which actively competes with its comfort-providing qualities. This duality produces a dynamic in which, "the real and the ideal are not pure and distinct concepts or domains [but] are mutually defining concepts and experiences" (Mallett 70).

Homes, then, are spaces that capture the ambivalence of social relations within a given society. Yet, home has largely been overrepresented as a place of unity and ease and underrepresented as a place of division and anxiety. I would like to suggest in this

chapter that *In the Castle of my Skin* is capable of reintroducing this ambivalence into the discussion of home because of how it imagines home in a way reveals that “privacy, safety, security, comfort and refuge are not necessarily associated with the inside or home but may be found beyond its reaches [and that] [s]imilarly, danger, fear, insecurity are not necessarily located in the outside world” (72). Lamming’s inscription retains the quality of the nostalgic ideal home while earnestly observing and interrogating the boundaries of home and non-home. This mixed quality results in a narrative that emphasizes turmoil in a space commonly recognized as a zone of stability and scrutinizes the qualities of home. In that vision, perhaps, I can locate some impetus which motivates the migrant to reconstruct the lost home. Freud would agree that “each single struggle of ambivalence loosen[s] the fixation of the libido to the [lost] object” (“Mourning and Melancholia” 257).

The ambivalence that releases the migrant from a melancholic attachment to the lost home is only the beginning of the reconstruction, since “[e]ach single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrate the libido’s attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists” (255). The migrant must come to accept that the home he or she left has been lost. In the case of the non-white male West Indian who has migrated to England, home may still exist as a physical and geographical position, but the network of ideological reference points and divisions has been overturned by changes in gender dynamics and by the excluding pressures of racism and nationalism in English society. It is during this introduction to the pressures of English society that the migrant confronts the “demand that all libido shall be

withdrawn from its attachment to that object” (244). Subsequently, he encounters a challenge which Freud would call the reattachment of the libido to a new love-object. I would like to extend his assertion by suggesting the migrant must actively reconstruct a home in which he may house the libido. By accepting that home has “no fixed or essential past [the migrant can come to recognize that] the identity and meaning of [home] must be constructed and negotiated” (Mallett 70).

What we begin to see in this outline is the psychic involvement in the task of homemaking. As I have outlined in Chapter 1, the classical patriarchal paradigm situates women in the domestic sphere, and relegates them to the task of homemaking. Thus “the issue of ‘home’ and the private sphere is usually embedded in discourses on women” (George 19). That being said, the primarily male characters of *The Castle* introduces the complexity of a man or boy’s involvement in the task. A large part of *The Castle* addresses the “issue of ‘homelands’ or ‘home-countries’ [...] raised primarily in the discourse on nationalism and the other so-called masculine, public arenas” (19). Yet, I would argue that what is at stake in this chapter is not so much the masculine-gendered national/political sphere, but masculine reworkings of home in the private and personal spheres. This inversion of masculine ideas of home implies a bridge between the binary of masculine and feminine concepts of home on which the migrant can lay the groundwork for a provisional point of reference between the “boundaries of place and/or home [which] are [inherently] permeable and unstable” (Mallett 70).

Lamming’s narrative voice mirrors the provisional point of reference in “the self-discursive G. and the collective third person narrator [which] repeatedly defer to a chorus

of village voices that name their own reality” (Paquet xxiii). The narrative moves between the mind of G. (suggesting “George,” Lamming’s semi-autobiographical self), the omniscient perspective (what I will call an exterior perspective), to a third perspective where the narrative speaks through the characters of Lamming’s village. Although the third perspective is evidently interior, that is to say speaking from within the mind of the characters, it represents the voices of villagers who are separate from G.’s experience. Through this movement, Lamming is able to address, alongside questions of home-nation (which will be discussed in the following chapter), private and personal worlds extending outwards from the protagonist. Moreover, this persistent oscillation between the interior/exterior, between the protagonist and his village, thematizes what might be considered a counterintuitive aspect of home. What is commonly imagined as “provid[ing] a sense of place and belonging in an increasingly alienating world” (Mallett 66) is reimagined as “a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference. Homes and home-countries are exclusive” (George 2).

Keeping in mind how home radiates outward from the self, the beginning of the narrative focuses on orienting us within G.’s self. G.’s ninth birthday has been interrupted, and ruined by “Rain, rain, rain” (Lamming 9). This entrance to G.’s home reveals the process of home being ruptured by exterior forces. When we hear that “the water rose higher and higher until the fern and flowers on our verandah were flooded [and] came through the creases of my door, and expanded across the uncarpeted borders of the floor” (9), the implications of the home and the self are brought into question. The Jungian theory of home would see G.’s room as a representation of his identity or self. By

extension we must recognize that “The identity of the ego is not only secured in space but also in time” (Easthope 42). The event in his room is therefore representative of his state of mind during the pivotal time of his ninth birthday. In *What a Man’s Gotta Do* Antony Easthope reminds us that “The purpose of the masculine ego, like that of the castle, is to *master* every threat” (39-40). Understanding that *The Castle* is a semi-autobiographical bildungsroman which chronicles the development of G.’s maturity, then the flooding of his room is indicative of flaws or structural weaknesses in his identity at a time when maturation as a man is in question. G. still depends on his mother for defending his identity against external assault. Yet his dependence is no longer effective, even though “[G.’s] mother brought sacks that absorbed [the water] quickly” (9), she is unable to keep “the crevices of the roof [from] weeping rain, and surfacing the carpet and epergne of flowers and fern [with] liquid, glittering curves” (9). The rain is responsible for damaging G.’s home in a physical and symbolic way. His self is in the process of being destroyed. As implied with repetitive emphases, the rain colludes with the force of death when G. describes the “sodden *grimness* of an evening that waded through water” (9, emphasis mine). He keeps “an eye on the crevices of our *wasted* roof where the colour of the shingles had turned to *mourning black* (9, emphases mine). The rain appears as the source of death for G., but for the rest of the village “it was irreverent to disapprove the will of the Lord or reject the consolation that [his] birthday had brought showers of blessing” (9). By beginning the novel with the autobiographical event of his birthday I would suggest that he is calling attention to a point in time when he was being reborn. That is to say that Lamming recasts his ninth birthday as the beginning point in the formation of his identity.

G.'s identity is formed by his recognition of the difference of beliefs that divides him from his community. For him, the rain and flood "evok[e] the image of those legendary waters which had once arisen to set a curse on the course of man. As if in serious imitation of the waters that raced outside, our lives—meaning our fears and their corresponding ideals—seemed to escape down an imaginary drain that was our future" (10). The despair here is not just the spite of a child whose birthday has been ruined by rain, there is the recognition of a schism between his beliefs and that of his community. From this schism we can discern a level of narcissism on his part. He is self-concerned to the point that he rejects the beliefs of his community outright. In that state of mind he sees his community as "the uniform wreckage of a village at night in water" (11). When his "mother [says] it was a shame," he "even after many years would try to fix her label. What precisely was a shame? Was it the weather or the village or the human condition in which and in spite of which the poor had sworn their loyalty to life" (11). I would like to suggest that the bitterness we hear in young G.'s inquiries is an enunciation of self against the surrounding community. As Paquet explains: "G. is weakly assimilated into the collective community that constitutes his lived experience. He sees himself as part of the community but does not see or feel the community as part of himself" (Paquet xiii). Lamming recognizes G.'s naiveté in his self-enunciation, but also echoes it because they both feel "a cultivated sense of difference" (xiii) and distance from their community. At the time *the Castle* was being written, Lamming was separated from his community by the sea.

The fact that his home is beset by structural weaknesses implies that G. is unable to maintain his self. This phenomenon evokes Freud's theory of the development of the libido, which in turn mirrors the attachments and reattachments G. endures and questions. Summarizing Freudian theory, Antony Easthope explains that "The ego is not born in you but has to be developed. At first, the infant cannot distinguish between itself and the outside world. Its 'I' is brought into existence as it comes to identify itself as inside and everyone else as outside, the self being defined by what is other than the self" (Easthope 40). Already we begin to see the similarities between ego construction and the concept of home. G.'s flooded home reminds us that his self is no longer capable of supporting the home/non-home boundary, just as he cannot support his self/non-self boundaries. In the first stage of libido development the libido and the identity of the child is inseparable from the mother. After birth, however, the child must develop his own identity, but as "The ego has not energy or libido of its own [it] must draw from its reservoir in the unconscious, the id. It is able to do this because the id comes to feel loss, especially loss of the breast and the mother" (40). The libido is "withdrawn from the object and directed towards the ego" and "the ego [takes] its place as one of the sexual objects" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 17). From this development comes the child's identity and sense of self. I would argue that G.'s current crisis is one of a growing sense of community which threatens to displace his self, destroying his self-attachment.

Going back to Porteous' analysis: "just as self and non-self appear to be the basic divisions of psychic space, so the fundamental dichotomy in geographical space is between home and non-home" (386). Given that G.'s home is a shared symbol of both the

geographic space and his psychic state, the non-self and the non-home threaten to destroy their counterparts. The flood waters invade his home while dissolving singular identities into a communal identity: “The season of flood could change everything. The floods could level the stature and even conceal the identity of the village” (*Castle* 11). What causes G.’s anxiety is the idea that his self may be dissolved within the larger frame of community:

Then she broke into a soft repetitive tone which rose with every fresh surge of feeling until it became a scattering peal of solicitude that soared across the night and into my neighbour’s house. And the answer came back louder better organized and more communicative, so that another neighbour responded and yet another until the voices seemed to be gathered up by a single effort and the whole village shook with song on its foundation of water. (Lamming 11)

The consonant voices of the villagers during this disastrous event reveals a sense of community that transcends any individual’s faults, misgivings, or sense of loss. At the beginning of the song G.’s mother could “indicate but not control a tune” (11), but once the voices of the villagers join in, the sound becomes “better organized and more communicative” (11). The rain is now more clearly a symbol of the dissolution and recomposition of G.’s identity within his community. Moreover, the village song appears to be expression of *communitas* which produces a collective meaning for all its participants. The start of the novel asks if G. will be able to forgo the narcissistic withdrawal of the libido and take his place within his community, or whether, like Mr. Foster who, confronting the flood waters “won’t leave the old house, [and ends up]

sailing down the river on the roof” (13). But, as I will attempt to demonstrate, G. comes to identify a desire to join in a community connection—a desire which runs contrary to the fear of losing his self.

I, therefore, recognize a tension between G.’s solitude and his need to be part of a community. Unfortunately for him, he recognizes a disadvantage when it comes to his “birth [which] began with an almost total absence of family relations. [His] parents on almost all sides had been deposited in the bad or uncertain accounts of all my future relationships” (12). From birth G. feels severed from anyone but his mother. This results in a “loneliness from which had subsequently grown the consolation of freedom” (12). G.’s mother did not share that loneliness as demonstrated in her transcendental song with the support of the village chorus. Moreover “Miss Foster. [G.’s] mother. Bob’s mother. It seemed they were three pieces in a pattern which remained constant. The flow of its history was undisturbed by any difference in the pieces, nor was its evenness affected by any likeness” (24). *The three* represent *communitas* which G. apparently admires. They “were shuffling episodes and exchanging the confidences which informed their life with meaning. The meaning was not clear to them. It was not their concern, and it would never be” (25). The properties of the meaning they attain through *communitas* is not important, rather, it is self-justifying. The details of this meaning remain vague but invariably uplifting: “[t]he sun let its light flow down on them as life let itself flow through them” (25). Yet we can surmise one quality of this uplifting meaning; it offers a sense of permanence and stability within an unstable environment.

In the first chapter we see that G.'s self has already been destabilized. Assuming that his libido has been displaced it would appear he is in need of this type of meaning and self-justification. This begins with a slow-growing relationship with Bob. Bob, along with Boy Blue and Trumper become his portal into a community. Yet his mother views it as a liability for him: "On [his] way home from the morning class [...] he stopped at the corner to say hello to [Bob], but [his] mother saw him, from the veranda and shouted [at him] to hurry up" (112). When G. runs home, his "mother unhook[s] her belt from a nail and lash[es] [him] thoroughly" (113). The corner where he went to greet Bob is where G.'s mother draws a boundary. If G. passes that threshold, he belongs "where the men were always gambling and the women dropped remarks, telling each other about themselves" (113). At the corner, G.'s mother is attempting to establish a rule of exclusion with G., reminding us of the constructed inclusions and exclusions of home and of Said's concepts of filiations and affiliations. Filiation is "the ties that an individual has with places and people that are based on his/her natal culture; that is, ties of biology and geography" (George 16). In view of filiations, the inhabitants of the corner are no different from her and are tied to the same culture and ethnicity by both biology and geography. Conversely, affiliations "are what come to replace filiations, are links that are forged with institutions, associations, communities and other social creations" (16). It is according to affiliations that G.'s mother designates the corner people as exterior or liminal. G.'s mother proposes that they are inhabitants of non-home and are at the limit of her community. She explains:

‘An all I talk to the boy about that corner he won’t hear. Mornin’, noon and night I pray and I preach to the boy. I tell him what the worl’ is like an’ what he must expect, an’ the boy won’t hear, won’t hear not a single word I say. I don’t say you mustn’t play, I don’t say you mustn’t have friends, but that corner is no good for you. I tell you repeatedly, once, twice, three times, I tell you to choose. Either go with the gang at the corner, obey them, do as they tell you to do and live as they live and don’t let me waste my time, or you do what I say. You can’t serve two masters. (*Castle* 113)

G.’s mother is trying to engrain a difference between G. and the inhabitants of the corner. To construct this wall of difference between G. and some of his unsavoury peers she explains that he can belong to only one family and one home. She makes it clear that homes are mutually exclusive. So G. has a simple choice, he can belong to his home and with his mother, or he can join the corner people. But he cannot expect to belong to both, after all “[y]ou can’t serve two masters” (113). Home cannot accept the corner people as it is “established as the exclusive domain of a few. It is not a neutral place” (George 9). What solidifies that corner as non-home in the eyes of G.’s mother is precisely its *motherless* appearance. The corner people exemplify the term motherless. The corner is associated with vices such as poverty, sexual immodesty, vagrancy, laziness—more importantly they represent a lower class and marginalized people. The corner people are but one example of “The image of the enemy, and the enemy was [G.’s] People. [His] people are the low-down nigger people” (Lamming 27). G.’s mother has internalized “The language of the overseer” (27) as the motivation behind such a boundary.

G. does not explicitly break his mother's set boundaries by joining the corner people, however his journey to the sea with Bob, Boy Blue and Trumper does even more to test the symbolic boundary of home. The sea is the boundary that stretches to the furthest edge of home, the edge of the homeland. Since we have already concluded that '[h]omes are manifest on geographical, psychological, and material levels' (George 9) and that they represent a "fixed reference point for the structuring of reality" (Porteous 386), it should not surprise us that the limits of home instructs (sometimes falsely) his reality. Bob believes that "from a logistical point of view, if a ship leave here by the club and keep straight, straight without turnin', it bound to end up round there by the lighthouse," after all that is "exactly what Christopher Columbus mean to say when he say that too far east is west'" (156). Bob's understanding of homeland is (in)formed by the boundaries which surround it. Moreover, this understanding reminds us how, just as Barbados is shaped geographically by the sea which surrounds it, Barbados' culture and history is also shaped by the social, historical and cultural influences of colonialism which will be broached directly in the following chapters. What I want to keep in mind moving forward is how both the geographical and sociocultural aspects of home are shaped by exterior (non-home/non-self) variables that both literally and figuratively impose themselves on home.

It is at this boundary of the homeland and *the world* that we see how a group of people can create an enclave of community at the edge of home. Trumper explains that

'Tis always like this at home. The way we is here. My mother over yonder in that corner, an' my father down there in that corner, an' me somewhere else. An' you

get the feelin', you know, that everything's all right. 'Cause of the way everybody sittin', just sittin' there, an' for the moment you feel nothin' ever change.

Everything's all right, 'tis the same yesterday an' today an' tomorrow an' forever as they says in the Bible.' (120)

Trumper sees that their seating arrangement is symbolic of home and the family order. Even though they are at the farthest edge of home, the boys feel a sense of stability and comfort that allows them to talk freely. Still, the symbolic boundary is not forgotten and it continues to be a site of renewed interest and fear. But before I examine the properties of the boundary, the journey to the shore contains its own pertinent properties. The journey the boys have undertaken reminds us of Porteous' assertion that "[a]s psychic space, home paradoxically involves journey" (390). So far, we have been moving under the presupposition that home is stationary in most of its forms. We know that the self is a mobile entity, but the boys' journey reminds us that community is mobile as well. Their exodus implies a need to build their own community separate from the affiliations embodied in Creighton Village. Why must the boys construct this community relationship outside of the village? Bachelard explains that "psychoanalysis sets the human being in motion, rather than at rest. It calls on him to live outside the abodes of his unconscious, to enter into life's adventures, to come out of himself" (10). The self is in motion and called to experience adventures exterior (or at the boundary) of home. A community, a collection of selves that constitute a whole, can be subject to the same desire. This is desire rooted to the rite of passage, which demands of boys entering manhood to exit the boundaries of society. This phase of separation "comprises symbolic behaviour signifying

the detachment of the individual or the group from either an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an established set of cultural conditions” (Turner 232). By exiting the structures of their society, G. and his comrades enter a space where they become liminal—at the border of their society and the exterior world. In doing so, they enter a space which holds greater possibility of *communitas*. In this context, entering the space of *communitas* does not only imply the spirit of community, but also a space which makes transgression against social structures and the reimagining of those structures possible. This desire to adventure to the “in between” space is also rooted in stimulation and mastery, fundamental bases of home according to Porteous: “Stimulation, the third of the territorial triad of satisfactions, is clearly necessary for survival, as many sensory deprivation experiments have shown. It is achieved by making, modifying, and defending the home [, thus mastering]” (385). Stimulation and mastery work hand-in-hand to consolidate home, as seen after Boy Blue’s botched attempt at crab catching:

A wave wrenched [Boy Blue] and now he was actually in the sea. We shivered, dumb. A wave pushed him up, and another completing the somersault plunged him down. He screamed and we screamed too. He was out of sight and we screamed with all the strength of our lungs. And the waves washed our screams up the shore. It was like a conspiracy of the waves against the crab catcher (151)

Boy Blue’s attempt at showing his mastery of crab catching was intended to impress his comrades, but instead the sea punishes him for trespassing. As a visual support to the idea that “[t]he purpose of the masculine ego, like that of the castle, is to master every threat” (39-40) Easthope positions a photo of two boys building a sand castle on the shore in his

book, *What a Man's Gotta Do*. One boy is tasked with the construction of the castle, while the other stands watch at the shoreline. In the above situation there is a similar pattern. Although Boy Blue's objective was to catch the crab, by doing so he brings himself closer to the edge of his homeland. It is in part a performance of his courageous masculinity, in part the fulfilment of his desire for stimulation, and lastly it is a child's mimicry of the defender of the threshold. He ultimately fails and has to be saved by the fisherman because, as previously mentioned, the ocean is representative of the imposing dangers of non-home. G.'s own impulse to test the boundary, on the other hand, is relatively successful, probably because of its moderation. To join his male comrade's community he had to deliberately trespass his mother's set boundaries. Only once he does so can he join his fellows. Even though "[t]he purpose of the masculine ego, like that of the castle, is to *master* every threat" (39-40), the inclination towards the testing and defending of the boundaries of home is prompted by the domestic quality usually coded as feminine. Earlier in their discussion the boys recognized the stability and comfort which comes from a close community or family and which represents the interior domestic sphere. The family arrangement they mirrored during their discussion is a community which represents the center for which they stand watch at the edge of the abyss.

At the beginning of this chapter we saw that G.'s self was in peril. No longer attached to his mother and being imposed upon by surrounding community, G.'s only viable possibility for development of self was in dissolution and recomposition within a new sub-community. G.'s active attempt to join the boys in their adventures is an attempt

at performing his own rite of passage, and in doing so, he marks his entrance into a new Sub-community. If he were to be successful, he would have found a lasting camaraderie with his companions. From that attachment he would draw the sense of community interconnectedness we observed in his mother's song as well as a stable point of reference. This might have led to the furtive sense of meaning we saw in the links drawn between Miss Foster, G.'s Mother and Bob's Mother. Unfortunately, G. retains a distance from his brethren that prevents him from connection or attachment. In his final journal entry before he leaves for Trinidad he explains: "I review these relationships and they seem so odd. I have always been on this side, and the other person on that side, and we have both tried to make the sides appear similar, in the needs desires and ambitions. But it wasn't true. It was never true (261)". G. resigns himself to a detachment of which the only remedy is a sense of conviviality. Only by comparing their similarities side by side, in an act of what Said calls affiliation can he achieve any sense of connection. To that end their "likenesses will meet and make merry, but they won't know you, the you that's hidden somewhere in the castle of your skin" (261). In this final section, it appears the only hope for meaning or connection is in communication of similarities. By the same token that is where that connection ends.

In the Castle of my Skin does not offer a resolution of G.'s isolation from others and his community, but it does indicate some potential causes of his isolation. Those causes may direct us towards an essential aspect of connection which may in turn reveal properties of home and community. According to G., a major source of his isolation is "feeling terrified of being known; not because they really know you, but simply because

their claim to this knowledge is a concealed attempt to destroy you” (261). This fear keeps G. isolated from his fellows and prevents him forming lasting connections with his comrades. This fear suggests a defensive stance towards the other, by which the self is impoverished. The self, as we have seen, is not self-sustaining. Rather, as contemporary philosopher Kuang-Ming Wu declares: “Home is where I both was born and am being continually born, within that womb called other people, in their being not me” (195 Wu). From where does G.’s defensive stance come? Easthope states that: “the watchfulness of the would-be masterful ego, is a good way to recall what the ego wishes to deny and forget: that it depends on a process outside itself for its very existence” (44). It appears, then, that G.’s isolation is a denial of dependence on the other. If there is any chance of maintaining the self it is in permitting an interdependence that allows the “difference and no difference” (*Castle* 24) that G.’s Mother, Miss Foster, and Bob’s Mother have mastered. *Communitas* is contingent on that interdependence, and so it is a product of vulnerability rather than defensiveness. If the enclave imagined in the group of boys is to extend beyond the home-country, the individual migrant must be ready to be breached. He or she must let go of masculine defensiveness when it is time to construct close affiliations.

Chapter 3: Home as Confederation or as One-Man Nation in Lamming's *The Emigrants*

In the previous chapter I examined some of the concentricities through which we imagine home. In my readings of Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin*, I attempted to make visible the connections between these concentricities and how they form identity and community. This chapter is aimed at outlining a new method of engaging with the loss of home incurred during migration. When outlining the properties of the differing areas of home, I see at least one quality remains unchanged throughout. This quality of home is reflected indefinitely in the dichotomies of home and non-home, self and non-self, inside and outside. These dichotomies imply that the idea of home is partly based on an ambivalent movement which Freud might argue is an essential part of the individual's relationship to the love-object ("Mourning and Melancholia" 250). At the same time, ambivalence is a method of coping with loss by loosening our attachment to said object (257). Thus, embedded in the loss of home is are the materials which were used to construct it in the first place.

The negotiation of the boundaries of home and non-home is part of what is at stake in this chapter and what was in question during the 1950s and 60s, when West Indian nationhood was being devised in the form of The West Indies Federation. Although *The Emigrants* takes this question up wholeheartedly by "undertak[ing] an experiment in the creation of the spatial conditions necessary for the nation" (Szeman 66), it also indicates many of the challenges inherent to its creation. As Szeman goes on to explain "[t]he West Indies Federation was a brief political entity (1958-62) that proposed

to join all the various British colonies in the Caribbean into a new, independent national entity” (67). But because of “in-fighting among the islands over such fundamental issues as the nature of the federal constitution, power-sharing arrangements, the system by which representatives would be elected,” alongside racial concerns that the black majority would marginalize the Indo-Caribbean population, the movement fell apart (68). Despite the fact that for “the four years that the federation formally existed, it was not yet a fully functioning political entity,” it did exist as a political concept which “was established in order to open up more substantive discussions regarding the form of the new national institutions that would be the basis of a new nation” (67). The effort towards a dialogue regarding a shared nationhood suggests that there is an understanding of political connection between these communities that goes beyond geographical position and colonial history. This is a marked difference from the attempts prior to the 20th century when “the efforts to create a British Caribbean federation emanated from the metropole and represented imperial designs to institute efficient government via the streamlining of colonial administration in the region” (Duke 221). The move toward West Indian federation, however doomed, was a concerted attempt at imagining what form a West Indian nation might take.

The Emigrants, unfortunately, does not reveal a satisfactory solution to the series of problems addressed by The West Indian Federation. But I would like to suggest in my reading that, behind its perplexing and intransigent poetics, that the narrative interpolates the role of the individual West Indian in the larger political schema of nationalism. One section of the novel entitled “A Voyage” expresses itself as an active dialogue between

migrants who represent the various British West Indian islands from which they came. In this manner, the text does not stake a single assailable position on the question of federation. Rather it gives expression of the debates which connect Caribbean migration to the larger idea of West Indian nationhood. This kind of debate indicates that although “quarrelling may be a necessary error among all men, [...] it is a distinguishing feature in exiles; and among exiles whose ambitions and predicaments are similar, the quarrel becomes a normal way of being together” (Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* 24). This section which presents the migrants’ passage from their respective homelands to England appears a symbolic reversal of the middle passage. This passage allows but also prompts the passengers of the ship to discuss their origins and their reasons for departure. Almost all of the migrants choose migration from their home countries in order to find *a better break*, that is, an opportunity to receive better education and employment opportunities.

Set against the backdrop of the middle passage, the migrants in the section “A Voyage” express solidarity against the Caribbean migrant and postcolonial conditions they face. More notably this solidarity results in a generally effective erasure of self and individualism. In a conversation about the reasons for migrating to England, the narrative takes the form of a play. This dialogue emphasizes a dialectic form in which the participants discuss their “search o’ some way to make the future better” (*The Emigrants* 61) and how the postcolonial situation affects their pursuit. The Barbadian and Higgins³ both explain their desire to succeed through professional learning. The Barbadian decides that “When he get up there in England [he] goin’ to look for something to do an’ at night

³ Higgins is from Grenada.

try and educate [himself]" (59). Higgins calls the Barbadian "a man after [his] own heart" after all "the only thing to save a man these days [is] Paper [and] Qualifications" (59). These two characters share the desire to use professional education to achieve a successful career and "make man o' [themselves] (61)." To this unified goal the Jamaican remarks: "the two o' you come from different island but him talk an' the way you talk an' it ain't make no difference at all. De wahter separatin' you from him ain't do nothing to put distance between de views you got on dis life or the next...Dat's de meanin' o' the West Indies." (61) As we will remark later, in this analysis the Jamaican seems to speak for the vision of West Indian federation. His vision is representative of the West Indian view of nation that became prevalent in the 50s. As Curdella Forbes explains, during this time "[n]ation' meant the distinctive political and cultural identity both of individual territories and of the region as a whole" (4). So when the Jamaican points out that Higgins and the Barbadian speak the same *idiom*, he is indicating a type of community which, although aware of the distinctions, responds to the similar circumstances of colonialism and imperialism in a similar manner.

The Strange Man's⁴ entrance into the conversation marks the beginning of what can be called a dialectic. It is he who destabilizes what appears to be a full agreement between Higgins and the Barbadian. Theirs "Is a view [he] doan' share full an' complete" (61). According to the Strange Man, all that "business o' drawin' a map o' yuh life an' sayin' you doin' dis an' you doin dat is a lot a kiss-me-tail nonsense" because he recognizes that "dere's always people an' powers to stop you" (61). Even further, the

⁴ The Strange Man is from Trinidad.

Strange Man goes on to explain that the West Indian man is subject to an ennui that equalizes the value of the pursuit of professional success with professional stagnation: “If they dint have Steel Band [music] or the same rum or a handful o’ sports to chase behind, they’d be tired an’ sick o’ dis blasted life de same” (62). The design which Higgins and the Barbadian had previously composed, that education leads to a worthy occupation and a worthy occupation leads to fulfilment, is thus tested by the Strange Man’s belief that “the most miserable bastard in dis worl’ is a educated bastard who ain’t know w’at to do next” (62). The existential ennui which the Strange Man explains begs the question: why would West Indian men lack a sense of purpose in their home country? Higgins and the Barbadian believe that the Strange Man’s pessimism fractures the collective vision they were just celebrating. They are afraid that difference of opinion will inhibit the development of a community built upon the sense of similarity and connection that goes beyond the desire to emigrate. More accurately, however, The Strange Man proves a precocious awareness of both the influence of (colonial) power dynamics and their effects on his fellow West Indians.

According to the Strange Man’s outburst, those who have a future in mind for which they are planning “doan’ understan’ w’at it is to live in a place where dere’s powers all over yuh head. Is different in dose small islands ‘cause in a small island people who hold power seem to belong to a different kind of world altogether” (62). For the Strange Man, there is indeed a difference between “small islan” and “big islan” and that difference is how classes are distinguished. In Grenada, Barbados, or the like, the ruling classes are “so far remove from de rest they got the power over dat nobody worry to

remember dem till they make some criminal law an' then riot or something bust out" (62). Looking back at *Castle* again, we recall that Mr. Creighton represents that distanced and negligent source of colonial power, a source of power that inhabits and is yet elevated from the village. Conversely, he explains that in Trinidad and likely other big islands "those same people look like anybody else" (62). Something is preventing the postcolonial black upper class from becoming the ruling class after the emancipation and the decline of the plantocratic administration. In other words, something anchors the black upper class to the same level as the general populace. Although they are not equal in terms of class, they are equal in terms of power. "Colonialism means that a significant portion of the economic structure is located 'outside' the West [or England in this case]" (Szeman 11). For the colonial circuit to be complete, however, the power earned by that economic structure must be returned to the West and then redistributed to the colonies (in the form of governing, policing and educational forces). From the Strange Man's perspective, those forces are impotent vestiges of a ruling class who are, like the general populace, subjects to the source of power firmly set in English soil.

Szeman argues that this displacement of power results in a "crisis of representation" (11) for the West. Although this may be true, I would like to suggest that crisis runs both ways. The imperial side of this crisis is well documented in studies of imperialism and colonialism. We know that the Empire seeks to reproduce its power and consolidate the existence of the British Empire as a cohesive unit through extensive representation of its exemplary nationhood in the colonies. Examples of this process can be seen in such phenomena as Empire Day, the advent of an 'English' literary curriculum,

the focus on British history in colonial schools, and the ubiquity of the Union Jack in places where the abovementioned forces are exercised. On the other hand, colonials such as West Indians believe that in order to prove their existence they must represent themselves in England. So as Lamming explains, “each exile has not only got to prove his worth to the other, he has to win the approval of Headquarters, meaning in the case of the West Indian writer, England” (24). This desire extends beyond the West Indian writer, to anyone who wishes to receive education, certification, or recognition that would have value within the West Indies or without. In spite of their upper class status then, the fact that “[s]ome o’ those Civil Service chaps” (62) in Trinidad feel the same lack of purpose as West Indians of the lower class implies that meaning or purpose cannot be produced in the West Indies. Therefore, migration from the West Indies to England is not only the result of the socio-economic desires manifested in the *better break* idiom, but it is also an effort to respond to a psychological and existential identity crisis, wherein the West Indian man does not have the power to produce his own meaning, but requires England to impart that meaning.

After the Barbadian and Higgins demonstrate their disapproval of the Strange Man’s perspective, the Jamaican maintains a sense of unity amongst the Caribbean passengers in spite of this growing division. The Jamaican skilfully reconstructs a unified vision from seemingly incompatible responses to the West Indian condition. He explains that the Strange Man “leave so soon ‘cause him think dat because you chaps here goin on a different mission you an’ him ain’t the same company” (64). Yet, the Jamaican is adamant that the mission is the same. He postulates that “All dese people in de West

Indies, brown skin, black skin, all kind o' skin, dose wid learnin' an' dose wid no learnin', dem want to do something. All them want to prove to somebody that them can do something." (64) Here he collects all peoples of the Caribbean under a more capacious but a more concrete vision of purpose—they all want to prove themselves. I believe that the desire to prove themselves suggests a process which both justifies their existence as individuals and also as constituents of an encompassing West Indian culture. The Jamaican explains

We never hear so much talk till lately 'bout West Indies. Everybody sayin' me is West Indian. We is West Indians. West Indian this, West Indian that. You want to know w'at happenin' all of a sudden. Me look into hist'ry a little an' say to myself, when a man starts callin' his name all the time, for all and sundry to know, watch out, him ain't sure w'at his name is. (65)

The Jamaican recognizes that the desire to get a *better break* is only one part of the decision to migrate, the other part has to do with the construction of a national culture. A culture which, until recently, has not been recognized and is not yet fully known. In other words, West Indian culture is on the brink of coming into existence and these emigrants are the builders of the West Indian future. The Jamaican also recognizes that the West Indian culture wants to prove its existence and its importance to England. Demanding recognition from the culture which has time and again attempted to reduce West Indian culture may seem, in some ways, a self-defeating mission. On the other hand, to recognize West Indian culture is not the same as asking England to license it as an independent culture. Rather, it depends on the very opposite. For these West Indian

migrants, to prove themselves is to act in a manner that actively disregards the judgement of the previous colonial power. The Jamaican produces a visceral allegory that helps to illustrate that existential element which both predisposes the West Indian to migrate and demands that he exist independently in spite of the colonial power structures which seek to classify and evaluate him, and otherwise take ownership of him:

Hist'ry tell me that dese same West Indies people is a sort of vomit you vomit up...de great nations make plans for dese islands. England, France, Spain, all o' them, them vomit up what them din't want, an' the vomit settle there in that Caribbean Sea. It mix up with the vomit them make Africa vomit, an' the vomit them make India vomit, an' China an' nearly every race under the sun. An' just as vomit never get back in yuh stomach, these people, most o' them, never get back in where them vomit them from. Them settle right there in that Caribbean Sea, and the great nations, England, an' the rest, them went on stirring the mixture, them stir that vomit to suit themselves, an' them stir an' stir' till only Gawd knows how...the vomit start to take on a new life (66).

The Jamaican presents the culture of the West Indian people as an uncomposed mixture. The peoples of various lands the world over have become a part of this mixture. He makes clear that it was the "great nations" which began this concoction. But the mixture has begun to autonomously compose a new purpose, a will "to stir itself" (66). According to the same orator, in order to take the next step in composing its own culture the West Indian people must migrate:

Them all provin' something. When they stay back home in they little island them forget a little an' them remain vomit; just as them wus vomit up, but when them go 'broad, them remember, or them get tol' w'at is w'at, an them start to prove, an them give w'at them provin' a name. A good name. Them is West Indians. Not Jamaicans or Trinidadians. Cause the bigger the better. Them is West Indians.

(66)

Therefore, migration is a response to cultural identity crisis, an important means toward building a composite West Indian culture, and “a communal political project whose aim is to create a promising future out of [that] terrible past” (Forbes 8). That promising future is extremely reliant on the West Indians' need to produce a sense of purpose in their lives. In this sense, producing a purpose in the life of the migrant becomes an adjunct to the construction of the West Indian nation and to the construction of the West Indian concept of home. The act of constructing home through migration is another reflection of the contradictory structure of home, except that now we see it as a blueprint of the nation: one that is not solely constructed from the inside (the West Indies) out (to England), but also from the outside, in. Strictly speaking, this is a response to colonial history. At the same time, that response is a sign of a collective *idiom* that implies the existence of a home-nation that is figuratively and literally larger than any single island in the British West Indies. In this way, the West Indies becomes a nation which was not produced by the English Empire, but a nation that was born of itself, all while the English Empire exerted power over it.

Lamming reveals previously ignored filiations in the way the West Indian people are affected and respond to the crisis of colonialism in “A Voyage.” That being said, *The Emigrants* does not rest with a resilient and fully formed idea of nation. Instead, as we move along we find that the narrative immediately begins to challenge this possibility, as if in debate with it. The challenges take the form of a dysfunctional sense of individuality and estrangement from any sort of community. Specifically, the Governor⁵, who is considered one of the impromptu leaders for the group of emigrants (the other being the well-spoken Jamaican), reveals that he has no qualms satisfying his own individual needs while being negligent of Tornado’s.⁶ Just prior to the group celebration of their arrival in England, he has a short-lived affair with Lilian, Tornado’s partner: “‘I’ll go up first,’ Lilian said, and relaxed under the Governor who kissed her deeply in the mouth” (Lamming 92). Lilian’s decision to go up first is an obvious attempt at secrecy. Neither of them want to jeopardize their relationship with Tornado by revealing their fling. Furthermore, if they were to expose their affair it might reveal an obvious rift within the group. This affair, however, is more than a simple egoism. The Governor’s individualistic actions with Lilian suggest a privileging of a particular type masculinity often seen in the West Indian political sphere during the age of burgeoning nationalism, in which “Masculinity as authoritative, prolific and prodigal sexuality was a contradiction in that, while moral rectitude was expected from the holders of public office, there was also tacit acceptance, sometimes even hidden celebration, of well-displayed sexual prowess by men

⁵ The Governor is from Trinidad.

⁶ Tornado is also from Trinidad.

of this category” (Forbes 52). Forbes sees this expression and acceptance of the “village ram” type of masculinity in positions of political power as a “replication of the slave master’s taboo” (52) from the era of plantocracy. The slave master often exercised sexual control over female slaves despite its taboo nature, and similarly avoided repercussions. In this case, the Governor (whose name connotes political leadership) seems symbolic of that type of leader. The cultural privileging of this type of masculinity may even be one of the causes of his egoism and his inability to act successfully as a leader.

What is important about this first section of *The Emigrants* is how, as active debate and negotiation continues, certain explanations and solutions are argued and agreed upon by the group as a whole. The dialectic calls to mind Gilroy’s redefinition of the slave ship in *The Black Atlantic*. Gilroy describes the slave ship as “a living micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion” (4). He describes the slaves carried in the ships “not as commodities but [as a people] engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy and citizenship,” consequently “[they] provide the means to re-examine the problems of nationality, location, identity and historical memory” (Gilroy 16). From this point of view, the migrants who are not only descendants of slaves but also now participants in the history of the Middle Passage, are drawn to discuss those very same struggles. In fact, it may be the struggles that draw them to construct a West Indian community who, (as a result of their debate) forgo their rivalries and the singular nationalities in exchange for group cohesion and a sense of solidarity. The West Indians’ ability to forget their nationalities in service of the group reiterates Lamming’s belief that “one characteristic of the West Indian is the tendency to forget; and the most bitter

denunciations are often used at a later stage as an opportunity for coming together in order to agree” (24). As long as the migrants have been on the ship, their sense of themselves has been in motion. In this way they have, for the most part, been capable of successfully renegotiating what they consider their home, their nation, and themselves. Despite the fact that for the most part they fight to cohere as a community, certain characters retain a type of individualism or narcissism which foreshadow trouble ahead.

When the emigrants arrive in England any sense of community dissolves into alienation. Where their identity was once in the process of being constructed on the ship, they arrive in a country where their identity has been defined and decided for them. Fanon concurs with Lamming in that: “As long as the black man [or the black West Indian] remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels he will not have to experience being for others” (89). On the other hand, if he migrates to the Western World, the gaze of the (white) other becomes such an overwhelming force that it has the power to reduce him from an individual to an object; an “object among other objects” (Fanon 89). When Fanon explains that he was “desirous to be at the origin of the world” (89), it calls us back to Freud’s theory of narcissism discussed in the first chapter. In this act the “libido is withdrawn from the object and directed towards the ego (introversion),” reminding us “that the ego is the true and original reservoir of the libido” (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 17). The desire to be at the center of the world typifies individualism. So then what occurs that diminishes this sense of self-importance so much so that the subject feels his personhood dissipate?

As I have shown in Chapter 2, joining a community can threaten the dissolution of the individual self. Yet, in *The Castle* the dissolution and reconstitution within the community is seen as the key to constructing a meaningful identity which can effectively exalt itself against various plights of the living condition (see page 9). Hence the dissolution of self for the sake of joining similarly marginalized peoples appears an effective method of dealing with that marginalization in the West Indies. At the end of *Emigrants* Tornado, Lilian, and the Jamaican show how the construction of a sub-community can be an effective method for the defending oneself against marginalization in England. Before this revelation, however, *Emigrants* shows how objectification can push the migrant away from his community and bring him closer to a perilous individualism, a “being for others” that is “woven [...] out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories” (Fanon 91). Ultimately these details make their way into the psyche of the migrant making him, like Fanon explains, “responsible not only for [his] body but also [his] race and [his] ancestors” (92). He continues: “I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania*” (92). In other words, when the black migrant arrives in a Western nation, he enters a culture with a pre-established definition of blackness. This definition was constructed to classify black (and often, other non-white) peoples identity in a way that is reductive of the immigrants’ sense of self. That reduction from persons to *objecthood* or, more specifically, *colourhood*, can keep the migrant from considering himself a member of the society in which he settles. Especially in the case of this study,

colourhood becomes a way of excluding the immigrant from ever being at home in England. The exclusion is most powerful when, by volition or not, the immigrant thinks himself alone in the struggle against *colourhood*. Only in the sharing of the burden, by imagining a collectivity or community, can the non-white male immigrant produce a resilient sense of self against the weight of objectification and exclusion.

After the arrival of the immigrants, in the section entitled, “Rooms and Residents,” Collis’s⁷ meeting with Mr. Pearson offers a distinct comparison between opposite states of being at home. This meeting also reveals two opposing types of masculinity. Mr. Pearson seems representative of the English ruling class and as such he epitomizes a sense of fulfillment with his self, in his home, and in his home country. This multi-faceted sense of being at home is revealed by his mystical belonging to his physical surroundings. After sitting down to speak with Mr. Pearson, the narrator remarks that, “The room seemed a persistent rebuke to the rudimentary shelter which Collis had found at the hostel” (139). The room gives a sense of consolidated position. As an English citizen, Pearson is cemented in his position as a member of his community and his nation, whereas the hostel where Collis lodges is a space in transition. The hostel is a space of constant cultural negotiations where migrants and travellers find lodging, Mr. Pearson’s room is shown as a bastion where the perspectival shifts caused by such cross-cultural stimuli cannot occur. Mr. Pearson’s room “was not only a habitation, remote and warm as the womb. It was an entire climate. The conveniences were natural elements by which

⁷ Collis is from Trinidad.

the life of the Pearsons was nourished. Mr. Pearson did not sit in the chair. He belonged to it” (139). The comparison with the womb emphasizes the fact that his position is one of comfort, untroubled by the possibility of loss. Moreover, it ironically implies that a part of the comfort that the English ruling classes feel comes from the belief that their nation (and perhaps, the Englishman himself) is self-sufficient and can produce its own meaning, in spite of the crisis of representation outlined above. Still, like the womb, England only appears self-sustaining—its existence is in fact dependent on sustenance from the exterior in the form of the resource-rich colonies.

The fact that Mr. Pearson can move from interior to exterior is another portrayal of his sense of comfort regarding his self, his community, and the outside world. Whereas in *Emigrants*: “[o]pportunities to go outside are regularly passed over by the narrator and avoided by his characters” (Ball 112), Mr. Pearson usually “always [goes] out to the garden” (Lamming 144). The fact that his house possesses both inside and outside (in the form of the garden), shows that he exercises control and possession over the exterior and interior aspects of home. Collis turns down the opportunity to join Mr. Pearson in the garden, preferring the space of the lavatory. He believes that “the lavatory is a place of privacy... You may leave the door open, and others will pass, pretending not to see you, but no one will enter. If the door is locked, no one will knock” (138). Even though Collis considers these characteristics consoling, it also exposes an obstacle between the self and the community. It is in fact a symbol of the disavowal and solipsism which supports Ball’s claim that the interiority the migrants face suggests a “people imprisoned, barred entry to the very city they have come to inhabit” (Ball 112). It is also an anxious type of

masculinity which is concerned with disavowing all exterior threats (Easthope 40). The lavatory is a room in which the outside world cannot interfere, it is ignored and it can ignore. Still, by ignoring the outside in an attempt to defend the inside from harm, Collis is losing sight of the conflict necessary to (re)construct home. Home, especially in the case of the postcolonial migrant is a conflictual process. Figuratively containing himself within a room excludes the other (non-white or white) and precludes the possibility of community. The emphasis on restrictive spaces both “physical and mental” (Ball 113) marks the condition of the new emigrants as locked within physical spaces but also locked within their *selves*. This attempt at consolation threatens the possibility of West Indian collectivity, or community. The West Indian collective, as we have seen in “A Voyage” is reliant on the connection and friction between individuals in order to agree on and establish an idiom that might hold together a nation or construct a provisional diasporic home outside West Indies.

In the third section, “Another Time,” we see a similar, yet distinct dynamic in the Governor’s increasing individualism. The walls of the Mozamba, the Calypso club he owns, reveals the increasing gulf between himself and his community. Despite the fact that he opened what has become a gathering place for members of the West Indian community and others, he thinks to himself “It was wonderful to be removed from the crowd, to be with it, though not of it” (270). His estrangement from his community here appears desirable, as though he is sure of his own self-sufficiency. Earlier in the day he had visited a fortune-teller who prophesized that “he would become famous,” but she also reminded him that he “had had domestic trouble,” prompting him to “be wary of women”

(270). The Governor's séance with the fortune-teller was not "for her reassurance. It was a curiosity and a kind of greed which made him seek the truth about his future" (270). He has interest in his own success and, though this does imply a degree of narcissism, it does not yet signal any upheaval in his connection to the West Indian community. When the Strange Man, who has found his way to England, arrives at the doorstep of Mozamba with a large group of homeless West Indian migrants, he literally comes face to face with the community he is a part of, but which he has abandoned for solitude. The Strange Man reminds the Governor "how de las' time de chaps say how in rain or sun, poor or rich they'd always stick together" (279). When approached with this invitation to a community mentality "[t]he Governor seemed to collapse. He felt no loyalty to the crowd outside" (279). The Governor has no interest in sustaining the larger West Indian community. In his mind his success has made him an individual who has no need nor desire for anything outside of himself.

Now that he has made a man of himself, he has no desire to rejoin the community of which he is a product. While the Strange Man has changed and "[lived] different rememberin' w'at those chaps say 'bout bein' together'" (279), the Governor actively wishes to estrange himself from his people. This, however, is not the limit to the Governor's intense selfhood. Once he decides to put up only the Strange Man and his wife and the two enter the club, the Governor recognizes her. The identity of the Strange Man's wife is never revealed in the narrative, but the fact that "She looked at the Governor like she had found a fortune" (280) implies that she may be the unfaithful ex-wife whom the Governor had left in Trinidad. As the Governor's anger rises the woman is

no longer recognized as an individual, “she was, no longer human. She was a fact. Something that had happened. A deed which could not be undone” (281). His anger can easily be construed as retribution for her betrayal. More significantly though, it is the manifestation of a defensive ego.

The ego is responding to an anxiety about the flaws in its structure. The defensive reaction to loss for the libido is to be “withdrawn into the ego” (“Mourning and Melancholia” 249) like the narcissistic act of introversion discussed above. In that manner the Governor feels that the distance from his community gives him comfort and protection. He feels fortified from any further loss. Easthope explains that “To maintain and defend itself [the masculine ego] and the line between inside and outside the ‘I’ has two strategies, disavowal and denial. Through disavowal (*Verleugnung*) it can deal with something in the outside world by pretending it doesn’t exist” (40). Through disavowal he has sectioned himself off from the rest of the community and revels in a type of solipsism. To have his ex-wife reappear in the present situation forces the Governor to confront one of the painful reasons why he left Trinidad. The Governor left Trinidad because his wife, through her infidelity, had unseated him from his home.

As a reminder of being cuckolded and displaced from his position of comfort and power, the Governor’s ex-wife undermines the gross egoism he possessed prior. It is from that undermining, Easthope explains, that the aggression bursts: “[s]ince the ego was never there in the first place it has been organized out of fragments bound together by force to make up unity. The energy that binds it is always likely to be released against anything that tends to pull it to pieces again” (41). If we think back to the primary loss in

Freudian psychoanalysis—the loss of the mother—it becomes clear that the loss is not an act of disappearance, but rather the loss of a state where all desires and their fulfillment are encompassed in the self. The home and the ego try to mimic this arrangement by withdrawing aspects of the outside to the inside. Yet when the ego recognizes that the inside and outside, the self and the non-self, and the home and non-home are separate entities it feels that it is at risk of being pulled apart again, which explains “why for psychoanalysis, aggression is an effect of the ego and the ego’s struggle to maintain itself” (Easthope 41). The Governor, unable to maintain his composure, violently assaults his ex-wife and tells her to ““Get out”” (Lamming 281). The Governor, who at the beginning of the text appears as one of the most qualified leaders is unable to act in that role because of the radical individualist nature of his masculinity.

The potential for a West Indian nation both postcolonial and diasporic remains relevant in *The Emigrants*, but it is challenged by a type of masculinity which is unable to compromise an individual perspective for the group to which it might belong. The possibility of community which opened wide in “A Voyage” is forced to adapt to the limitations surrounding immigrant life in England. Some adaptations are more harmful than helpful. Any form of social advancement that leads away from a connection to the West Indian immigrant community leads only to dysfunctional individualities and damaging masculinities. A few migrants though (the Jamaican, Tornado and Lilian, in particular) succeed in building a community that offers a future for West Indians in Britain, thus touching on the diasporic nationhood the Jamaican broached in “A Voyage.” What allowed them to build this community is the understanding that “a man ain’t nothin’

in particular,” that, in the case of the West Indian migrant, the individual can only accrue a sense of purpose as a constituent of a larger collective. In that schema, any personal masculinity is only effective in relation to the collective, and nothing on its own. This collective is imagined in Tornado’s basement apartment:

This was of all the rooms in the basement the most used. It was Tornado’s room which he shared with Lilian. The Jamaican and his girl lived in another, and the third was shared by three men, who worked in the same factory. After work they all met to play bridge and talk. The Jamaican and his girl usually joined Tornado and Lilian at the evening meal, each party bringing their own preparations, and when the men had finished their meal in the adjoining room, they too would join Tornado and the Jamaican. (189)

In acting and working cooperatively they try to create, like the three women of *Castle*, a song which reproduces meaning for them. Again, the meaning is unclear, but what is important is that together they “invent [their] own satisfaction” (196). This means actively enduring and engaging the challenges of their situation.

That being said, these challenges have not been conquered in any lasting way. They must continuously face material socio-economic challenges such as finding employment, living in squalor and facing racism, but these are challenges that also manifest on an existential or spiritual dimension. After all “they were together in a small room which offered no protection from the threat of boredom. It was so easy to feel the emptiness of being awake with no activity which required their whole attention” (192). In their respective home-countries “[i]n another climate, at another time, they would ramble

the streets yarnning and singing,” there they “talked about everything and nothing. Life was leisurely” (192). Since England is not yet home for these three immigrants, they must patiently build that home together. They go on building this home so that in the future they (or perhaps their descendants) can prove themselves.

Chapter 4: Exclusion and Targets of Culture, Race and Language in Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners*

In order to gain a fuller understanding of how West Indians conceptualize home, it is important to investigate the function of language. The West Indian idea of home is connected to how language is used in the community. More so than in Lamming's novels, Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* is rooted in West Indian language. In the previous chapter I used the idea of the idiom to explain how a collective view of West Indian culture grew out of a response to the system of problems introduced in colonialism. This idiom takes a much more literal place in Selvon's text, as Selvon does not write *The Lonely Londoners* in British English, but rather, Trinidadian creole. To understand why such a literary move is "a major step forward in the process of linguistic and cultural decolonization" (Nastax), I want to first understand why the use of West Indian language is so culturally charged. As Fanon explains, a colonized people "whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave position themselves in relation to the civilizing language: i.e. the metropolitan culture" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 2). This linguistic positioning is common among many colonized peoples, but particularly prevalent in the case of the descendants of slave and indentured labourers in the West Indies. Most West Indian writers relegate West Indian language in their texts to dialogue, as West Indian languages are largely oral in practice. At the same time, the fact that West Indian language rarely makes an appearance as opposed to the language of the colonizer in literary writing makes a

deprecating statement about its significance in West Indian society. As Peter Roberts declares:

In all societies of man [sic] the spoken language has always been more used and more powerful than the written language. On the other hand, the written language, in societies where it exists, has a higher prestige than the spoken language and is often perceived by the general public to be a 'higher' version of the spoken. (17)

British English, which is used as the written form of language within the West Indies, puts the orally focused patois and creoles of the West Indies at a cultural disadvantage. In his analysis, *West Indians & their Language*, Roberts explains that this disadvantage developed from the “social stratification of the plantation system” (8). It was largely class divisions within West Indian plantation societies that “created in each territory a spectrum of language varieties” (8), each with its corresponding place in a linguistic hierarchy.

As Fanon explains, the development of West Indian languages were always oriented in relation with the language of the colonizing nation. It is not so difficult to imagine, then, that “The European language [became] the target language and [that the] acquisition and mastery of the target language was in direct relation to social position and degree of social contact with speakers of the target” (Roberts 8). Hence, the evolution of West Indian languages is heavily influenced by the participant’s place in the social hierarchy. Roberts frames the social hierarchy of the plantocracy in a pyramid. On the top of the pyramid are the owners and administrators of the plantation. Below them are the poor whites, and below the poor whites are the house slaves and artisans. At the bottom of

the pyramid are the field slaves who are the most marginalized within the plantocracy. Roberts notices that West Indian languages developed along a similar pattern. The social structure of plantation society was “the same as the linguistic structure of society, with those at the top speaking the European language, those at the bottom furthest away from it and those in between gradually approximating it” (8). In the case of the British West Indies, colonial power structures positioned English as the language (and thus culture) to target and emulate. Other factors, nevertheless, contributed to the evolution of language in the West Indies. These factors include “the ratios and social relationships between the component groups of society” (8), but also the rate of importation of African slaves and the immigration of Chinese, Indian and Portuguese labourers (8). As Lamming declares pointedly: “the world met here, and it was at every level, except administration, a peasant world. In one way or another, through one upheaval after another, these people, forced to use a common language which they did not possess on arrival, have had to make something of their surroundings” (*The Pleasures of Exile* 37). It is on this basis that the peoples of the British West Indies came to recognize “a passive perception of sameness” (3) in their disparate languages. Despite these variations, the *process* and use of the languages enunciate a shared struggle and liminality, even when it is used in England.

Lamming’s appreciation of the common language is not shared amongst all West Indian people. Since the colonizers’ language was always superimposed upon the West Indians’, the latter’s language was often considered culturally inferior to that of Standard British English. This becomes even more evident when we look at the use of what Roberts calls *foreign English* in the West Indies. Roberts explains that foreign English,

which is “by and large British, American and Canadian...has always been a significant factor in the West Indies” (Roberts 18). What is striking about the use of foreign English in the West Indies is the fact that it is produced by the native West Indian as “a non-national form of speech [and] as a ‘sophisticated’ form of speech” (19). The ranking of British English over West Indian languages in a linguistic hierarchy means that the West Indian writer must negotiate a conflict between their marginalized creole and the celebrated colonial language. Yet, the colonial language is so effective in its reductive capacity that even though “West Indies official policy allows for native expression as a healthy part of cultural and psychological development,” many middle and upper class readers would dismiss works written in creole (142). Since language in the West Indies is “inseparable from perception of morals and standards of behaviour, representation of non-standard [West Indian creole] in print is viewed by some [especially the middle and upper social classes] as highly undesirable, supportive of backwardness, and an obstruction to proficiency in standard English” (142). As a result, West Indian cultural production is hindered both psychologically by a sense of shame about native language usage which is considered vulgar, and economically by a literate middle and upper class who dismiss and abandon it.

It is against these pressures that Selvon defends Trinidadian creole. By “translat[ing] the humorous dynamics of Caribbean street talk...into an international context” (Nasta viii), he becomes a champion of the vulgar. Namely, he reasserts the significance of the common language of the West Indian against English cultural superiority which is taken for granted in the West Indies. Also, he challenges classist

disdain of the lower classes that has long been part of the system of the colonized and the European language. Reflecting on Szeman's definition of "Resistance [as] a way of preserving or defining the integrity and autonomy of one's own community against threatening outside forces" (26), Selvon's project becomes a way of articulating a cultural difference between Englishness and West Indianess, which both the colonizer and the colonized (in different ways) sought to elide.⁸ The introduction of a text with a drastic linguistic difference from British English and from within an English field of cultural production is an act of infiltration and subversion that challenges the myth that "begins with the fact of England's supremacy in taste and judgement: a fact which can only have meaning and weight by a calculated cutting down to size of all non-England" (Lamming, *Pleasures of Exile* 26). In direct conflict with this myth, the "British West Indian had to make English his" (31). So he produces literature that is in many ways English (published, and produced in England, in English, by a citizen of England, in an ostensibly English field), yet at the same time dialectically distinct.

The articulation and performance of cultural difference represented in Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* and other West Indian writers rework the historically one-sided cultural exchange. As Lamming makes clear: "[s]ince the cultural negotiation was strictly between England and the natives, and England had acquired, somehow, the divine right to organise the native's reading, it is to be expected that England's export of literature would be English" (27). The writing of Selvon's text in Trinidadian creole thus forces the

⁸ The colonizer attempts to neutralize the culture of the colonized and imposed their own, while, in response, the colonized attempt to emulate the culture of the colonizer.

English reader to face the opening seam of a “nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population” (Bhabha 212). Through the subversive use of creole language, his novels can be seen not only as challenging views of nationalist and racial homogeneity. But, even further, as an actively diasporic text, it creates a cultural bastion within an overwhelmingly English field of cultural production. If “[h]ome is a way of establishing difference” (George 2), then this project reveals the potential for a *home* or at least a sense of belonging.

Inside that conceptual space Selvon can construct *home* which can help to house the narratives of the West Indian diaspora. Mary Douglas, citing Susanne Langer, explains that her “notion of virtuality suggests we should focus on the home as an organization of space over time” (Douglas 268). Keeping the idea of virtuality firmly in mind, this concept of home becomes a “building [with] a distinctive capacity for memory or anticipation” (268). In short, the construction of a distinct field of cultural memory within another is an example of “Memory institutionalized [, which is, in turn,] capable of anticipating future events” (268). Douglas is not saying that home makes one capable of clairvoyance, but rather that it is built in anticipation *of*, or in “response *to* outside pressures” (268, emphasis mine). In other words, Selvon’s work is a precocious attempt to crystallize West Indian cultural memory and rearticulate the West Indian idiom in a way which can secure a future for a West Indian national culture in diaspora.

Such a project is larger than Selvon alone and has since seen many authors which contribute to this movement with differing methods. That being said, what Selvon’s *Lonely Londoners* offers this study specifically is a look at the limitations of such an

ambitious home-making project. One notable limitation which Selvon exposes comes from the fact that he is not attempting to elevate the West Indian language by producing a literary masterpiece that rivals the English literary tradition. Rather, *Londoners* is formed as a type of relation between the English and West Indian idioms. It is a claim to an autonomous idiom that does not evolve in isolation, but in conflict and negotiation with exterior influences. Nasta sees this dynamic in “the psychologically disorienting effects...created by the collision between two worlds—of Trinidad and London,” but she is also aware of the fact that “[t]hrough his encounter with London, it [becomes] possible [for Selvon] to move towards a more fully realized picture of the world back home whilst defining a Caribbean consciousness within a British context” (viii, x). This circuitous movement of West Indian experiences through the British reality colours the narrative and creates a text that can exist only as long as it is in cultural transition. It is a text that refuses to station itself upon a single cultural or national paradigm. Conversely, for a text written during the period when a collective West Indian culture was directly in question, it appears remarkably reticent about the issue. Curdella Forbes notes that “issues of nationalism in Selvon’s work are to be found less as overt treatment in the texts and more in the historical context (the larger field of shared texts and processes) out of which both the texts and their readers are produced” (79).

Another serious concern which *The Lonely Londoners* portrays is the gender realities of male West Indians. The challenges presented by these gender realities do not exist in isolation either. In order to understand how these realities were originally structured, I will cite two West Indian scholars at length, Errol Miller and Curdella

Forbes. Errol Miller's treatise *Men at Risk* addresses the changes in power dynamics of genders in the West Indies as compared to the United States and the Soviet Union between the 1950s and the 1980s. In his book he traces the decline of the power of men and theorizes the relative rise in the power of women in West Indian society. With a different tone, but treating a similar subject, Forbes' *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Cultural Performance of Gender* confronts the intersection between representations of gender and representation of nationalism in the works of Selvon and Lamming. Although these two analyses conflict in certain areas, especially in their accounting for the apparent rise of the woman in both public and private spheres and whether West Indian society can truly be called matrifocal or matriarchal, they both agree that, beginning in the age of West Indian nationalism, men who were considered to be on the margins of society showed symptoms of added pressure caused by that position. They disagree on whether men's growing sense of marginalization is caused by a greater number of women being put into positions of power (Miller 166) or whether the image of manhood which nationalism represents is repressive of a more nuanced and culturally relevant masculinity (Forbes 72, 73). These two texts will help to explain the historical and cultural contexts which influenced Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. More specifically, I want to find some indices that might explain the effect that nationalism had on gender conditions in the diaspora, as well as how those conditions intersect with the negotiations between the West Indian and English cultural idioms.

It is only fitting for *The Lonely Londoners* to begin with how the West Indian might view London. Despite Moses' ten or so years in the city, he still seems unable to grasp the reality of the metropole: "it had a kind of unrealness about London with a fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet" (*The Lonely Londoners* 1). Moses is a veteran of life in London, and so it becomes his unwritten mandate to welcome other newcomers to England and help see to their establishment. In this way he functions as escort in the liminal space between England and the West Indies. More significantly he is also the pioneer or the home-maker who, by his own establishment, has paved the way for the diaspora. His familiarity with the details of the transition make him a leader of sorts in this new order. He is not enthusiastic about this position as

it look to Moses that he hardly have time to settle in the old Brit'n before all sorts of fellars start coming straight to his room in the Water when they land up in London from the West Indies saying that so and so tell them that Moses is a good fellar to contact, that he would help them get place to stay and work to do. (2)

Even though Moses has been relatively long established in London, it is clear that he is missing a level of comfort in the city. Being unable to settle in suggests that he is in a disturbed or unstable position, one that has not been steadied by the time he has spent in London. Immigration to a new country has never been considered an easy transition, but for Moses and other non-white West Indian immigrants there are additional factors that inhibit them from achieving a stable sense of home in the city.

It is partly this dissatisfaction with his life in London that gives him “a feeling of homesickness that he never felt in the nine-ten years he in this country” (4), when he arrives at Waterloo station to meet a new ward, the narrator remarks that some West Indian immigrants who have lived in England for a long time still feel a compulsion to “see familiar faces” to “watch their countrymen coming off? the train” (4). When those nostalgic migrants see people they recognize, they “start big oldtalk,” asking them “what happening in Trinidad, in Grenada, in Barbados, in Jamaica and Antigua, what is the latest calypso number, if anybody dead...” (4). Even though the narrator makes it clear that although Moses “never [joined] in this sort of slackness,” seeing the station again does bring the thought that “when the time come, if it ever come, it would be here he would say goodbye to the big city. Perhaps he was thinking is time to go back to the tropics, that’s why he feeling sort of lonely and miserable” (5). The desire for home catches Moses off guard. The new arrival acts as a source of nostalgia, reminding him of the home he left, but also of his own arrival.

In these first pages of the *Londoners* the narration begins to show its fluidity. As Forbes aptly notes: “Perspective (narrative voice) is in *The Lonely Londoners* a complex construct, gliding... between the inner consciousness of composite, sometimes multiple personae and the consciousness of Moses as observer-participant and as metaphor for this entire group of men unmoored” (81). This form of movement between Moses speaking for all of the boys and speaking for himself implies that the symbolic experiences of the narration can be both part of Moses’ experience as well as a projection of the experiences of his comrades. Notably, when Moses takes the bus to Waterloo: “Moses sit down and

pay his fare he take out a white handkerchief and blow his nose. The handkerchief turn black and Moses watch it and curse the fog” (1). His disgusted reaction to the handkerchief and the fog may parallel the boys’ reaction to what those signs symbolize. The handkerchief is a reminder of the role blackness plays in London, “[t]he fear of racist contamination objectified” (Nasta viii). The recurring motif of the fog captures the unrealness of the city which is a symbolic by-product of the relationship between the West Indian migrant and his cultural surrounds. It is a recurring trope of modernism that echoes T.S Eliot’s “unreal city” in “The Waste Land.” The intertextuality of this motif reveals a connection to the body of English literary culture and the myth of the English I mentioned earlier. Likewise, it reveals a dissonance from that cultural body and an obscurity as to what that relation means for the migrant.

Some of the newer arrivals, however, readily deny any cultural dissonance or racial objection at all. Racism and cultural dissonance are indisputable facts of West Indian migration to England. Yet, colonial education “had taught [West Indians] to regard England as the *motherland* and themselves as members of the British Empire” (Paul 120). This educational primer predisposes Galahad, and many new migrants to disavow or otherwise modify any evidence that might detract from their idealized view of England as home and as a paradise—a home away from home. This disavowal is seen with the arrival of Henry, the character Moses is waiting for at the beginning of the novel. When Moses spots him, the last straggler from the train,

he have a feeling that this couldn't be the fellar that he come to meet, for the test⁹ have on a old grey tropical suit and a pair of watchekong¹⁰ and no overcoat or muffler or gloves or anything for the cold, so Moses sure is some test who living in London a long, long time and accustom to the beast winter. (*Lonely Londoners* 12)

When Galahad introduces himself to Moses as the new arrival he is looking for, he is baffled by Galahad's brazen lack of preparation. He would never expect "the day would come when a fellar would land up from the sunny tropics on a powerful winter evening wearing a tropical suit and saying that he ain't have no luggage" (14). For his seemingly easy adaptation to English life Moses gives him the epithet, Sir Galahad.

Galahad's actual sentiments surrounding his migration are soon revealed by the narrator in the next morning's conversation with Moses. He is in the process of giving Galahad crucial information about how to get a job and find a place to live but, instead of listening intently, Galahad acts rather dismissively towards the information. The narrator explains that "Galahad know that Moses talking good talk, but he don't want him to feel that he want any help from him" (19). The narrator anticipates Moses' declaration that "'Listen, I know fellars like you, you know. You try to fool people that you know everything, then when you get lash you come bawling" (20). Although he prepared no luggage or clothing for his trip to England, Galahad did prepare a façade. The persona he wishes to portray is that of a cosmopolitan—a man who is infinitely adaptable and one

⁹ Term for man.

¹⁰ West Indian term for tennis shoes, or sneakers.

who is at home anywhere he is located. Moses tests this theory by letting him go alone to the employment exchange. When Galahad starts on his way to the employment exchange, he begins to lose his comfort and ease, and is instead struck with “a feeling of loneliness and fright” (23). While he is walking through the London streets he realizes that he is without support or affiliation, he “forget all the brave words he was talking to Moses, and he realise that here he is, in London, and he ain’t have no money or work or place to sleep or any friend or anything” (23). As he comes to this realization, he begins to notice certain cultural differences that exacerbate his shock: “He see a test come and take a newspaper and put down the money on a box—nobody there to watch the fellar and yet he put the money down. What sort of thing is that? Galahad wonder, they not afraid somebody thief the money?” (Selvon, *Lonely Londoners* 23). Galahad cannot understand the oddities of life in London. He considers it strange that someone should pay for something when there are no authorities preventing him from taking it outright. Moreover, it shocks him that the man leaves payment out in the open, with no one to watch it. These are unnerving cultural differences to Galahad, who begins to see that “a kind of fog hovering around. The sun is shining, but Galahad never see the sun look like how it looking now. No heat from it, it just there in the sky like a force-ripe orange” (23). Again, the fog appears as a symbolic symptom of the cultural dissonance Galahad experiences. There is also the image of the sun which appears to Galahad like a ghostly vestige of his home in the equatorial Caribbean. The sun appears weakened, however, unable to offer him any comfort in England. It stands only as a symbol of further dissonance, it is compared to an orange which has been stolen from its original

environment in order to ripen for sale. In short, it appears as though the sun does not belong in England at all.

In some way or another, the new migrants try to adapt to their surroundings. Galahad, after the painful scenario above, becomes quite an adept addition to his cultural surroundings, though he never truly becomes a part of them. He has reworked his usual method of adaptation. At this point in the narrative, instead of only pretending he is at home, he dresses the part too. “The first time he take a craft¹¹ out, he dress up good, for one of the first things he do after he get a work was to stock up with clothes like stupidness, as if to make up for all the hard time when he didn’t have nice things to wear” (73). The narration accentuates this façade by describing Galahad as “cool as a lord” (75), or declaring that he “feels like a king” (73). His costumed performance in the London streets contrasts starkly against his panicked walk in the passage we looked at previously. Instead “old Galahad walking out to the roads, with plastic raincoat hanging on his arm, and the eyes not missing one sharp craft that pass, bowing his head in a polite ‘Good evening’ and not giving a blast if they answer or not” (75). But after his date with an Englishwoman named Daisy, he brings her back to his dwelling and “when he open the door a whiff of stale food and old clothes and dampness and dirt come out the door” (81). There is an obvious disconnect between the façade Galahad puts on to impress Daisy and the disarray in which she finds his home. “‘Is this your room?’ Daisy say, looking around and shifting about as if she restless” (81). Galahad’s dwelling, symbolic of his state of

¹¹ Term for woman.

mind, betrays neglect of his interior identity as opposed to his exterior façade. Galahad's ostentatious dress and his hyper-confident demeanour is a construct that is built to protect himself. The state of his home, nevertheless, proves that his protection is ineffective at maintaining peace of mind. If anything, his façade only distracts from an inner disquiet. But why does he feel threatened? Further, what does he feel threatened by?

In order to explain the vulnerability against which Galahad and the boys must disguise themselves, I must examine the intersection that exists between national culture formation and gender. As mentioned in Chapter 3, what most ostensibly connects the different nations of the West Indies are a shared colonial and plantocratic history. What I have yet to discuss is how that history has affected gender conceptions in the West Indies and, how the gender, language and class performances of the boys respond directly to social strictures defined by plantation society. As Forbes notes in *Nation to Diaspora*, in the plantocracy, the image of the white male was such a dominant figure that its existence marginalized any other form of gender display:

Every institution [of the plantocracy] was male-dominated, and dominated by men who were very careful to display a particular type of authority that would keep the slave and slave society in place. That is to say, the visible, stable identity (behind which was the face of mercantile capitalism) was a particular masculinity which was personal, social, civic and political, but in the end utterly public, since even in its personal face it was accessible to the slave only as spectacle/spectacular authority. So powerful in its reach was this 'played' (spectacular) masculinity that

the few slave-owning women arguably became subsumed within it as assistant masculinities. (43)

It is under these protocols that slave society existed and slaves were dehumanized. The view of slaves as products is frequently documented, as were practices of cultural decimation. What is less frequently documented is the fact that, while white masculinity was being exalted, the administration of the plantocracy suppressed the gender identities of slaves. These ideological systems resulted in slaves that were, in essence, socially dead. As Forbes explains: “[t]o be socially dead while being yet alive meant to occupy the space of the liminal” (33), an outsider to society who is nonetheless sanctioned to perform manual labour. Moreover, “To be socially dead meant to have no gender, if we define gender as the allocation and investiture of social roles and responsibility based on biological sex” (33). This was yet another aspect of plantocratic ideology that helped consolidate the social stratifications in Roberts’ continuum we saw at the beginning of this chapter. The boys of *The Lonely Londoners* are inheritors of this liminal socio-cultural position. Even in London it becomes evident that they are outsiders, contracted to do menial labour in post-World War II England.

What manifested as a result of social and gender suppression in the plantocracy was a resurgence in a type of performance: “slaves often cross-dressed in carnivalesque plays on free days, or ‘days’ of jubilee,” men playing women’s parts and vice-versa, in coded, parodic challenges to the master’s identity and the ‘identities’ they had been assigned” (36). In this way, days of jubilee were an outgrowth of West Indian culture which privileged the performance of alternate (gender) identities and were also a

tragicomic lamentation of the loss of their (gender) identities. Additionally, as the carnivalesque dimension implies, it is also an act which subverts and resists (as defined by Szeman) colonial and plantocratic authority, while at the same time existing within embedded limitations. Although the performances employed on days of jubilee never reified any lasting or stable (gender) identity, they offered another example (others being the production of creole languages, and their sustained use in the diaspora) of successful *communitas* and a reimagining of cultural structures in a community considered to be marginalized, or socially dead.

The effective erasure of gender identity under colonial plantocracy persisted, although as time passed it lost its unilateral element. In short, slave masters placed female slaves in roles which compromised their non-gendered status “so that the lines between (gendered) human and (‘merely’ sexed) slave were constantly blurred” (Forbes 33), while male slaves remained liminal. Forbes relates that “Frequent cohabitation with female slaves, especially those of mixed blood, and the fact that the slave was often offspring or a trusted member of the household—or both—resulted in ‘emotional slippage,’” that is to say “the master’s ideological position was often betrayed by feeling, which recognizes the other’s humanity” and thus her gender (33). These gender allowances were emphasized by nineteenth-century abolitionists who “focused on the treatment of female slaves as a major plank in their argument against slavery as a degenerate institution. The response of many slave owners was to valorize the hitherto degendered female slave as the essence of fertility, kindness and other nurturant ‘feminine’ qualities” (33). If female gender identity somehow managed to develop despite its previous suppression, where does that leave

their descendants and the descendants of male slaves? This is the question Errol Miller endeavours to answer in *Men at Risk*. He notices that since the era of nationalism women are performing better than most men in what used to be male-dominated fields: “In the Jamaican labour force women have made greatest progress in the most coveted, prestigious and highest-paying occupations” (Miller 84).¹² According to Miller, this is in part the cause, but mostly the symptom of a patriarchal system that suppressed male subjects that the British-emulating ruling class consider to be alien. In this way, the system uses women to actively inhibit the socioeconomic advancement of certain classes of men. The class of men considered alien to the plantocracy were evidently those who were stationed in liminal positions and furthest away from the privileged group of men, which were the standard English-speaking white owners and administrators. By these processes (the exaltation of white masculinity and the marginalization of black masculinity) English-speaking whiteness came to be connected to social status. The connection is so vigorous that not only was the European language the target language, as Roberts puts it (8), but also whiteness became the *target race*. There is no convincing method of mimicking the colour of one’s skin, but the race-language connection suggests that race is accessible through linguistic mimicry.

¹² “The changing status of Jamaican women in the labour force and in earning power is not unique in the Caribbean. While the times may be later in some of the other Caribbean countries, all show similar patterns and progress” (Miller 87).

Even though the race-language hierarchy possesses a long lineage in West Indian history, it is never explicitly evoked in *Men at Risk*. Without stating which types of men are considered alien or marginalized, Miller posits that

[t]he description of Caribbean societies points to lower-strata's men's marginal position in the family, role reversal in a small but increasing number of households, boys declining participation and performance in the educational system, the greater prospect of men inheriting their fathers' position in the social structure, the decline in the proportion of men in the highest paying and most prestigious occupations and the decrease in men's earning power relative to women's especially in white collar occupations. (93)

In short, Miller maintains that among marginalized men in the West Indies there is a decrease in socioeconomic status and power. The transformation which began in the nationalist period are representative of systemic changes that target lower-strata black men. According to Miller then, these are the threats to masculinity against which West Indian men are reacting. Within the historical and social context of *The Lonely Londoners*, these are the threats from which the characters are fleeing.

Sir Galahad escapist disguise serves as a good example of the fear of marginalization. As he adapts to London he learns how to protect himself from the pressures of racism but "it used to have times when he lay down there on the bed in the basement room in the Water, and all the experiences [of racism] come to him, and he say

‘Lord, what it is we people do in this world that we have to suffer so?’ (76). While he was in this dejected mood he recalls

how the night before he was in the lavatory and two white fellars come in and say how these black bastards have the lavatory dirty, and they say they didn’t know he was there, and when he come out they say hello mate have a cigarette. And Galahad watch the colour of his hand, and talk to it, saying, ‘Colour, is you that causing all this.’ (77)

In one way, when he is “talking to the colour Black, as if is a person” (77), he is noticing that he has nothing to do with the preconceived judgements thrown his way. He is coming face to face with the objectification Fanon describes as “the lived experience of the black man” (89). The pre-established position of the black man as inferior and impure conflicts with Galahad’s status as a *Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies*. Galahad’s citizenship led him to believe in his position as an equal English citizen but, as he finds out, his blackness devalues his membership to English society.

This realization, which is straddled in the narrative by Galahad’s date with a white woman, brings us back to the defensive and escapist measures the boys take in response to these marginalizing factors. One such measure is the pursuit of sexual relations with white women. All the boys frequently make advances towards white women without a second thought toward women of their own race. Tanty, Tolroy’s Jamaican aunt, questions this behaviour: “let me warn you, I know where you going. You think I don’t know you have a white girl” (*Lonely Londoners* 59). Forbes suggests that Tanty

represents a vigorous restructuring of the preexisting national culture in England, but, for the boys, she represents the reestablishment of West Indian cultural structure (Forbes 87-88). So when she warns Tolroy about their strange new preferences—“is that what sweeten up so many of you to come to London. Your own kind of girls not good enough now, is only white girls” (*Lonely Londoners* 59)—she is attempting to reintroduce and propagate the cultural paradigms the boys abandoned.

Even undisturbed, however, their attempt to escape never lasts, as Bart discovers during his own relationship with an Englishwoman. Even though Bart is of a lighter complexion and insists that “he is Latin-American...the girl father wouldn’t give him a chance...The father want to throw Bart out the house, because he don’t want no curly hair children in the family” (50-51). The pursuit of white women in the context of *Londoners* is not a simple matter of sexual preference but is heavily influenced by racial and colonial history. Fanon, understanding that whiteness is the *target race* in the colonial imagination, declares that: “Out of the blackest part of [the non-white colonial subject’s] soul, through the zone of hachures, surges up the desire to suddenly be *white*. [He] want[s] to be recognized not as *Black* but as *White*” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 45). Fanon suggests that, for the black (or non-white) colonial, “who better than the white woman to bring this about? By loving [him], she proves to [him] that [he is] worthy of a white love. [He is] loved like a white man. [He is] a white man” (45). It is to this end that he “espouse[s] white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these white breasts that [his] wandering hands fondle, white civilization and worthiness become [his]” (45).

This desire is recapitulated in the stream-of-consciousness passage which recounts the summer experience of the boys. For them it is the season of escape and, at the same time, one of cultural conciliation. The narrator's representative perspective returns in full force when he declares joyfully, "Oh what a time it is when summer come to the city and all them 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 blasts and you could coast a lime in the park" (92). The lack of punctuation and digressive clauses support Forbes' conclusion that the boys are seeking to escape the structured existence they endured in the West Indian societies. Being liminal additions to English Society also allows them a path for escape they otherwise might not have had. Additionally, the section supports the relation between the West Indian migrants' sexual preferences, race and English culture. In this way "The image of England as siren is easily redrawn and reinforced on her own soil, where desire is never fulfilled though the desirer is constantly seduced" (Forbes 84). This statement echoes the racial and cultural desires manifest in the ideas of *target race*, *target culture*, and *target language*.

Yet, the passage above also comes from a section that proves an effective negotiation of cultural dissonance. I would like to suggest, that the clear weather is a counterpart to the fog in the first sections of the novel. As the narrator explains:

sometimes walking up to the Bayswater Road from Queensway you could look on a winter day and see how grim the trees looking and a sort of fog in the distance though right near to you ain't have not fog but that is only deceiving because if somebody down the other side look up where you are it would look to them as if it

have fog by where you are and this time so the sun in the sky *like a force ripe orange* and giving no heat at all (93, emphasis mine)

The fog, again, shows itself as a symbol of misunderstanding and deception. In this context, the fog seems like a skilful metaphor for intercultural relations between migrants and English citizens. The individuals within the fog cannot see the fog in their vicinity, but when looking at others the fog becomes visible. This phenomenon implies that when looking at one's own culture, one assumes a sense of clarity, an understanding of one's own world view, but another's culture remains shrouded. This shroud is lifted by a renewed connection to home, manifested by the summer in this scenario. In this way, the summer weather allows the experience of connection between the West Indies and England, "for then the sun shine for true and the sky blue and warm wind blowing" (93). This poetic fallacy is a conciliatory middle ground between differing cultures. It portrays a perspective that is free from the prioritization inherent in target cultures, nationalities, languages and races. Although the portrayal remains completely symbolic, it suggests a hybridized environment without the alienation of the forceripe orange, one that might allow for a comfort and stability which the characters have yet to achieve.

Conversely, the boys never want to imagine it as a home. The idea of home comes with the stratification, social and otherwise that make whiteness and Englishness unachievable. Being both presently and historically conditioned to desire these positions, the boys succumb to a type of addiction. When the summer gives them a growing sense of belonging and ease, they use it only to try to possess those same desires, ignorant of the fact that they are unattainable. This addiction repeats in a cycle that makes them

question the purpose of their existence, a cycle represented in the shifting of seasons, and the differences in perspective of migrants new and old. Galahad, new to having his desires within view, says: “when the sweetness of summer get in him he say he would never leave the old Brit’n” (101). On the other hand, Moses “sigh a long sigh like a man who live life and see nothing at all in it and who frighten as all the years go by wondering what it is all about” (102). It seems even in “the great city of London, centre of the world” (134), Moses is unable to imagine a meaning to the events that have occurred since his migration.

In order to derive a meaning from the events of his migration, Moses and the boys must have a home in which to house it and a community with which to share it. This necessity becomes visible when Moses thinks to himself “if it was that we didn’t get together now and then ... talk about things back home, we would suffer like hell” (126). Here Moses explains that in conversation it becomes possible to reimagine home and live in a community which houses a collective sense of meaning “Always every Sunday morning they coming to Moses, like if is confession, sitting down on the bed, on the floor, on the chairs, everybody asking what happening” (137). The confession represents a cultural structure to which the boys belong. This cultural structure is built by an oral dialogue by which the boys interpret the events of their life in England. It also implies a community which shares the suffering of each of its constituent. Moses becomes the representative of the plight of the boys: “listening to them, he look in each face, and he feel a great compassion for every one of them, as if he lives each of their lives, one by

one, and all the stress come to rest on his shoulders” (135). This linguistic and narrative construct becomes their only reference point from which to interpret reality.

Chapter 5: The Upstairs/Downstairs Divide in Samuel Selvon's *Moses Ascending*

As I have shown in *The Lonely Londoners* West Indian language can be used as a reference point by which West Indians from differing Caribbean territories can attempt to construct a home in England. At the same time, I have attempted to expose an association between exaltation of the English language and the systems that reduce the integrity of West Indian languages. As is commonly shown in postcolonial discourses, the domination of English culture is directly proportionate to the denigration of the cultures which it colonizes. Even further, the elevation of the English language is the elevation of the English cultural idiom (that is to say how the Englishman responds to the events of his existence on the level of the individual and of the culture as whole). The promulgation of this supremacy in the form of Orientalist discourses and colonial education results in the view that Englishness is the superior culture and the *target culture*. Thus, progressivist discourses which attribute moral and aesthetic value to a particular culture also present that culture as a target for the cultures below it on the imagined cultural hierarchy. This desire in turn manipulates the colonized culture so that it rewards the emulation of the target culture, making the colonized people complicit in the debasement of their own. The target culture (which, in this context, includes target race, target language and target social position), is unachievable by the majority of West Indians, as their blackness (or non-whiteness) makes it impossible to fully access an English racial and cultural identity. Thus, any attempt to access that cultural identity is thwarted by their racial reality.

Although the desire to become white or to become English is a condition of colonialism and imperialism at its core, it appears, in certain ways, stronger in members of a diaspora. At the end of the *Londoners* the *target culture* phenomenon reveals itself as a part of a cycle which makes Moses question his life in England. By defining their home-nation as exclusively white, English culture implies that simply being in England is not enough to make a home within their borders. Becoming English seems the only way of being at home. Moses does not consciously realize that he is seeking out Englishness, but he does recognize that he is unable to attain any sort of meaning in his everyday pursuits. He feels a sort of Sisyphean inability to attain meaning, if only because the meaning he's attempting to attain is Englishness. The pursuit of Englishness appears to peter out at the end of *Londoners* (1956), when a spirit of community allows for autonomous cultural outgrowth. Still, according to its cyclical structure, the pursuit of Englishness resurges in *Moses Ascending* (1975). It would be misleading, however, to say that *Moses Ascending* is simply a continuation of this cycle. Changes have occurred in the life of Moses, and it is these changes which I intend to identify and examine.

Understanding *Moses Ascending* is largely contingent on understanding the West Indian's relationship with his own language and the language of the colonizer. This becomes even more evident as I transition from *Lonely Londoners* to *Moses Ascending* because, where the *Londoners* championed the language of the common people and satirized the mimicry of British English in the character of Harris, *Moses Ascending* begins with an almost complete espousal of British English by the title character. Moses' use of the Queen's dialect and his exaggerated enactment of racist, imperialist, orientalist and

nationalist registers directly parodies this type of white English masculinity by non-white and the migrants who pursue these ideological references as ways of being at home. What makes the criticism of such a parody effective is Selvon's symbolic use of the house Moses buys in Shepherd's Bush. Just as Moses arranges his personality according to the reference points of British imperialist masculinity, he attempts to personalize his home in Shepherds' bush with these ideologies embedded in it. Moses' embedded ideologies reveal themselves in various ways.

The first thing a reader who has read *The Lonely Londoners* will notice when he/she reads *Moses Ascending* is Moses' mimicry of the English voice. This is the first sign of Moses' espousal of Englishness, but alone it does not divulge the turning point which caused this espousal. Thus far, I have enumerated a few effective indices that are effectively summed up in Mocombe, Tomlin and Wright's article on "The Constitution of Black British Life":

What developed then was a caste, color, class system in places like the UK in which the black immigrants sought the embourgeoisement of their former colonial masters through education in segregated poor black inner-city communities where work was beginning to disappear to the suburbs or overseas, while simultaneously reproducing a class system in which those who did not attain the middle class ideology and language of the former colonial masters constituted an underclass caste of poorly educated, unemployed, and patois-speaking blacks" (Mocombe 182)

In short, Moses has adapted to a certain caste system intrinsic to the colonial system. The role that Moses plays as a black bourgeois in *Moses Ascending*, then, is a latent part of colonial structure. In order to initiate himself into such a position in British society he requires a specific type of possession. It is, in fact, this possession that begins the narrative: “It was Galahad who drew my attention to the property” (Selvon 1). What Moses requires, in order to enter into the role of a bourgeois member of society, is the possession of property. Because the possession of property is an indicator of both economic status (having the financial surety to pay for a house), it is also an indicator of political involvement, as until historically (until 1948), the ownership of property was related to the English franchise.

The narrative begins with an examination of the house that Moses intends to buy. One should not underestimate the importance of such a change in Moses’ life or the importance of moving to another home. Moving to this home represents a disengagement from a long Sisyphean cycle Moses and the boys have endured since their arrival in England. He repeatedly comes across the “sad feeling that all black people was doomed to suffer, that we would never make any headway in Brit’n. As if it always have a snag, no matter how we struggle or try to stay out of trouble” (46), but the purchase of the house and the renting of its rooms is a way he can evade this suffering. The house becomes his reward for enduring that suffering and his proof that his efforts do not come to nothing, that “one and one [don’t] make zero” (46). Nevertheless, to disengage from the Sisyphean struggle his peers endure means to disengage from the underclass which represents the womb from which he sprang. From this movement, the questions present themselves: can he ever truly

separate himself from the roots of the Black West Indian underclass? Will the English and members of the West Indian diaspora ever recognize this separation? These questions depend heavily on whether or not Moses can effectively maintain his performative mimicry of the English bourgeoisie and whether that mimicry can become more than a façade and, somehow, permeate his individual psychology.

Selvon's novels show that racism inhibits the attainment of any position (or role, in this case) that might be held (or played) by a black man, socially and economically. "Ever since the significant number of black Caribbeans and Africans arrive to Britain they have faced racism at every level of society" (Mocombe 175). Of course, at the time that *Moses Ascending* was written, being black invariably resulted in a decreased opportunity in the area of employment. During that period "research shows widespread discrimination in [the Labour Market]" (Mocombe 176). This discrimination reiterates the fact that despite the effectiveness of Moses' façade, racism will always be an impediment to his plans. Yet mimicry and performance, as I will attempt to show, may prove more important in its failure than in its unlikely success. As Bhabha declares, explaining Lacan:

mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself' (128-129).

Moses can never be anything as anything other than a resemblance. He cannot become English nor can he repress his cultural (and physical) difference and thus become a part of middle-class English society. But the performance of this mimicry also reveals the lack of a consolidated identity construct that would otherwise prevent that alternative identity (performed mimicry) from being built. After all, two objects cannot occupy the same space. The malleable identity of the West Indian migrant, then, can be both a powerful tool for subversion and an image of the wound left behind by colonialist power structures.

Performance in *Moses Ascending* exemplifies the balancing act of subverting colonialism and being oppressed by it. Then again, we have seen proof of a type of performance which exceeds mimicry in *Castle*, *Emigrants* and *Lonely Londoners*. This performance comes in the form of *communitas*, a spirit of community born of the shared expression of the challenges of liminality. In *Londoners*, Moses becomes the voice of community and manages some level of exaltation in their Sunday *what happenings* and *oldtalk*, like the community events of the days of Jubilee discussed in Chapter Three. However, in *Moses Ascending*, Moses' "aim is to recreate himself as a completely personal kind of man, outside the control of social forces" (Forbes 91). Moses has the desire to fulfill the Englishman's role, as declared by Edward Coke: "The Englishman's home is his castle". In order to do this he attempts to sever all his connections to his community. In Forbes' words,

Moses wishes to stay on one side of British orthodoxy, which in his colonized imagination spells respectability, even while he seeks to retain a complete independence of self. His plan is to appropriate these aspects of an English

masculine identity that he finds attractive and discard those that are inconvenient to the life of pleasure without responsibility which he wishes to live (91)

In order to achieve this goal he employs the strategies of performance and mimicry I mentioned earlier. These strategies are employed in various ways, but in the end all of “the strategies are used to construct a narrative of self that denies his West Indian connections and responsibilities. Moses wants nothing to do with West Indians lest they drag him back down the depths of unrespectability” (Forbes 91). Moses’ methods raise the questions: Is it possible to escape the culture of the homeland by separating yourself from its proponents? Is it possible to have a home without a community? Even with those questions up in the air, the carnivalesque elements of *Moses Ascending* do not allow for an undistorted comparison between the two options he is offered—independence or interdependence. Irony, leading an assault from all sides, does not privilege one side over the other. In short, “[i]dealism gets a rough ride in *Moses Ascending*” (Kunzru x).

The only relationship Moses maintains throughout the entirety of the novel is with his manservant, Bob. It is a relationship that exemplifies the carnivalesque reversal of roles as the white man becomes the servant, and the black man, the master. Their connection also makes the racist reordering of Moses’ home at the end of the novel painfully clear. Bob’s status in the household is inextricably tied to his lack of education. His illiteracy allows Moses to play a Prospero or Robinson Crusoe figure, both of whom act from an equally sanctimonious dais. Without his counterpart, his mimicry of English lordliness would be incomplete. His white man Friday or Caliban serves as a mirror by reminding him of his superior position. This produces something of a mimicry *mise-en-abyme*, in which the

black servant mimes the white master and the white servant mimes the black master who is miming the white master. By having a black West Indian immigrant enact the usually white English figure, Selvon makes visible and satirizes certain registers of the English cultural idiom. In particular, Selvon makes imperial, orientalist and ethnographical registers completely laughable. The pathos behind this humour is in the hollowness of Moses' mimicry, who after joining in such registers, and modeling his home-life by them becomes subject to them. The results of Moses' mimicry ad absurdum of the narrative works alongside the ironic and carnivalesque in a combined process which demonstrates the disorientation of Moses. Hence, mimicry can result in a type of colonial disorientation which results in "a type of 'schizophrenia' (split consciousness) in which one is never quite sure who one's self is, or indeed if one possesses a "self" at all" (71). This happens quite vigorously and visibly in *Moses Ascending*, where an attentive reader will notice Moses' teetering position as to the performance of his role and his of a subservient role at the end of the novel.

Yet the narrative begins with a symbolic stake in a consolidated position, the purchasing of a house. As I made clear in Chapter 1, a house should not always be equated with home, but it is always a network of ideologies which the resident (or the head of the home) uses to include and exclude certain peoples. In Moses' case the purchasing of this house is an overt endeavour to reconstruct home using the ideologies he has learned from the myth of the English prevalent in colonial education systems. The narrative does not wait to satirize it and foreshadow potential flaws in its structure. These flaws may symbolically imply flaws in the English cultural idiom, as well as foreshadow flaws in

Moses' performance and mimicry which end up collapsing on him at the end of the narrative. It occurs in the form of an advertisement which Galahad reads to Moses. "Listen to this," he declares, "[h]ighly desirable mansion in exclusive part of Shepherd's Bush" (Selvon 1). He explains that it is Tolroy's house that is for sale. Making humorous jabs at the advertisement, he asks Moses, "[y]ou ever build houses with playing cards when you was a little boy?" 'Yeah.' 'And you shift one card and the whole house collapse?' 'Yeah.' 'That's Tolroy's mansion'" (1-2). Always keeping in mind the symbolic connection between the home, the self and the mind, it appears the house is already set in the form of a façade. It is called a mansion, when really, it is a house of cards. In other words, it is supposed to represent a sturdy dwelling, established both physically and economically and a house fit for a lord. In contrast, the house of cards indicates a dwelling that will not be able to hold off the exterior pressures which might bring it to ruin, like G's house in the *Castle*. The symbolism of Moses' dwelling, though, does more than just reiterate the Jungian concept of home. Home, in all its concentricities, should also be imagined as structure which not only defends the interior from exterior influence, but one which also influences those who live within in its boundaries.

How, specifically, the home influences its inhabitants depends on which concentricity is in question. One way to explain this influence is in the idea of orientation that I cited from Sara Ahmed on the first page of this thesis:

If we know where we are, when we turn this way or that, then we are oriented. We have our bearings. We know what to do to get to this place or that. To be oriented is also to be oriented towards certain objects, those that help us find our way.

These are the objects we recognize, such that when we face them, we know which way we are facing. *They gather on the ground and also create a ground on which we can gather* (543, emphasis mine)

Intrinsic to the idea of home is its position as opposed to the exterior world. Home becomes the frame of reference for orientation, as it is used to orient ourselves in relation to whatever is deemed exterior. It is only once one has been oriented that he/she can proceed with any purpose, both literally (to move somewhere to commit an action) or figuratively (to embody an identity). In other words, orientation allows us to have a “consciousness [which] is always directed toward objects and hence is always worldly, situated and embodied” (544). In a sense, then, to be *at home* is synonymous with being oriented in the world. It implies a physical and ideological center from which we journey and to which we return, like Joseph Rykwert’s hearth: “[h]ome is at the center. For many of us, a hearth marks that focus from which we start” (47). This idea corresponds with Ahmed’s at a fundamental level: “The starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the here of the body and the where of its dwelling” (545). In order to understand the transformation Moses performs in his newly bought mansion, I must also recognize that home orients him in different ideological and perspectival directions.

Already in anticipation of purchasing the house, Moses imagines how it will change the way he will act. As he himself notes: “If you are a tenant, you catch your arse forever, but if you are a landlord, it is a horse of a different colour” (Selvon 2). He offers the Houses of Parliament as an example: “take HP for instance: ‘Er, Mr Moses, er, I’m

sorry about this procedure, but we usually ask if our customers know anyone who will be prepared to act as guarantor? Perhaps your landlord?’ ‘I beg your pardon, *I* am the landlord’” (2). This time placing himself at the door as the defender of the interior/exterior threshold: “I can also be on the other side of the door when people come to look for rooms. ‘Is the landlord in?’ ‘*I* am the landlord.’ ‘Oh...I’m looking for a room’ ‘I don’t let out to black people’ (3). Both imagined scenes are charged with different social and political significances. The incident with the House of Parliament representative demonstrates that as a land owner, Moses would be in a new position of power. In such a position, he would have a literal and figurative place where he could stand his ground against outside political powers. More importantly he feels as though he would have new rights that would allow him to stand up against white English political structures. According to these imaginary incidents, his position would also confer to him the rights and the ideological position of the white landowner. Furthermore, his enactment of the landlord’s racist register reveals an absurd humour in its hypocrisy. Alongside the idea that he is already beginning to be possessed by the role which the home would confer, the humour of the “teapot calling the kettle black” reveals that his blackness is incompatible with such a role.

Moses’ defensive position at the threshold of his home should bring us back to ideologically *masculine* roles I indicated in the first chapter. Easthope’s claims, that “[t]he design for the fortress provides a masculine narcissistic fantasy and is in many ways a model of the masculine ego itself” (39) and that “[t]he purpose of the masculine ego, like that of the castle, is to master every threat” (39-40), seem uncannily convincing at this

point. What these imagined encroachments reveal is an anxiety about: (1) white politics, (2) supplications for black solidarity and (3) the inherent desire to defend one's home against them. Not only does Moses mimic the white, English, masculine role as defender and lord of his castle, but it also fulfills one of Douglas Porteous' territorial satisfactions: "Stimulation, the third of the territorial triad of satisfactions...It is achieved by making, modifying, and defending the home. Moderate levels of stimulation may be achieved through personalization" but even "[h]igher levels of stimulation emerge when that which is personalized is also defended" (385). This also proves the ambivalence inherent in being at home, in the sense that Moses feels anxiety at the thought of confronting these exterior forces and, at the same time, he feels a joyful excitement at the thought of defending his home.

Even though Moses' voice in which *Moses Ascending* is written is highly personal, it retains a similar range of nuance to the communal voice in *Lonely Londoners*. These nuances are caused by the fluctuating ideological distances from the black West Indian community. Moreover, the fact that the novel is written as a memoir brings the personal to the fore while leaving the community perspective in the background: "*Moses Ascending*, [then,] the story of Moses's attempted flight from the community, is the Memoir itself" (Forbes 91). Moreover, the memoir is an extension of what Moses imagines to be an Englishman's orientation and perspective. So when we read one of his first ostensible entries about the position of the black man in London society, the reader should see first the ideological difference that this approximation uses to ironize Moses' mimicry. Moses relates that

The alarms of all the black people in Brit'n are timed to ring before the rest of the population. It is their destiny to be up and about at the crack of dawn. In these days of pollution and environment, he is very lucky, for he can breathe the freshest air of the new day before anybody else. He does not know how fortunate he is. He does not know how privileged he is to be in charge of the city whilst the rest of Brit'n is still abed. (7)

This passage makes a few additional properties of Moses' mimicry abundantly clear. It appears as though he has become utterly ignorant of the subject position of Black men within English society. As I mentioned earlier, the pressures of the underclass position direct Moses toward embourgeoisement. Subsequently, embourgeoisement predisposes him towards a reorientation of his personal position as, what Forbes would call an "Afro-Saxon" (94), that is, a black man who mimics white English masculinity. This accounts for his romanticized and, ultimately, warped view of *black privilege* throughout this passage. In the same stroke, Moses' warped view is an accurate portrayal of the skewed ethnographic type understanding that might have been espoused by white Englishmen. With the same ethnographic Afro-Saxon bias, he continues:

As [the black man] stands, mayhap, in some wall-to-wall carpeted mansion (resting, dreaming on his broom or Hoover) and looks about him at mahogany furniture, at deeply-padded sofas and armchairs, at myriading chandeliers, at hi-fi set and colour television, as his eyes roam on leather-bound tomes and velvet curtains and cushions, at silver cutlery and crystal glass, at Renoirs and Van Goghs and them other fellars what thoughts of humble gratitude should go

through his mind! Here he is, monarch of all he surveys, passing the wine,
 toasting the Queen, carving the baron of beef, perambulating among distinguished
 guests (8-9)

From his own change in perspective, Moses feels as though he had finally “[become] objective,” and that the black migrants show “ingratitude [and] unreasonableness” because they have only seen “one side of the coin” (9). What Moses fails to recognize is that his *objectivity* is merely a privileged perspectival position afforded him by his superior social position. What the *objective* register is suggesting is that to be in the presence of certain luxurious objects is to absorb and retain the experience of the social milieu which they represent. That perspective is nevertheless ignorant that the meaning of the objects is also contingent upon the role and orientation of those using or experiencing them. Since the black migrant workers are relegated to subservient roles, they obviously cannot be expected to experience the objects in the same way, or enjoy those privileges which the objects indicate.

Since Moses’ mimicry is constantly in flux, it is important at all times to be attentive to his level of sincerity and self-awareness. For the most part, the above passage is written in British English, and with much fewer Trinidadian or West Indian colloquialisms which filled *Lonely Londoners* from cover to back. Though, when Moses says “them other fellars” (8) it betrays his Trinidadian dialect and may even indicate a flippant awareness of his position as opposed to the black West Indian working class. As I explained with some depth in the preceding chapter, language in the West Indies is directly associated with social standing and moral caliber. This is a result of West Indian

language evolving along (and in some cases, against) the socioeconomic stratifications introduced by colonial plantocracy. I also discussed the resulting use of foreign (mostly British) English in the West Indies. Another variety of West Indian language is erudite English which Roberts describes as “English which contains features which clearly indicate to the hearer that the speaker is quite conversant with words, phrases, idioms, especially older ones and foreign ones and those considered perceptually difficult” (27). Roberts attributes the use of erudite English to two traditions, a West African oral tradition and colonial education. He also relates the use of erudite English to West Indian performance English. It is a variety of English in which “the communicative function of the language is not paramount. It is very often absent and the sole intention of the speaker is to impress by sound length or unusual combination of words” (Roberts 27-28). Although Roberts remarks that there is rarely any occasion for such a “pompous and sonorous” (28) use of English, it becomes evident that Selvon is using it to expose Moses’ desire to impress by an ostentatious oral façade. Moses’ pretentiously written passages are an attempt at writing in a skilful British English. And they almost always advance into erudite English because he is never able to effectively mimic the colonial culture. In order to do so, he must first master:

the virtuoso use of the Queen’s register; however, it turns out to be a glorious massacre of a range of English literary and West Indian folk registers, grammars, vocabularies and genres—in other words, a West Indian linguistic romp: syncretic, hybridic, creolizing, but royal only in its self-aggrandizing aspiration (Forbes 92).

Thus, just as the symbol of the house of cards indicates an inherent flaw in the construction of an effective façade, so does Moses' use of language. More and more it seems that the failure of his mimicry is inevitable.

Still, it seems there is no reliable alternative for Moses at this point. His self-created castle is built on fragile foundations. Moreover, because of his combined privileged and underprivileged positions, as a black member of the bourgeoisie, members of the Black Power movement in the West Indian community view him invariably as a financial and social asset, as well as a hypocrite. When Galahad, who has become embroiled in Black power politics, first visits Moses, he states: “I am glad to see you in prosperous surroundings. It is good for Our People to make progress. But you must not forget the struggle” (*Moses Ascending* 14). When Moses appropriates the struggle as an individualistic process and says that “I’m glad you see that *I* struggled to get where I am” (14, emphasis mine), he is defending himself against the community to which he has no choice but to belong as his “blackness [not only] entitles him to membership” (*Moses* 109), but as the events of the novel show, force him into it. He is forced into membership especially for the role of the black bourgeois which he has chosen. Galahad explicitly states: “It is only right that you should contribute to the cause. We need financiers” (14). It is obvious that Moses is a financial asset, but the social importance of his position is almost greater than his material economic importance.

When Moses unintentionally finds himself in a Black Power rally, he is arrested by the police and imprisoned: “If I had had time I would of said, ‘Unhand me, knave,’ but instead I say, ‘Let me go, man, I ain’t done nothing.’” (48). This passage exposes how

language is charged in Moses' psyche. In part he believes himself to be an *Afro-Saxon*, a citizen and home-owner with their concomitant privileges and so he should have no qualms with an assertive voice which calls the policeman a knave. On the other hand, "when you are a black man, even though you abide by the laws you are always wary of the police" (39), and so, almost by instinct, Moses reverts to the language common for an underclass black man—instilled by fear of discrimination by police. During the arrest, Galahad yells out to him, "you will go down in history as one of the martyrs" (48). At first, Moses does not realize how serious he is and expects the Black Power party to post bail. Moses' position, however, represents a special opportunity for the party. When he demands that Galahad post bail when he visits him in prison, he replies "[w]e [Galahad and the Black Power party] want you to go through the whole thing," he continues "[w]e want you to stay here until the case comes up. We are planning a mass demonstration on the day" (49). Once again Moses is not considered an individual agent, except by himself. His ability to act is defined by the black bourgeoisie role he has chosen. From the view of the party, he does not possess this privilege so much as he becomes it. And since he has become an asset, his imprisonment is a way of liquidating him and sharing his privilege with the party.

This is not the only time when Moses is liquidated for the *greater good* of the community. The next time it occurs, it happens with a group of people one would never associate with Moses. When he confronts one of his tenants as to the whereabouts of his flatmate, Moses gets inveigled into joining an illegal immigration operation led by the tenant, Faizull. What is salient about this dynamic is again how Moses' role as a West

Indian immigrant implicates him as a member of a larger immigrant community. Faizull does not liquidate Moses in the same way that the Party does. Moses gets paid for housing them and keeping their secret. What is similar between this scenario and the last is that Moses has his agency taken away from him in service of a community with which he does not want to associate. Faizull does not explicitly state the reason that he is co-opting Moses' aid in his venture, and therefore a reader may be inclined to believe that it is simply by Moses' discovery of the project that convinced Faizull to keep this loose end close to him. Given certain information, however, it seems more plausible that Moses has been taken in because specific weaknesses have betrayed him as a tool to be manipulated. Specifically, the double position I mentioned earlier makes him susceptible to manipulation. Because he is a bourgeois home-owner, he has economic and material means to help Faizull. And because he is a black West Indian, he is less likely to have a rapport with the police and more likely to feel sympathy for the situation of his charges.

Though the text does not explicitly mention where the illegal immigrants hail from, the kaleidoscopic collection of Hindu and Muslim stereotypes implies that the immigrants have come from South Asia. With his first charges entering the house from their layover in Amsterdam, he does not immediately feel a connection to them but rather he feels a complete difference between himself and his new tenants: "Their means bore that inscrutability they so famous for, as if they see you and at the same time don't see you. They seem poor subjects for integration to me: it look as if you can't penetrate them at all, they have you baffled from the start" (88). Moses' blatant essentialist and orientalist description of the illegal immigrants echoes a type of discourse commonly

used in colonialist literature, where the people from Asia are considered to be both enigmatic and incomprehensible (a stereotype to which Selvon himself might have been subjected). This discourse brings us back to the fears addressed in postcolonial criticism, where the English national feels threatened by the non-white and non-English cultures and, thus, relies on discourses which indicate an obscurity and radical difference between the English national and others. But this symptom of Moses' Afro-Saxon orientation does not last long as he begins to feel an emotional slippage which results in an ironic attachment to this people he has yet to comprehend:

I cannot express my feeling as my guests folded their bundles, wrapped their belongings, donned their turbans and saris gave the tot a double dose of Cow and Gate, and made other preparations for the evacuation. Was it sadness or gladness. Did I long to learn a trick or two from them, like eating a bottle which I saw F-and-C do for his dessert? Did I yearn to learn a few phrases of their exotic language, so that if the tables were ever turned and Britons were immigrating to Pakistan, and I had to be amongst them, I could tell my host to fuck off in Urdu? Was I, perhaps, subconsciously forsaking Christianity to answer the call of the muezzin? All I know is that I experienced a welter of emotions as I moved among them, helping to tie a parcel here, tucking in a turban there. (117).

It is difficult to point out all that is strange in this ultimately disorienting passage. Moses himself reflects his own disorientation in this passage. It marks a deep sympathy for this immigrant community that he has met so abruptly. Yet, it is ironically written in a performative British English style. With abbreviations (F-and-C, for Fish and Chips),

metonymy (Cow and Gate for milk), and a relishing of exoticism (answering the call of the muezzin). What the reader is witnessing is another type of double movement, where he expresses a deep connection to this immigrant community, yet cannot express it except by a style which seems to mock it. In this scenario, Moses feels the emotional connection and attachment but his Afro-Saxon persona is preventing him from interpreting the experience except through a British English lens. Moses gives no cause to question his sincerity at this point in the narrative. So if there is a satirical critique occurring here, Moses is not conscious of it. What the passage appears to be mocking is the voice of the involved English humanitarian who, seeing the trials of other cultures, desires a more involved connection with them. Moses is endeared to them by the difference in their cultures, and by helping them on their way, he believes that he is entitled to an ethical highground. In other words, his selfless act of helping these homeless immigrants find a home makes him a virtuous cosmopolitan. Ultimately, his behaviour exposes the position of such humanitarians as desirous of a connection which is obstructed by their elevated social role. This is particularly true for Moses, whose ascent into the bourgeoisie was tantamount to withdrawing from any sort of community, into a type of hyper-individualism similar to the Governor's in *The Emigrants*. Although Moses' role has allowed him to successfully defend himself from the encroachments of community, in the end, it appears that he did not really desire isolation.

Isolation is only one aspect of what should be called Moses' *descent* towards the end of the novel. When Moses tricks Bob into leaving the house (angry at Bob for sharing his memoirs with Brenda) he is left to deal with the housekeeping details alone. It is in

this swapping of roles where Moses begins to slide into a subservient role. He “*did* stop to think, as [he] was putting rat poison in the Cypriot room and bounce my head hard under the mantelpiece, that in fact Crusoe was swapping roles with Friday” but he justifies it by declaring “humility is a virtue too few of us have” (156). This rhetoric of humility does not match our knowledge of Moses’ Afro-Saxon character. On the other hand, Moses’ actions at the end of the novel only continue to demonstrate the importance of Bob’s position as a mirror which reinforces Moses’ superiority. Once Bob leaves, Moses already begins to lose the sense of superiority that allowed him to hold his ideological position as master of the house. Moses, now subject to the tenants’ whims, takes the role of servant and no longer retains the sanctimonious orientation his luxuries had afforded him.

When Bob returns with his girlfriend, Jeannie, Moses insists on starting their relationship anew. Arriving at the homecoming party Moses had prepared for him, Bob is prepared to take up his old position: ““there are all these guests to be attended to”” but Moses insists ““you have the night off. It’s your party”” (162). Moses’ isolation and the refiguring of his role changes his view of his relationship with Bob and he would rather ““live like friends, not master and servant”” (163). Moses continues this somewhat heartwarming change by expressing his respect for Bob’s marriage to Jeannie and even teaching him to read. As time goes on, Moses is enchanted by her presence and even goes as far as saying: “Jeannie’s presence was like having a young fairy godmother in the house. Not only was she a good and conscientious char, but she was such a charming girl, ready to bestow favours” (175). Keeping in mind that Moses’ superiority complex was simply a defensive technique, without it he appears docile or compliant with his tenants.

Jeannie's addition to the household seems to subjugate Moses further. Moses explains that "[i]n return for [Jeannie's] generous nature, [he] was ever willing to offer [his] services, no matter the task. One of these was the scrubbing of her back whenever she had a bath" (175). When Bob walks in on Moses scrubbing Jeannie's back, the terms of friendship fall apart, and Moses, in a fit of panic gives Bob and Jeannie his penthouse room:

What I blathered was 'The-penthouse-is-yours' and continue, as I see him consider this, 'doesn't that put a different complexion on things?' 'You have behaved like a despicable cad,' Bobbie say. 'You realize your paltry offer can never make amends for your loathsome behaviour?' I nodded silently, hanging my head. 'If I do accept, it will have to be on my own terms,' he say. *You're the boss,* I say" (177, emphasis mine)

So, Moses abruptly capitulates all his former power in the home to Bob, giving him the penthouse, and making him the master of the house.

Hari Kunzru, who wrote the introduction to *Moses Ascending* notes that the novel is "peppered with television references" (xiv). *Upstairs, Downstairs*, a television series about an upper class ruling family and a lower class servant family sharing a home is poignant as it echoes the class system of Moses' house. Even as Moses surrenders his penthouse to Bob and Jeannie, he asks: "'I can't even come up to look at Upstairs and Downstairs in colour?' ... 'We used to enjoy that programme so much together'" (177). In this docile role, full of pathos, Moses is at his weakest, even though he retains the

responsibilities of the landlord. He can and does descend further. As Brenda demands to move up from the basement room, he moves into the room she abandons. Moses' descent reveals certain properties of the Afro-Saxon form of class power he wielded as master of the house. The power Moses possessed at the beginning of the text was contingent entirely upon the role he played as master. In order to keep this power he attempted to construct a buffer from anyone who would have questioned his role as superior and as master. Since Bob was his only form of *society* and he was subservient, there was no reason to question his mastery over the household. In fact, his mastery and superiority was disproportionately reinforced by Bob's lower class characteristics (being from the country, a foreigner to London, and illiterate). The reversal of this dynamic places Bob's highfalutin admonition of Moses' behaviour in a comic light.

Moses' superiority means an isolation from personal or emotional attachment or connection. When forced to be in contact with the South Asian immigrants, Moses' feeling of emotional attachment was renewed. He finally knew what he was missing. Moses' desire for attachment recurs after he tricks Bob into leaving. He ends up yearning for friendship so much that he completely frees Bob from his responsibilities as manservant and wants to build a friendship on new and equal terms. Even at this point, Moses did not fully understand that his role was still contingent on the people and the system of roles performed around him. As such, the introduction of Jeannie as Bob's wife constructs a system of domesticity which leaves Moses at the figurative exterior. The white husband, becoming the new master of the house and the white wife becoming the mistress leaves the black servant. Even Moses himself recognizes that "Thus are the

mighty fallen, empires totter, monarchs dethrone and the walls of Pompeii bit the dust”
(177). More importantly however, what *Moses Ascending* recognizes is that the roles
which are embedded in ideologies, and the roles we play, have real effects on the actions
we perform, and the actions we allow to be performed on us.

Conclusion: Vulnerabilities and Unity

Throughout this study I have worked under the supposition that migration causes a loss of *home*. Since home is not only a literal and physical location but also a psychic space which indicates a cultural and ideological orientation, its loss deprives West Indian migrants of their ideological and cultural frame of reference. This is especially relevant regarding the ideological construct of masculinity as it deprives male migrants of the *communitas* they need to re-engage with their masculinity in an attempt to rebuild a consolidated idea of their masculinity which was originally established in their home environment in West Indies. As I have attempted to show, however, many of their attempts to reconstruct their masculinity are predestined to failure by the concomitant pressures of racism, colonialism, and imperialism by which they are plagued. Moreover, their inability to rebuild a satisfactory masculine ideology inhibits them from constructing a satisfactory idea of home. Nonetheless, in their failures, the characters I discussed from *The Emigrants*, *The Lonely Londoners* and *Moses Ascending* reveal certain indices as to what needs to be done before their masculinity can be reconstructed and before a sound ideological home can be built in England.

In the Castle of my Skin reimagines home from the perspective of a boy growing up in the West Indies. G.'s highly personal perspective is not so much a documentation of his life in the West Indies as it is Lamming's own autobiographical hindsight after his migration to Britain. In this way, Lamming rewrites his childhood with an informed knowledge of how his individual reality was structured by the underprivileged society in

which he lived. His mother's protective vision directed and controlled his actions until he began to challenge her authority. At first glance, it may appear as though the challenging of her authority is nothing more than childish rebellion. What becomes evident in Chapter Two is that G.'s rebellion is a precocious exercise in what Victor and Edith Turner call *communitas*. As Victor Turner would describe it, *communitas* is "the egalitarian 'sentiment for humanity'...representing the desire for a total unmediated relationship between person and person, a relationship which does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness" (Victor Turner 274). This is the state G. notices in the song his mother, Miss Foster and Bob's mother sing with the village. It becomes apparent to G. that the women of the village are capable of accessing a level of meaning which he has been denied. G. may not have explicitly understood how "their life together [took] on full meaning" (Edith Turner 1) but in challenging the structure by which his mother defined his life, and joining Trumper, Boy Blue, and Bob at the ocean he was able to come closer to a sense of belonging than he had hitherto been unable to access.

Unfortunately, the *communitas* G. discovered in his youth is lost as he grows older. In his days before he migrates to Trinidad he finally begins to see that there is an ideological force which keeps him from maintaining a connection to his fellow men. I argued that in order to feel the sense of community connection he felt when he was with the other boys at the beach there must be a shared vulnerability. Yet the masculinity which has developed is one concerned with eliminating all sources of vulnerability within him and building a defensive fortress around him. This defensive masculinity was not

born of itself, rather it was a part of the colonial myth which surrounded G.: “The image of the enemy, and the enemy was my people” (*In the Castle of My Skin* 26). G. has internalized colonial ideologies which suggest to him that the very people with whom he should belong are the enemy from whom he must defend and distance himself.

The Emigrants offers additional examples of masculinities disoriented by the loss of home. Within the novel’s depiction of disorientation, the section entitled “A Voyage” offers a brief and fragile glimpse into how the dialogue concerning West Indian nationhood can produce a somewhat successful *spirit of community* among the men. Unfortunately, the connection the men make on the ship is disrupted by their arrival in England. Once they arrive, the disorientation and alienation they endure causes many of the men to forgo their connections to one another and withdraw, both on a psychological and social level. For some, withdrawal means a secure existence structured only by themselves. For others it is a narcissistic enunciation of individualism. In either scenario, they try to disavow exterior societal influences and are completely unable to access the satisfaction or meaning which can be found in community involvement. Even some of the emigrants who do manage to construct an enclave community seem stifled by the radical interiority in which they live. Since “[s]tructure, or all that which holds people apart, defines their differences, and constrains their actions” (Victor Turner 274), and prevents them from achieving a satisfactory feeling of belonging and collective purpose. Yet, as we have seen in *The Lonely Londoners*, the collective struggle against those structures may allow migrant masculinities to access the *communitas* they managed to achieve while in transit.

The boys of Londoners reveal a desire to escape the cultural dissonance forced upon them by structures of exclusion established in English society. Many of them do not as yet realize that their very acts of escape are symptomatic of their marginalized position. That is to say that the acts they perform to escape cultural dissonance result from a racist, colonial culture which privileged whiteness, made it a target for emulation and insisted on the inferiority of non-white peoples. Their acts of escape, almost entirely focused on meeting and having sexual intercourse with white women, imply a necessity to possess both *whiteness* and *Britishness*, despite the impossibility of its attainment. As a foil to this emulation of whiteness and Britishness, the text is written in Trinidadian Creole. The West Indian language in the novel poses an iconoclastic challenge to the age-old colonial tradition which privileged English culture and language while denigrating the cultures and languages that existed under its colonial rule. Moreover, the fact that West Indian languages were developed by the community of slaves in plantation society implies that its creation was a success of an underestimated West Indian underclass. Understanding that *communitas* most often thrives and “resides in the poor and those considered inferior in their culture” (Edith Turner 3), associates it with liminality, marginalization, and may even suggest that West Indian languages are, in fact, a tool built by *communitas*. Moreover, since the only ostensible way that *the boys* manage to achieve a sense of collective meaning is through *oldtalk* and *what happenings* indicates that the language itself, alongside nostalgia and group discussion, is partly able to offer them solace in their largely liminal and underprivileged positions.

Moses Ascending, on the other hand, offers no clear solutions to the problems raised in my previous chapters. Rather it successfully satirizes embourgeoisement and the mimicry of white British masculinities while at the same time parodying those British masculinities. In doing so it corroborates the implications of *The Emigrants* and *In the Castle of my Skin*; that radical individualism in the West Indian migrant population manifests an emotional and/or psychological privation in the migrant. Moreover, individualism leaves the migrant susceptible to the societal pressures of racism. In effect, connecting to the community protects the West Indian immigrant from the racist structuring which might impede a migrant's will or drive to social and/or economic advancement. In that way, *Moses Ascending* strongly suggests that the role a man performs within the societal network in which he is involved informs his actions and the actions which he allows to be performed upon him. But even further, *Moses Ascending* satirizes the English masculinity which simultaneously claims to be objective towards and accepting of colonial migrants, while excluding them through racialized politics.

This study then argues that, since the era of West Indian nationalism, West Indian masculinities have had to negotiate the pressure of certain perspectival changes. Migrant masculinities, in particular, after losing their patriarchal position of power to the more malleable female gender identity and being subjected to societal exclusions witness the collapse of their attempts at rebuilding their rigid masculinity. The idea that the masculine ego is a fortress that must never be breached suggests to men that they must deny or disavow any sign of instability. Yet, the experiences of disorientation and collapse are what allow the men in these novels (and their readers) to see the similarities in their social

positions. In order to connect with others on a level that will allow them to rebuild a community and a home after migration, West Indian men, like men everywhere, must learn to forgo heavy investment in the personal ego and accept their vulnerabilities. This is not solely an issue of personal responsibility. In a wider cultural frame, images of unassailable masculinities which have been historically privileged must be re-evaluated and realigned so that West Indian men may join a community in which selfhood and connection are not inimical to one another, but rather working parts in a larger network of meaning.

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