UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE - FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Migrant Experience in Contemporary Black British Fiction

Přistěhovalectví v současné britské černošské literatuře

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., M.A.

Zpracovala:

Veronika Vítková

Studijní obor:

Anglistika a amerikanistika - Politologie

Praha, srpen 2010

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a pouze na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Praze dne 20. srpna 2010 ………………….

Veronika Vítková

Poděkování

Děkuji PhDr. Soně Novákové, CSc., M.A. za odborné vedení, ochotu a cenné rady při vytváření této práce.

Abstrakt práce

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá přistěhovalectvím, jak je zobrazeno v poválečné britské černošské literatuře. S pomocí vybraných textů převážně britsko-karibských spisovatelů rozebírá vliv diaspory na identitu imigrantů, analyzuje jejich pojetí domova a pocit příslušnosti ke společnosti, jíž se ne zcela dobrovolně stali součástí. Soustředí se na dvě generace přistěhovalců a analyzuje aspekty vzniklé v konfrontaci s impériem. Nahlíží i do historie, až k počátkům vztahů mateřské země a jejích kolonií, a to zejména proto, že tyto se významně odrazily ve vztahu britské společnosti 20. století k imigrantům. Jejím cílem je zmapovat zkušenost imigrantů a způsoby, jakými se vyrovnávali s vykořeněním, přesazením a hybriditou jako důsledky diaspory a kolonialismu.

Nejprve se práce zaměřuje na imigranty první generace, kteří do Británie přicházeli v 50. a 60. letech 20. století plni nadějí na nový a lepší život. Jejich barva pleti se ale stala překážkou nejen k nalezení odpovídajícího zaměstnání a bydlení, ale byla i příčinou rozplynutí jejich iluze o nalezení skutečného domova. Většina z nich se nikdy nevrátila do bývalých kolonií a zůstala diskriminovaná, vykořeněná a izolovaná v zemi, kterou předtím považovala za zaslíbenou, v komunitě, která se vytvořila v konfrontaci s většinovou společností na bázi jejich odlišné barvy pleti. Jejich zkušenost je zde popsána na základě děl *The Lonely Londoners* a *The Final Passage* autorů Sama Selvona a Caryla Phillipse.

Další část se soustředí na druhou generaci přistěhovalců, kteří se v Británii narodili a v důsledku toho ji za svůj domov považují. Přesto čelí diskriminaci a i v jejich případě barva pleti – která je v rozporu s rasově definovanou britskou identitou - brání vytvoření pocitu příslušnosti. Svou odlišnost potomci první generace imigrantů vnímají silně zejména proto, že je jim většinovou společností neustále připomínána. Různými způsoby tak bojují o to být akceptování takoví, jací jsou. Z toho vychází hybridita, která je pro tuto generaci typická. Jejich snahu o nalezení identity zmapuji pomocí románu *White Teeth* autorky Zadie Smith a dlouhé autobiografické básně *The Adoption Papers* spisovatelky Jackie Kay.

Poslední část poté analyzuje jeden ze způsobů vypořádávání se s přítomností, konkrétně rekonstrukci historie. Jejím cílem bylo mimo jiné znovu vytvořit kontinuitu, o kterou byly kolonizované národy připraveny, upozornit na to, jakým způsobem se staly součástí Británie a jak dlouho už je jejich osud s touto zemí spojen. Význam této části spočívá v tom, že umožňuje prozkoumat spojitosti mezi úplným počátkem britského rasismu a

přístupem k imigrantům 20. století. Rekonstrukce historie je analyzována s pomocí románu *Cambridge* Caryla Phillipse a básní *Turner* a „Song of the Creole Gang Women“ Davida Dabydeena.

Podobně tato práce vytváří kontinuitu mezi érou otroctví a současností. Popisuje vliv kolonialismu na představy kolonizovaných obyvatel o své vlastní identitě, změny, které způsobil v konceptu domova a příslušnosti. Zároveň poukazuje na multikulturnost současné Británie a problémy, které tento stav provází, tak jak je popisují vybraní autoři. Ilustruje změny ve společnosti a nutnost redefinice zastaralých konceptů, zejména rasově definované identity, která vylučuje velkou část právoplatných občanů současné Británie. Popisuje, jak ideologické dědictví kolonialismu současně s odmítáním závazků plynoucích z imperialistické historie ovlivnily schopnost nejen imigrantů, ale i jejich potomků, dokončit diasporické putování a zapustit kořeny v Británii.

Table of contents

1. Introduction....................7

2. First-generation immigrants....................13

3. Second-generation immigrants....................33

4. Reconstruction of history....................52

5. Conclusion....................68

Bibliography....................70

1. Introduction

My work will be concerned with post-WWII migrant experience in Britain. Accordingly, I will focus on issues of identity, hybridity, belonging, diaspora and the concept of home. All these will be exemplified on the basis of selected works by black British writers that will be specified below.

Over time, the denotation of the term diaspora – originally meaning the dispersal of the Jews from Israel – increasingly widened. Nowadays, it may refer to people leaving their countries not only for reasons of expulsion and persecution, but also for example in the wake of political strife or war, through conquest and colonisation, as part of global flows of labour or as a result of the capture or removal of a group through slavery.[1] According to Avtar Brah, "the question is not simply about *who* travels but *when, how, and under what circumstances*?"[2] Moreover, it is not possible to create strict categories – types of diaspora - into which particular moving people can be placed. This is also the case of black immigrants in Britain whose ancestors were brought to the Caribbean from Africa for the reasons of slavery. They themselves came to Britain as a result of at least two factors: colonialism and the global flows of labour. As Avtar Brah claims, "[a]t the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey."[3] This is a factor that connects all types of diasporas.

When Salman Rushdie discusses immigrants, among which he himself belongs, he says: "We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown."[4] Rushdie claims that we humans are not trees; we do not have roots: "Look under your feet. You will not find gnarled growths sprouting through the soles."[5] For critics like him dislocation becomes the key to a release of a new form of creative energy. However, as he also admits, the phenomenon of "belonging" observably exists. Thus, similarly as in the case of this writer, the flight is never complete and the migrants do not shake themselves free of their roots completely. People become attached to their birth-places and there is for many a need to feel a keen sense of belonging. Accordingly, diasporic journeys are not only about departure, but as Brah puts it, "essentially

[1] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: contesting identities* (London: Routledge, 1996) 182.
[2] Avtar Brah 182.
[3] Avtar Brah 182.
[4] Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Vintage, 1995) 85.
[5] Rushdie 86.

about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'."[6] As Simone Weil noted, "[t]o be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul."[7]

The question is where "home" is to be located for diasporic communities. Is it in the place of birth, the displaced cultural community one is born into, or in the place this diasporic community is located? The diasporic communities cross the boundaries of cultural, geographical and linguistic origins and the concepts such as "belonging", "home" or "identity" become extremely problematic in their case. Consequently, in a post-colonial society, new forms and dimensions of culture, possibilities of renewal and regeneration are created. These are influenced by the experience of dislocation and exile and made more complicated by the encounter with the new, often hostile, society to which the diasporic community struggles to belong. Trying to root oneself in one country while still experiencing a sense of disruption from one`s original place, is a very complicated and confusing process which often results in multiple identities and notions of home clashing in the minds of diasporic personalities. The complexity of their struggle to belong and their hybridity are naturally mirrored in works by diasporic writers and influence not only their view of themselves, but also their outlook on Britain which is often multiply refracted and fractured.[8]

Although Britain has long been subject to cultural transformation, induced mainly by its colonial expanse, and thus, as Mark Stein claims, it "cannot be considered an autochthonous society of True-Born Englishmen,"[9] it was the middle of the 20th century that brought the most crucial changes. Inhabitants of colonies and former colonies were granted British citizenship, workers from the Caribbean were recruited, the Empire collapsed. Migration from former colonies has increasingly changed the texture of British society. For many of its members, this transformation was hardly digestible and the best they could do was to pretend that it did not happen. They thus fastened their minds to the idea of an illusory exclusive racial identity of the English and refused to accept anything that did not meet its criteria. Therefore, for black immigrants in Britain, the process of creating a new home was made more difficult as the society they wanted to belong to marked them as different and denied to accept them as its genuine members. My work will thus examine their struggle to belong to a white-defined exclusive society.

---

[6] Avtar Brah 182.
[7] Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (London: Routledge, 2002) 43.
[8] Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004) xiv.
[9] Stein xiv.

A lot of texts were created in the second half of the 20th century that were affected by these changes and the British reaction towards them. Although they are often referred to as "black British fiction", "immigrant literature" or "texts by diasporic writers", they are marked by a degree of heterogeneity. In Mark Stein`s explanation, the category of black British literature means:

> texts by male and female writers with African, South-Asian, Indo-Caribbean, and African Caribbean backgrounds (backgrounds which could be further subdivided); writers who belong to different generations and social classes; and who are (or were) located in different geographical regions of Britain. This body of texts consists of different genres such as the novel, poetry, drama, film script, and essay; texts which are written in different varieties of English, varieties born out of the interaction between distinct linguistic communities in Britain and abroad.[10]

My study will naturally have to limit the ground it covers. Of the amount of black British writing, this B.A. thesis will concentrate upon several novels and poems published since the 1950s. The vast majority of works I will examine is by British-Caribbean writers. The reason for this is mainly the fact that the Caribbean was colonized for a longer period than Asia or Africa[11] and the effect of the Empire on its cultures was thus much deeper and more intense as a result of the history of slavery and its aftermath.[12] The experience of the British-Caribbeans was thus very specific and their encounter with their mother country more personal and frustrating. The only exception I will make is Jackie Kay, born to a Nigerian father and Scottish mother. The reason why I chose her next to Zadie Smith to illustrate the experience of the second generation immigrants is mainly her exceptional treatment of the search for a cultural identity and her specific position – of a black girl being brought up by a white adoptive family – that is not described in *White Teeth*. It is also important to note here that Smith, although herself of half-Jamaican origin, is equally concerned with South Asian immigrants and their children. Moreover, as will be specified later, Samuel Selvon`s *Lonely Londoners* also includes a few non-Caribbean characters – nevertheless, in his case their origins are wiped off. Although Smith`s community clearly refers to that of Selvon, the particular origins are already observable, particularized and influence the immigrants` struggle to belong. Thus, the part describing the second generation immigrants will

---

[10] Stein xiv.
[11] Raajev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 89.
[12] Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, „Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction," *Black Experience and the Empire*, eds. Morgan and Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 6.

intentionally not be purely Caribbean; it will also not include writers of Caribbean origin only. Overall, my primary aim is to map immigrant experience and patterns of reaction to diasporic re-location.

In the first part, I will address the first wave of immigrants who came to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead of a promised land where they hoped to find a better life, they found themselves in a country that stigmatized them because of the colour of their skin. This first generation of immigrants is generally characterized by a desire to find a home in Britain. This theme will be exemplified on Sam Selvon`s *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and a somewhat later text - Caryl Phillips`s *The Final Passage* (1985). For the last mentioned text, two things are of vast importance. Primarily, it is the date of publication – some two decades after the actual period. Secondly, the fact that Phillips, as a member of the second generation of immigrants was himself not directly involved in what happened in the 1950s and 1960s. Both of these enabled him to look at the past with a critical distance. Moreover, it gave him the opportunity to compare the first generation of immigrants with the second and perceive more carefully particular characteristics distinguishing or connecting the two. As I will show later, Selvon`s and Phillips`s descriptions of the same period differ in many aspects. Apart from the fact that Phillips`s novel is complicated by gender, the reason for this may be the author`s special position of a second-generation writer describing the first-generation experience. As a result, he lacks Selvon`s optimism and romantic illusions resulting from his being personally involved in the period, and his view is thus much more critical not only of the British society, but also of the immigrants themselves.

In the second part, I will focus on the second generation of immigrants who, although having ostensibly found a home in Britain, experience an inner sense of (un)belonging, question their cultural roots and identity. These immigrants' literary experience may in general be characterized by cultural clash, hybridity and search for identity. To illustrate this point, I will work with Jackie Kay`s *The Adoption Papers* (1991) and Zadie Smith`s *White Teeth* (2000).

The writing of the second generation writers must have necessarily differed from that of the first as it is rooted in totally different ground. As C. L. Innes puts it, they respond "implicitly or explicitly to living in a Britain which heard outbursts of racist and anti-immigration rhetoric from Enoch Powell, Margaret Thatcher, and other prominent members

of the establishment. It also witnessed riots in many British cities, and a concerned response by liberal institutions and members of the public to these."[13] Aspects of their resulting complex sense of identity, which is inevitably mirrored in their works, will be specified later.

It is not incidental that, to illustrate the experience of second-generation immigrants, I chose works of two women writers. Again unlike the generation of immigrants or immigrant writers who came to England in the 1950s and 1960s and were typically male, the second generation was characteristic by the emergence of women writers and various supportive groups, for example the Caribbean Women Writers group or Asian Women`s Collective. Moreover, this category of writers is specific in that they do not, unlike their male counterparts, focus so intensely on the interracial conflicts and explicit instances of racism. Instead, they attempt to direct the reader`s attention to the issues of colonialism and racism more indirectly and through much more personal stories. As Charyl A. Wall said, "[c]ontemporary black women writers focus (…) on those intimate relationships in which the most painful consequences of racism are played out. Racism corrodes love between black men and women, fractures families, and destroys mothers` dreams for their children."[14] The fact that their writing is strongly personal enables me to look more closely on the experience of the individual characters.

In the third part, I will examine one of the means that the immigrants used to cope with the present - their loss of historical background and identity - and that is re-living and re-creating their distant past. Among the representative texts of reconstruction of history are Caryl Phillips`s *Cambridge* (1991), David Dabydeen`s long poem *Turner* (2002) and "Song of the Creole Gang Women" from his collection *Slave Song* (1984). This part will enable me to look for connections between the very beginning of British racism and the country`s 20th century approach to black immigrants.

In discussing all these above mentioned works, I will focus especially on those aspects of the black immigrants` identity that developed in deep dependence on their mother country. Here I am referring particularly to their view of themselves that often changed rapidly after having found out Britain`s approach to its colonial heritage. My work will discuss how the chosen texts explain processes through which colonial identities were constructed. Several of

---

[13] C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 241.

[14] Cheryl A. Wall, *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition* (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 6.

them show human beings as fragmental discursive constructs and describe various stages of the development of their colonized selves as well as their struggle for freedom and self-realization. I will examine how colonialism, cultural domination and British racism contributed to the creation of the immigrants` identity and self-image from slavery to the present.

2. First-generation immigrants

With the economic boom after the Second World War the immigration from the Caribbean to Britain increased. This first wave of immigrants which has become known as the Windrush generation was "[o]riginally invited to the 'mother country' by the Labour government in an attempt to solve the immediate labour crisis following the Second World War."[1] Advertisements were placed in newspapers offering berths on the SS Empire Windrush for special prices to lure the islanders into going to Britain and filling the gaps on the labour market.[2] As the *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* explains, "[b]ecause of the depressed situation that existed in Jamaica at that time, there was great competition for these very limited spaces."[3] The actual number of immigrants brought to Britain by the Empire Windrush was thus much higher than the number of berths originally offered.[4] Most of the passengers were ex-service personnel not only from Jamaica, but also from Trinidad, who fought for the mother country during World War II and were now promised jobs in England.[5]

The 1948 arrival of the Empire Windrush is considered a turning point in the history of immigration to Britain. In spite of its historical importance, it definitely cannot be said that the human cargo it brought were the first black people in Britain. However, the symbolism of the moment lies in the fact that it was the first large group of Caribbean immigrants brought to the United Kingdom[6] and thus in "[t]he increased visibility that the arrival of ships full of black migrant workers created."[7] It in fact marks the beginning of the period in which the first generation of immigrants from the Caribbean arrived and which lasted for another thirteen years. Nevertheless, until 1951 the number of immigrants arriving from the Caribbean was not as high as it was generally thought and it did not exceed 1,000 a year.[8] However, according to *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, "[t]he bulk of Caribbean

---

[1] Susheila Nasta, "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels," *Other Britain, Other British*, ed. A. Robert Lee (East Haven, Conn.: Pluto Press, 1995) 48-49.
[2] David Dabydeen, et al., eds. *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)155-156.
[3] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* 155-156.
[4] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* 155-156.
[5] "SS Empire Windrush," *ICONS. a portrait of England*, 2 July 2010 <http://www.icons.org.uk/theicons/collection/ss-windrush/biography/windrush-biography>.
[6] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* 155-156.
[7] Julia Sudbury, *'other kinds of dreams': black women`s organizations and the politics of transformation* (London: Routledge, 1998) 3.
[8] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* 155-156.

migration took place between 1955 and 1961, peaking at 66,000 in that latter year."[9] This rapid increase in immigration was caused by the prospect of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act which came into force in 1962.

How many islanders were leaving the Caribbean is apparent in *The Final Passage* when Millie complains to Leila and Michael about their leaving "to England like the rest of the damn island."[10] Later on, Millie says again that "too many people beginning to act like it`s a sinful thing to want to stay on this island but there don`t be no law which say you must go to England, you know. People here too much follow-fashion."[11] Not only individuals or pairs, but whole families were leaving the islands. This is apparent in *The Lonely Londoners* when Tolroy expects only his mother to come but instead his whole family is coming to live with him as they think he is doing very well there because "[he] getting five pounds a week."[12]

Apart from the already mentioned economic situation there existed also other reasons why so many islanders desired to leave their homes. In the West Indies, they felt to be a part of the Empire. Having British passports, officially being British citizens, they did not doubt to be so also in reality. As a part of the large and prosperous Empire, they felt to be limited on the small and poor island and wanted to leave it for the big world. They were convinced that the islands held no future for them. Michael expresses this feeling when he says: "Not enough space to grow or do things here."[13] Not only are the islands small and the weather is very hot there, also time flows very slowly. All these factors create an atmosphere of idleness which is so apparent in *The Final Passage*. When Leila packs her suitcase, she watches the children playing in the street through "the almost permanently open door"[14]: "Across the road the naked children bathed under the rusty stand-pipe which dribbled water on to their boneless limbs. They splashed and played the best they could. It was already a clear, hot day."[15] Through the unbearable weather which almost breathes from this passage, Phillips communicates the all-pervasive inferiority complex resulting from colonialism. In the book, it is apparent that nobody hurries anywhere; everybody is calm and idle as if they were taught that they are made to be like that. Most of them do not try to change their situation as they do

---

[9] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* 155-156.
[10] Caryl Phillips, *The Final Passage* (London: Picador, 1995) 99.
[11] *The Final Passage* 106.
[12] Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (New York, NY: Longman Caribbean Writers, 2009) 29.
[13] *The Final Passage* 103.
[14] *The Final Passage* 13-14.
[15] *The Final Passage* 13-14.

not see the chance for it. It is as if the atmosphere was telling them that this is the only way of living here, it is everything the island offers and it is impossible to change it. If anybody wants more, they have to go.

This can also be seen in the behaviour of Phillips` characters. Michael and Bradeth spend the afternoon sitting in the sun, talking, listening to calypso and drinking beer. Michael does not work at all, Bradeth does some occasional deliveries. Their attitude to work is obvious from their conversation. When Michael advises Bradeth to get back to work, he, a bit offended, replies: "Who you talking to about work? The day I see you take up a job is the day you can talk with me about going back to work."[16] Their life is so calm and easy that Bradeth cannot understand what can make Michael think about a different life and not being satisfied with the one he currently lives: "Well, what is wrong with you, man, for you having a nice time sitting out in the sun, drinking beer, listening to music and talking. What else it is you want?"[17]

Michael connects this kind of lazy life with the islands as it is clear when he says: "This country breed too many people who just cut cane in season to be rum-jumbie out of it."[18] Although he himself does not work and thus belongs to the same people whom he criticizes, his current way of life does not fulfil him. What is interesting is the fact that he does not try to change his life and instead of it stays passive as long as he lives on the island. He is convinced that his ambitions can only be achieved in Britain. It seems as if he does not want to waste his talent and abilities for such a small world and thus spares it for the big one. He believes living in Britain itself would make his life much more productive and meaningful. It can be said that Selvon`s and Phillips`s characters in general are convinced that to fulfil their dreams and to achieve their objectives, they have to leave the islands. As Michael`s grandpa informs him: "Ambition going teach you that you going has to flee from beauty, Michael. (...) West Indian man always have to leave his islands for there don`t be nothing here for him." [19]

These feelings of inferiority and inability to improve both one`s own position and the state of the society as such result from colonialism and its aftermath, more particularly from the fact that local people were deprived of status and of their right to govern their own

[16] *The Final Passage* 26.
[17] *The Final Passage* 27.
[18] *The Final Passage* 103.
[19] *The Final Passage* 42.

country. They were disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere and thus in a way emasculated.[20] This racial disempowerment is so crucial that some authors even compare it to castration.[21] Their long-lasting subordination damaged their belief in themselves and their own people. That is also the reason why it is so difficult for a Caribbean writer to gain local audience and interest in his works. As Katrin Norris puts it, local people "still cannot believe that anything done by a Jamaican or West Indian can be really good."[22]

Colonialism also deprived the islanders of their identity. Consequently, they felt much more British than for example Jamaican, Trinidadian or Barbadian. One reason for this is naturally that they always worked for the good of their mother country – either involuntarily in case of the slave trade or later voluntarily and willingly for example in case of the British West Indies Regiment during World War I. Despite the fact that the rewards for their services were usually none, their loyalty to the mother country was very deeply rooted. As Moses says to Galahad: "[I]s we who bleed to make this country prosperous."[23] As I have already said above, they also had British passports and were officially British citizens.

Moreover, the place they called their home lacked its own identity as the British one was imposed on it. Donald Hinds perfectly expresses this when he says: "[O]ur Caribbean background was shaped by English things."[24] What is more, the place could not even claim its British identity. It was not British but a kind of "sub-British", mainly because of the history of subordination to the mother country and its dependence on it. It was as if the islanders` world was not real and was only created by the colonialists as a kind of small Great Britain in the Caribbean, as a poorer copy of its model. As Susheila Nasta claims, the colonial education "had repeatedly told them that 'real' places were 'cold' places and these were elsewhere."[25] This idea again diminished the importance of the island and its individuality in the eyes of its inhabitants.

As I have mentioned above, the islanders were surrounded by everything English. Shiva Naipaul described it when he wrote: "Everything seemed to conspire against us. The faces we saw in advertisements were not our faces; the places seen in films were not our

---

[20] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005) 137.
[21] Loomba 137.
[22] Katrin Norris, *Jamaica* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 89.
[23] Selvon 40.
[24] Donald Hinds, *Journey to an Illusion: A Study of West Indian Migration* (London: Macmillan, 1966) p.4.; in "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.
[25] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.

places…[t]he books we had to read were not our books…Writing began and ended with Charles Dickens."[26] The colonial system of education taught them British history, British politics, British culture or British literature. How deeply influenced are the islanders by the colonial education is shown by the following extract describing Leila`s fantasy on her mother`s funeral: "[T]he four men waiting to lower the coffin looked like the evil characters from the Dickensian novels Leila had read at school."[27] British cultural standards were also imposed on them. They were taught that being white is good, whereas being black is bad and constantly attempted to approach the European standard which, in its most primitive form, meant white skin and straight hair. As a consequence of this overpowering cultural image of Britain and its imported standard, they were forced to suppress traces of their own identity and belonging to their islands and pretend to be as much British as they managed so that they were not considered absolute outcasts.[28] As a result of this, mothers would for example privilege children that looked most European, "women would try to straighten their hair and bleach their skin and men did what they could to compensate for their dark colouring by adopting other British attributes, such as a very exaggerated Oxford accent, a formal dark suit in the hottest weather, pompous speech and mannerisms and ultra-British names for their children and houses."[29]

Furthermore, another reason for the lack of their own West Indian identity was the fact that also their language was not their own but that of their colonialists. Susheila Nasta talks about "a language acquired but not possessed."[30] Moreover, even though they speak the language of their mother country, they are often mocked for the way they use it there. One of Galahad`s girlfriends, for example, has difficulties understanding him: "What did you say? You know it will take me some time to understand everything you say. The way you West Indians speak!"[31] Galahad naturally feels offended and defends himself by saying: "What wrong with it? (…) Is English we speaking."[32] As it is obvious, the islanders lack their own cultural basis or roots from which they could grow and develop their own Jamaican, Trinidadian, Barbadian etc. or at least West Indian identity and belonging to their particular

---

[26] Shiva Naipaul, "The Writer Without Society", in Anna Rutherdor (ed.) *Commonwealth* (Aarhus: Dangaroo Press, 1971) pp. 115-116; in "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.
[27] *The Final Passage* 181.
[28] Norris 98.
[29] Norris 11.
[30] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.
[31] *The Final Passage* 93.
[32] *The Final Passage* 93.

place of living. Instead of this, they were, through a variety of means, forced to accept a foreign one.

For these reasons, ships coming from the West Indies to Great Britain brought thousands of people whose expectations of life in Britain were enormous. They hoped to find here what they lacked on the islands – a better paid job, opportunities for themselves and their children. They also desired to find their real home and strengthen their identity and belonging to their mother country. On the islands they felt to be incomplete and they believed this would change in Britain. In the following extract, Michael expresses his reasons for leaving the island and at the same time his expectations of life in Britain: "It`s just that I don`t want to spend the rest of my life looking for small work when I know I can get big work if I wants it. Me, I want a car and a big house and a bit of power under my belt, like any man does want."[33] What they expected from living in Britain is also apparent from what Bradeth says to Michael and Leila before their leave: "But you all going be seeing me soon for I coming to seek me fortune."[34] In general the migrants imagined Britain as a land of plenty where, as Michael says, "all the opportunity is."[35] Such tendencies appear often in other texts dealing with the diaspora. Rushdie, for example, described the immigrants` hopefulness when he marked them as fantasists who "build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist."[36]

However, many of these expectations were absurd, mostly based on "hearsay and hesay"[37] and proved totally unfounded. In *The Final Passage* it is evident that the islanders really believe what someone says about England especially if it is positive. Bradeth, for example, tells Michael that "they say every coloured man in England have a good job that can pay at least $100 a week."[38] Bradeth even heard that "it`s the type of place in which (...) you soon going make friends"[39] and also seems to believe it. Furthermore, a lot of fantastic stories are told about people who were unsuccessful on the island and made a fortune in Britain. One of these is told by Bradeth: "Well, you know Shorty Fredrick`s son out there now making a fortune from investments, and you remember what Shorty Fredrick`s son was back here? The man born a criminal thief and alcoholic. (...) So life over there can be good, you know. I mean

---

[33] *The Final Passage* 103.
[34] *The Final Passage* 19.
[35] *The Final Passage* 106.
[36] Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Vintage, 1995) 85.
[37] *The Final Passage* 99.
[38] *The Final Passage* 104
[39] *The Final Passage* 105.

real good, man, and you lucky, you know."[40] Naturally, they also hear some negative responses to living in Britain but these are soon forgotten as they convince themselves that "the only way to find out is to go there."[41] As I have showed above, the images of Britain created in the minds of the islanders are mostly extremely positive. This is mainly caused by the colonial education. Susheila Nasta talks about "the idea of London as an illusion, as a dream built on the foundations of the colonial myth."[42] The islanders are sure they know their mother country perfectly and that they cannot be mistaken as the conversation of a group of men on the deck proves: "Me? Know anything about England? Look man, I been reading about the place since I five."[43]

It is important to point out the losses that the migrants experienced because of their desire to leave their islands for Britain. Michael, Leila and also the boys from Samuel Selvon`s community left everything they had and knew behind to begin a new and better life. Leila sold her mother`s house, Michael let his beloved motorbike to Bradeth. Both lost their closest friends and Michael also left his grandma who brought him up. For all of them, England is supposed to be a new start. This is best illustrated on Leila who, for this reason, decides to take to Britain "as little as possible with her to remind her of the island. What she left Millie was to have. What Millie did not want would be left in the house for the new owners to do with what they wanted."[44] She simply decides to leave everything what she expects to gain in Britain behind. She wants to break as many ties with the past as possible and become a new person, somebody totally different than she was on the island.

The truth is that the ties are not really strong and their attachment to the island as such is rather loose. On the one hand, it is the only place they knew; they were born, spent their childhood and teenage years here and in a way definitely accepted it as their home. This is apparent from what Michael says on their way to the mother country: "Leaving this place going make me feel old, you know, like leaving the safety of your family to go live with strangers."[45] However, as Katrin Norris points out, their idea of home is only little ambitious. According to her, "[i]t is first and foremost the place where you can be yourself, where you

[40] *The Final Passage* 104
[41] *The Final Passage* 105
[42] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.
[43] *The Final Passage* 141.
[44] *The Final Passage* 15.
[45] *The Final Passage* 141.

belong and where you are accepted as you are for what you are." [46] For many ordinary West Indians, the islands do not fulfil this demand. As Norris specifies on the case of Jamaicans, "[t]he ordinary down-to-earth Jamaican who has not had a sophisticated education (and few have) does not feel at home in Jamaica in that way. (…) [H]e cannot be himself, he does not feel that he belongs, and he is not accepted for what he is."[47] At "home", the West Indians are constantly confronted with the need to conform, to meet the accepted social standards. As a result of this, they may feel in some ways as visitors in a foreign country.[48] As it is obvious, the colonial context broke the concept of home in the former colonies and considerably influenced their inhabitants` attachment to it. Michael`s and Leila`s roots are thus rather slippery.

As a result of this, many people are leaving the islands and, consequently, a lot of families are broken. In *The Final Passage*, there is no evidence of a complete family. Leila lives only with her mother who, however, soon leaves for England. Michael was brought up by his grandmother. Selvon`s boys also left their families and went to England alone. Bradeth`s or Millie`s parents are not even mentioned. On the basis of such phenomena, the familial ties become rather loose. The lack of permanence and the constant fluctuation of people naturally affect also friendships. To prevent being hurt, people simply and often subconsciously protect themselves by not becoming attached to somebody who can, at any time, leave forever. Although Bradeth and Michael, similarly as Leila and Millie, are friends, these relationships are in fact developed more as a way of coping with the difficulties of the Caribbean life. What connects Michael and Bradeth is their feeling of inferiority and inability to improve their island lives. This is also the case of Leila and Millie whose only topics of conversation are their boyfriends` laziness, Michael`s faithlessness and irresponsibility and Leila`s problems with her mother. Here, an analogy with the pattern of creating black immigrant communities in Britain can be found. Similarly as the immigrants, as I will explain below, Leila, Millie, Michael and Bradeth are a kind of community developed in confrontation with the society and based on their shared experience and difficulties. Colonialism obviously turned the world in the colonies upside down and did not affect only public, but also personal spheres.

[46] Norris 97.
[47] Norris 97.
[48] Norris 97.

Another thing that made their leaving easier was the fact that they felt to be a part of Great Britain and despite the distance that divided them from it, they did not really feel as emigrating but more as moving from one town to another within one single country. Also the way back seemed to be easily possible for the same reason. This made the decision to leave the islands in a way easier. However, at the time they were leaving the islands they did not take into account the possibility that there might be other reasons which would prevent them from coming back home such as pride or lack of financial resources.

Both the harbour from which Michael and Leila leave their island and Waterloo in *The Lonely Londoners* function as connections between the two worlds. For the newcomers, Waterloo is the first contact with their mother country. At the same time for the veterans it is a kind of remembrance of their home on the islands. As Moses describes it, “the old Waterloo is a place of arrival and departure, is a place where you see people crying goodbye and kissing welcome.”[49] When Moses comes here, he feels home-sick and nostalgic. In the following extract, Moses describes the atmosphere there and the meaning the place has for the immigrants:

> It have some fellars who in Brit´n long, and yet they can´t get away from the habit of going Waterloo whenever a boat-train coming in with passengers from the West Indies. They like to see the familiar faces, they like to watch their countrymen coming off the train, and sometimes they might spot somebody they know. (...) [T]he station is that sort of place where you have a soft feeling. It was here that Moses did land when he come to London, and he have no doubt that when the time come, if it ever come, it would be here he would say goodbye to the big city.[50]

Also the harbour in *The Final Passage* works as a kind of connection with the big world. For Leila and Michael, it is the last contact with their home and also the place where they say goodbye to their families and friends and realize the significance of their decision, a place of nostalgia and home-sickness. In case of Leila, the atmosphere of the place evokes the following thoughts: “This small proud island, overburdened with vegetation and complacency, this had been her home. She looked, feeling sorry for those satisfied enough to stay.”[51] In *The Final Passage*, also the ship is an important aspect of leaving one`s home. As Leila claims when leaving it, “[s]he had grown attached to this coffin-like cabin, for it was a

---

[49] Selvon 26.
[50] Selvon 26.
[51] *The Final Passage* 20.

final reminder of home."[52] On the ship, the migrants are totally dislocated. Their former home is behind, their future one before them. The ship, therefore, becomes a kind of temporary home which perfectly describes the problems in defining their identity and belonging.

With the arrival in Britain, their expectations were in most cases ruined. As Susheila Nasta puts it, "the streets of London were not paved with gold and the journey from island to city was in many cases one of disappointment and disillusion."[53] Despite the fact that they came here to seize their opportunity and improve their standards of living, the reality was often the opposite. The fact that they were officially British citizens did not matter here. The only criterion their "mother country" used to judge them was the colour of their skin.

Unfortunately, the colour of their skin was visible at first sight and therefore made it easy for the white British to stigmatize them without any further need to talk to them or to get to know them. The immigrants are perfectly aware of this fact. Their feelings are expressed by Galahad in the famous monologue in which he talks to his colour of skin as if it was a person:

> Colour, is you that causing all this, you know. Why the hell you can`t be blue, or red or green, if you can`t be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world. Is not me, you know, is you! I ain`t do anything to infuriate the people and them, is you! Look at you, you so black and innocent, and this time so you causing misery all over the world![54]

Moreover, the people who stigmatize them do not distinguish from where they really come. As Selvon wrote in *The Lonely Londoners*, "Moses come from Trinidad which is a thousand miles from Jamaica, but the English people believe that everybody who come from the West Indies come from Jamaica."[55] The English people are simply not interested from which island they really come and how far it is from Jamaica. As Moses explains to Galahad, "to them you will be just one of them black Jamaicans who coming to London thinking that the streets paved with gold."[56]

The first problem they usually encountered on the basis of their skin colour was that of accommodation. Galahad again makes it clear that it is the colour of their skin that disadvantages them here:

[52] *The Final Passage* 140.
[53] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 48-49.
[54] Selvon 88.
[55] Selvon 28.
[56] Selvon 41.

> Black, you see what you cause to happen yesterday? I went to look at that room that Ram tell me about in the Gate, and as soon as the landlady see you she say the room let already. She ain`t even give me a chance to say good morning. Why the hell you can`t change colour? (...) Is not we that the people don`t like (...) is the colour Black.[57]

When Leila and Michael try to find a place to live, they encounter various signs that directly inform that black people are not welcome there such as "No coloureds" or "No blacks".[58] Where no signs are, they usually face very rude reactions of the flat owners. However, there is no way they could defend themselves. Earl perfectly describes the inconclusiveness of the situation when he says: "Well, some people just don`t like us and I guess we have to deal with it."[59]

Also in the estate agency, Leila is offered a totally unsuitable house, which, however, the agents describe as good enough for her and her family. In the following extract, Leila describes their new house:

> Two of the upstairs window panes were broken in, and the door looked like it had been put together from the remains of a dozen forgotten doors. (...) The house was dark and smelled of neglect, and there were no curtains to open to let the light in, and there were no doors to prop open to let the air circulate. In the living room there was an old settee, an empty fireplace and a table so scratched and battered that it looked as if someone had made a bad job of shaving it.[60]

The immigrants characteristically live accumulated in certain areas of London. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Tolroy and his family live in the working class area. As Samuel Selvon describes,

> [w]henever in London that it have Working Class, there you will find a lot of spades. This is the real world, where men know what it is to hustle a pound to pay the rent when Friday come. The houses around here are old and grey and weatherbeaten, the walls cracking like the last days of Pompeii, it ain`t have no hot water, and in the whole street that Tolroy and them living in, none of the houses have bath.[61]

---

[57] Selvon 89.
[58] *The Final Passage* 155.
[59] *The Final Passage* 156.
[60] *The Final Passage* 161.
[61] Selvon 73-74.

When Leila and Michael visit the house where Leila`s mother lived, they are shocked by the conditions the men live in there. Many immigrants sleep in one room, sharing one small kitchen and bathroom in which Leila is forced to spend the night with Calvin while her husband shares one bed with Earl. Among the immigrants, these conditions are not uncommon. Similarly in *The Lonely Londoners* it is evident how they live, many lodgers sharing one room and paying rent to the flat owner.

Another problem they face is to find a suitable job which would correspond to their qualifications. As James Winston claims, "a Trinidadian accountant might become a London bus conductor; a Jamaican seamstress might find herself in a fruit-canning factory in Manchester."[62] In *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses describes to Galahad how stigmatized the immigrants from the Caribbean are when searching for a job: "Now, on all the records of the boys, you will see mark on the top in red ink. J-A, Col. That mean you from Jamaica and you black."[63] Cap also describes how disadvantaged they are compared to the white people looking for work when he says: "They send you for a storekeeper work and they want to put you in the yard to lift heavy iron. They think that is all we good for, and this time they keeping all the soft clerical jobs for them white fellars."[64]

What increased the unfriendliness of the British against the immigrants was also the fact that the rapid increase in immigration occurred at the same time as the economic situation changed. According to BBC News Online, "by 1958 the economic boom that had brought post-war migrants to the UK was over. There was increasing competition for jobs."[65] Therefore, the immigrants coming from the islands to find a job here represented a threat for the British who also lacked it. This increase of immigration from the West Indies after 1955 and the troubles it caused to the immigrants living in London are also obvious in *The Lonely Londoners*, especially in the following extract in which Moses complains about it: "[I]t had a time when I first here, when it only had a few West Indians in London, and things used to go good enough. These days, spades all over the place, and every shipload is big news, and the English people don`t like the boys coming to England to work and live."[66]

---

[62] James Winston, "The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain," *Black Experience and the Empire*, eds. Morgan and Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 374.
[63] Selvon 46.
[64] Selvon 52.
[65] Linda Pressly, "The 'forgotten' race riot," *BBC News Online*, 21 May 2007, 15 Nov. 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6675793.stm>.
[66] Selvon 74.

Another thing that the immigrants in Selvon`s and Phillips` works had to deal with was hypocrisy of the white British. When Galahad meets a white woman with a child and the child says: “Mummy, look at that black man!”[67], the mother lectures it not to call Galahad so. Galahad tries to start a conversation but, as he describes it,

> the child mother uneasy as they stand up there on the pavement with so many white people around: if they was alone she might have talked a little, and ask Galahad what part of the world he come from, but instead she pull the child along and she look at Galahad and give a sickly sort of smile, and the old Galahad, knowing how it is, smile back and walk on.[68]

It is again Galahad who remembers an event when “he was in the lavatory and two white fellars come in and say how these black bastards have the lavatory dirty, and they didn`t know that he was there and when he come out they say hello mate have a cigarette.”[69] Pretence accompanies them on their every move in London.

Paradoxically, the disillusionment is in a way positive for them and brings them what they would not find staying on the island. As Susheila Nasta puts it, “escape from the islands was frequently a stage on the route to self-discovery.”[70] As I have already mentioned above, in their places of origin, they felt themselves to be British. Leaving the islands, confronting their supposed mother country and realizing they do not belong here, they naturally thought about what is then their real home.[71] Only then they returned to their roots and started to consider the place they come from not only as a British colony but also as in a way independent place of its own with its own spirit where their real roots are. Instead of strengthening their British identity they, therefore, for the first time, began to take into account their Caribbean consciousness.

Cambridge Advanced Learner`s Dictionary explains identity as “the qualities of a person or group which make them different from others.”[72] Staying on the islands, the migrants would never realize the qualities that make them not only culturally and racially but also mentally different as they would never confront the society they felt themselves members of. This can be supported by Susheila Nasta`s statement which says that “[f]requently (...)

---

[67] Selvon 88.
[68] Selvon 88.
[69] Selvon 88.
[70] “Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels” 51.
[71] “Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels” 51.
[72] *Cambridge Advanced Learners` Dictionary*

identity can only be found (...) by confrontation with the 'other' "[73] As Nasta specifies it, "the meeting between the island and metropolis, Caliban and Prospero, must occur and is a necessary prerequisite to the flowering of a real West Indian identity (...)."[74] As I will illustrate later, to talk about "real West Indian identity" is definitely an overstatement. However, it can undoubtedly be said that the West Indians in Britain realized their "otherness". How important was coming to Britain for their identity is illustrated by the case of Samuel Selvon himself when he said: "Only in London (...) did my life find its purpose."[75] As it is obvious, their voyage to the mother country fulfilled an absolutely different purpose than they would have expected. Instead of assimilating into the new society and strengthening their British identity, by confronting this, they discovered their ultimate otherness. In other words, they found out their "non-Britishness", which, however, does not mean that they at the same time realized where they really belong. Nevertheless, it made them change the direction on their way to their real identity.

Realizing the society`s reluctance to accept them as its genuine members, they naturally looked for other means of locating themselves in this cold and hostile country. Most of the immigrants were unable to get back to their place of origin either because of lack of financial resources or for reasons of pride which disabled them from getting back to their islands without the money they expected and were expected to get in Britain. As many of them let their families and friends behind, their need of belonging finds its fulfilment in an alternative community typical for the first generation of immigrants to Britain. C.L.Innes describes this community as "a gathering of people who find their identity less through their different places of origin than through their mutual presence in London."[76] The immigrants` need for companionship is perfectly expressed by Moses when he says: "[T]his city powerfully lonely when you on your own."[77] Whether from the Caribbean, Africa or India, members of the community simply base their belonging to the community on their shared story, shared experience of dislocation, loneliness and a loss of identity; these criteria, for its current importance, overshadow any other.

---

[73] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.
[74] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 51.
[75] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 53.
[76] C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2008) 233-234.
[77] Selvon 47.

This aspect is particularly visible in Samuel Selvon`s *The Lonely Londoners*. This community gathers not only “boys” from various islands of the West Indies – for example Moses from Trinidad or Five from Barbados - but also Cap, a Nigerian. As it is apparent, Selvon built a community of men of different origins and natures who are connected by their shared feeling of unbelonging and fight for existence and identity in London. The central figure is definitely Moses Aloetta, a kind of veteran in London, around whom the other boys gather and whom the newcomers ask for help. Again, in accordance with the community pattern, Moses, if asked for help, does not distinguish between the newcomers on the basis of their origins. As Susheila Nasta points out, “the boundaries of Selvon`s black enclave are carefully defined and always made accessible to new arrivals, who need careful initiation into the games of survival.”[78] As Nasta further states, “in the black London that Selvon creates in *The Lonely Londoners*, we are unaware of the boys` particular cultural identities. So powerful is the shared dynamic of the group at this stage that even Cap, the Nigerian, begins to behave like a West Indian.”[79] According to C.L.Innes, the members of Selvon`s community seek “companionship and support in face of a bleak, impoverished and unfriendly white London.”[80] The title of the book illustrates the boys` isolation which they fight to overcome through a newly built sense of communal identity – a new sense of “togetherness”. However, their new group identity does not really solve their loneliness. They still are isolated, although this time in a community which, moreover, suppresses their individual selves, origins and personal experience and accentuates one particular aspect of their identity – their skin colour.

These men meet every Sunday morning at Moses`, have various adventures together, share their joys and troubles. Not to feel lonely, Moses looks for a place where “he could meet the boys and coast a old talk to pass the time away.”[81] He fortunately finds it, as he describes in the following extract: “It had such a place, a hostel, and you could say that in a way most of the boys graduate from there before they branch off on their own and begin to live in London.”[82] Selvon`s boys also go to clubs where they can meet others from their community. Similarly Edwin, in *The Final Passage*, takes Michael to “the newly opened Caribbean Club”[83] as he prefers it to the pub. Tolroy`s “Tanty” likes to go shopping to the

[78] “Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels” 55.
[79] “Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels” 54.
[80] Innes 233-234.
[81] Selvon 47.
[82] Selvon 47.
[83] *The Final Passage* 169.

grocery which resembles shops in the West Indies and also offers similar assortment. Selvon describes the atmosphere in the shop in the following extract: "It does be like a jam-session there when all the spade housewives go to buy, and Tanty in the lead. They getting on just as if they in the market-place back home."[84] She likes the shop as it is a "chance to meet them other women and gossip."[85]

What is thus typical for the first generation of immigrants is the homogenizing tendency so obvious in *The Lonely Londoners*. The differences between the immigrants and their cultural backgrounds are wiped off not only by the whites, who see them all just as black, but also by the immigrants themselves who create a community based on race, not on their geographical origin. Their identity is thus definitely group and racial as they perceive themselves as black. It is created as an oppositional identity in the reaction to discrimination and marginalization.

What needs to be elaborated on is how the perception of their "blackness" differed in England from that which they experienced at home. In the Caribbean, a "hierarchy of shades of black"[86] was distinguished. Basically it can be said that the less black one was, the better his position in the society.[87] The confrontation with the British black/white dichotomy was for many immigrants really shocking. As Winston James describes it,

> [i]n the 'Mother-Country' no regard was paid to the complex hierarchy of shades by the 'host' society: the pattern of racism which the Caribbean migrants experienced here did not correspond to the pigmentocracy which they left behind in the Caribbean. They were regarded monolithically as 'coloureds', 'West Indians', 'blacks', 'immigrants', and even 'wogs' with no reference to differential shades.[88]

This experience was probably most traumatic for those "less black" who, in their countries of origin, were considered white and thus almost British. For Britain, however, they were not white enough and were thus immediately placed under the category of "black" or "coloured". These light coloured immigrants have their "colonial myth of (…) [their] almost

[84] Selvon 78.
[85] Selvon 78.
[86] Winston James, "Migration, Racism and Identity," *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain,* James and Harris eds. (London: Verso, 1993) 239.
[87] "Migration, Racism and Identity" 239.
[88] "Migration, Racism and Identity" 239.

British personality completely destroyed."[89] Thus, the black/white dichotomy of Britain helped them realize that they really are not white, although they might have been considered so in their countries of origin, and thus consequently not British. As it is obvious, despite their previous positions in the Caribbean resulting from their different shades of black, all immigrants found themselves equally disadvantaged in Britain.

What is further interesting particularly about the West Indians is how the inhabitants of individual islands are brought together in Britain. The relationships between individual islands of the Caribbean are affected by "island-chauvinism", antipathies and mutual suspicion which exist between them.[90] The geographical distance also plays its role. The islands are divided by the expanse of sea – as Winston James claims, "the distance between Port of Spain (Trinidad) and Kingston (Jamaica) is the equivalent of that from London to Moscow."[91] Thus, there is little chance for some common interests, ideas or identity to develop as there scarcely is contact between the islands. That is also the reason why the concept of being West Indian does not have any true meaning.[92] Life in Britain undermines these facts and brings the inhabitants of individual islands – Jamaicans, Barbadians, Grenadians, Kittitians, Trinidadians etc. – together. The centripetal forces of British racism make the immigrants recognize their common class position and common Caribbean roots. Although it might have been difficult for some Caribbeans, the insular prejudices must have been overcome so that some public solidarity with other Caribbeans, so useful when facing a hostile environment, could develop.[93] However, the fact that the immigrants from the Caribbean were brought together was obviously more caused by their shared social position and difficulties than by their common origin.

In *The Final Passage*, Caryl Phillips does not create such a sense of community. The characters` experience is rather more isolated. However, Leila`s and Michael`s friends or people with whom they share their troubles, also come from the same specific background as they do. Michael`s more experienced colleague and friend Edwin is also black and thus can instruct him on living in London as he also does: "Well, all you need to remember is they treat us worse than their dogs."[94] They thus do not share only the same work, but also same

[89] "Migration, Racism and Identity" 240.
[90] "Migration, Racism and Identity" 240.
[91] "Migration, Racism and Identity" 240.
[92] Norris 101.
[93] "Migration, Racism and Identity" 240.
[94] *The Final Passage* 168.

feelings and experience. Both of them are not satisfied with the way they live in London and together they plan a change – they decide to set up their own business.

The need to share the feelings with people with the same experience and the same feeling of isolation is apparent in the following event after Leila`s mother`s death when Leila shares her despair with a black woman in the street. The woman, despite the fact that she does not know Leila at all, understood her despair without words.

> [Leila] grabbed the woman by the shoulders and spun her around; then she fell down and began to sob. People stopped and looked, but the woman simply leaned forward and stretched out her hand to help her. Leila looked up at her. It was not her mother, but the coloured woman whose hand she took looked like she too was going to cry.[95]

Leila also befriends her Irish neighbour Mary. Despite the fact that Mary openly comes to talk to her and is honestly interested in Leila`s affairs, their relationship soon breaks off. Interestingly this time it is not Leila`s but Mary`s colour of skin which seems to be a problem. When Leila finds a blond hair on her husband`s jacket, her behaviour to Mary changes. She simply does not trust her and counts her among the white women who love to date black men. In this case it is the lack of shared experience which constrains the development of the relationship. Although Mary is a nice woman, she is not one of those trying to survive in an alien world and fighting against colour prejudices.

Moreover, in *The Final Passage,* gender is an extremely important aspect as the character of Leila tells us a lot about how complex and difficult the situation of immigrant women from colonial or postcolonial countries is. On the island she comes from, Michael treats her as subordinate not just because he really feels it but more because of his own feeling of subordination and unfulfilled ambitions caused by colonisation. Deprived of his manhood and self-respect, Michael in fact uses Leila to regain his domination.[96] In Britain Leila`s situation naturally deteriorates even more as she faces discrimination on the grounds of both gender and ethnicity.[97] Leila, at home with a small child, lives a very limited life full of obstacles and troubles. As she has to take care of her child, she is practically unable to work and is forced to rely on her husband. Her financial security and independence are undermined.

[95] *The Final Passage* 132.
[96] Loomba 141.
[97] Emily Brittain et al., *Black & Minority Ethnic Women in the UK* (London: The Fawcett Society, 2005) 1.

She also has problems finding friends. Her inability to trust her Irish friend is again connected with her husband as she identifies Mary with white women her husband dates and who thus endanger her own position and family.

What is also worth mentioning is that Michael and also Selvon`s characters are strongly interested in white girls. This may not be caused just by a sexual affection, but also by an attempt to assimilate into an alien world. White girls are the only group of people who does not stigmatize and deny them because of the colour of their skin but quite the opposite – it is exactly the dark skin which rises their interest. They enjoy the only advantage their colour of skin offers in London. It is in fact the only field in which their colour of skin privileges them over the white men. Tolroy`s grandmother expresses her complaints over their interest in white girls when she says: "White girls (...) 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. I see Agnes bring a nice girl friend from Jamaica to see us, but you didn`t even blink on she. White girls! Go on! They will catch up with you in this country"[98]

Paradoxically, this interest of white women makes them even more unwelcome in Britain. Already Edward Long in the 18th century expressed his fear that "[because the lower class of women in England are fond of the black men] the English blood will become so contaminated with this mixture (…) [that] the whole nation resembles Portuguese and Moriscos in complexion of skin and baseness of mind."[99] Although it may seem unbelievable, in the 1950s the Tories came up with similar claims. According to James Winston, "[t]hey feared the contamination of the British 'stock' (…) or the racial character of the British people."[100]

It is obvious that the first generation of immigrants did not find their home in England. Instead of it, they found out that their mother country does not accept them as its members and also realized how the big world in England differs from their small one on the islands. Similarly as the other immigrants, Leila does not understand

> this country in which a smile could mean six things at once, a nudge on a bus from a stranger either an accident or a prologue to a series of events that might actually lead to your destruction. In England people left bread on their

---

[98] Selvon 73.
[99] James Walvin, *The Black Presence* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1971) 69.
[100] "The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain" 370.

> doorsteps and dogs came and passed water on it, and in England it never rained good and hard.[101]

In the end, instead of finding their home in England, they lived isolated from the rest of the population in their community based on their skin colour and in fact created a small "coloured immigrant world" in England. The stay in England made many of the immigrants home-sick and long to get back to the islands. Although it might have given rise to some Caribbean consciousness in them, this, however, again does not mean that they realized where their home really is.

All the above mentioned aspects of the black immigrants` position in England illustrate the complexity of their identity and difficulties connected with their search for home and belonging. To describe their situation, Susheila Nasta talks about "a kind of cultural schizophrenia".[102] Some of the West Indians will even search for their true home and identity in Africa as a place where "they can be themselves without making themselves socially objectionable."[103] Whether the cultural schizophrenia of the immigrants was of triangular shape with three edges made up by England, the Caribbean and Africa, or just a line-segment between England and the Caribbean, most of the first generation immigrants remained uprooted till the end of their lives.

[101] *The Final Passage* 198.
[102] "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels" 50.
[103] Norris 97.

3. Second-generation immigrants

The racist immigration bills which came into force in the 1960s caused a rapid decrease of immigration from the Caribbean. Between 1973 and 1982, only 1,800 Caribbean immigrants arrived in the United Kingdom. Moreover, these were mainly close relatives_of those who had already lived there. This number, compared to the figures of the 1950s, is negligible. Nevertheless, in 1982 the estimated Caribbean population in Britain was 520 000[1] as the immigrants started their families. Consequently, the 1991 British census was adjusted to these changes in that it for the first time asked not about the "birth place of the head of the household", as in case of the 1981 census, but about ethnicity. According to this census, 30% of the 3 million ethnic-minority population in Britain were black. The 2001 census showed another increase in the number of the black population, this time to 1,14 million. The main reason for this continuous rise was not immigration; a considerable part of the number was made up by those already born in Britain, with whom this chapter is concerned.[2]

The most basic and at the same time the most important characteristic of the second generation of black immigrants in Britain is that they have either lived there since early childhood or they were born and brought up there. Thus, if not all their life, they spent there at least the greater proportion of it. Thus, they differed from their parents who usually spent their childhood, teenage years or even early adulthood in their countries of origin. This fact has profound implications not only for their view of themselves and the society they live in but also for their reactions towards it. Primarily, as Adele King noted, for the second generation of immigrants, "the country of origin may only be a tale told by the elders."[3] As they had never lived there, they did not experience the difficulties of life in pre-independent states of the Caribbean or Africa which forced their parents to search for their fortune in Britain. In case of the second generation, "[t]he 'consoling' effect of a poverty-stricken colonial Caribbean backdrop is absent."[4] They naturally do not compare their position and life-chance within British society with the condition of that pre-independent society but rather with that of their white British counterparts.

For the same reason, the children of the first generation of immigrants do not feel as

---

[1] Winston James, "Migration, Racism and Identity," *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain,* eds. James and Harris (London: Verso, 1993) 263.

[2] *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* 219.

[3] Adele King, "Poscolonial African and Caribbean literature,“ *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, eds. Irele and Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004) 811.

[4] „Migration, Racism and Identity“ 251.

immigrants at all. Unlike their parents, they feel more attached to Britain. It is their home and they do not have anywhere else to go, as their parents did. The second generation immigrants are black Britons.[5] Although they obviously carry some traces of their Caribbean or Asian roots, these are very much influenced or corrupted by their living in Britain from their birth or early childhood. An example of this may be their language. Although it may resemble for example that of the Jamaicans and may differ from standard English, on the island they would probably not be easily understood and they themselves would hardly understand their Jamaican counterparts.[6] It is the same with other characteristics which make them different from „the true born Englishmen".[7] Despite the fact that in the Caribbean, Asia or Africa they would be considered foreigners, that is Englishmen (as many authors, such as V. S. Naipaul, described from their personal experience), in Britain, their roots and ancestors are still so important that the society places them to a particular category of "others". Therefore, not surprisingly, also in case of the second generation, the aspect of disillusionment is present and lies in the confrontation with the racist British society which is reluctant to accommodate them although they feel to be part of it and instead shows its open hostility towards them.

How hostile the society and mainly the political authorities were against the immigrants is illustrated by a number of post-war legislative acts on nationality and immigration. The British Nationality Act of 1948, which "confirmed the right of entry to Britain for the citizens of Empire, who were deemed British subjects,"[8] was the last legislation positive for the incoming inhabitants of British colonies. The following acts steadily reduced these rights. The first attrition was the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act which ended the post-war "open door" policy. This act "introduced a system of employment vouchers, subject to quota, for Commonwealth immigrants."[9] Further restrictions on East Indian Asians followed in 1968. Three years later the Immigration Act was introduced and "limited domicile to those born in Britain, or whose parents or grandparents were of British origin."[10] The 1981 British Nationality Act "abolished the automatic right to British citizenship for children born in Britain"[11] and is thus considered "the most significant

[5] „Migration, Racism and Identity" 252.
[6] „Migration, Racism and Identity" 252.
[7] „Migration, Racism and Identity" 251.
[8] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2002) 163-164.
[9] Head 163-164.
[10] Head 163-164.
[11] Head 163-164.

redefinition of nationality and citizenship."[12] As Dominic Head specifies, "[t]his Act was designed to restrict the naturalization of immigrants` children, but in the process it removed from the statute book an ancient birthright."[13] As it is obvious, hostility towards coloured people was encouraged by political authorities which is also proved by Churchill`s, Powell`s or Thatcher`s famous statements.

This discrimination is apparent also in Zadie Smith`s novel *White Teeth*. Similarly as in case of the first generation, it is often connected with hypocrisy and pretence. As an example of this may serve Maureen, Archie`s colleague, who to all outward appearances loves and admires Archie, but under the surface her relationship to him is different as she does not approve of his behaviour and approach to immigrants, in other words

> this strange way he had about him, always talking to Pakistanis and Caribbeans like he didn`t even notice and now he`d gone and married one and hadn`t even thought it worth mentioning what colour she was until the office dinner when she turned up black as anything and Maureen almost choked on her prawn cocktail.[14]

Similarly Archie`s boss, Kelvin Hero, who does not invite Archie to a company dinner because of his wife`s skin colour, is unable to talk to him openly. When he tries to explain the reason to Archie, he primarily tries to make himself better in Archie`s eyes, as it is obvious when he says:

> it`s not that I`m a racialist (…) I`d spit on that Enoch Powell … but then again he does have a point, doesn`t he? There comes a point, a saturation point, and people begin to feel a bit uncomfortable…. You see, all he was saying- (…) is enough is enough after a certain point, isn`t it? I mean, it`s like Delhi in Euston every Monday morning. And there`s some people around here, Arch – and I don`t include myself here – who just feel your attitude is a little strange.[15]

He knows what the general attitude of the public is and pretends to distance himself from it. He tries to convince Archie about his tolerance by using absurd arguments instead of the truth. What is more, he even flatters Archie when he says that Clara is a real beauty and has incredible legs which would make it difficult for both men and women to meet her at the

---

[12] Head 163-164.
[13] Head 163-164.
[14] Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin Books, 2001) 69.
[15] Smith 73.

dinner – among women she would arouse jealousy, among men passion impossible to cope with. Then he just sums it up and says that they needed to cut down on numbers, put the names in a hat and Archie`s came out.[16]

The second generation immigrants, similarly as the first, have to face stereotypes, racial prejudices and generalizations. For example during the Harvest Festival which they fought so hard to be allowed to celebrate, the children – Millat, Magid and Irie – go first to visit old Mr J.P. Hamilton to give him as a present some food. The old man, however, confronted by three dark-skinned children, refuses to open the door for them and suggests them to be robbing or at least selling something. When he finally allows them in, he does not want to believe the boys when they tell him that their father fought in the war. Instead, he replies:

> I`m afraid you must be mistaken (…). There were certainly no wogs as I remember - though you are probably nor allowed to say that these days are you? But no…. no Pakistanis… what would we have fed them? No, no (…) Quite out of question. (…) No Pakistanis. The Pakistanis would have been in the Pakistani army, you see, whatever that was.[17]

When telling this to the children, although he must be aware of the fact that he is disappointing them terribly, he is still genteel. Obviously, more then to convince the children, he tries to convince himself. As Smith points out, he is "assessing the question as if he were being given the opportunity to rewrite history here and now."[18] Mr J.P. Hamilton here represents British society with its attempt to erase what clashes with the racial definition of British identity, with the idea of the "clear" genes. By rejecting the loyalty of British colonial subjects during the war, he creates an ad hoc advocacy of the British approach towards them.

Another example of generalization is the fact that Millat is always called "a Paki", despite the fact that he is from Bangladesh, which makes him really angry. Other stereotypical characteristics derived from Millat`s origin and used frequently against him are apparent from the following extract:

> He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelt of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people`s jobs; or had no job

[16] Smith 73.
[17] Smith 172.
[18] Smith 172.

> and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; that he worshipped elephants and wore turbans; that no one who looked like Millat, or spoke like Millat, or felt like Millat, was ever on the news unless they had recently been murdered. In short, he knew he had no face in this country, no voice in this country (...).[19]

Similarly Jackie Kay, the heroine of the long autobiographical poem *The Adoption Papers*, is called *Sambo* and *Dirty Darkie.* She is the one to blame when she physically attacks the verbal abusers, the teacher does not stand up for her. Instead, she is supposed to become a juvenile delinquent in a few years and is humbled by being forced to read the definition of the term out to the class.

In connection with the discrimination, the basis of the racial definition of British identity must be explained. From the above mentioned sketch of legislation it is obvious how the subjects of the former British Empire, first positively encouraged to migrate to the mother country, were constantly rejected from the 1960s onwards. As Dominic Head points out, "the shifting policy shows that identity based on national affiliation is a mutable, political construction." [20] Thus the move from national identity based on citizenship to racial definition was possible, compounded by the immigration policies of successive governments.[21] Inevitably, Head talks about the constructedness of national identity.[22] The immigration policy helped to foster racism and expressed "a denial of postcolonial obligations and a rejection of the postcolonial heritage."[23] As Caryl Phillips points out, „Britain has perennially sought to define herself and her character by defining others. Naturally enough, the country finds herself in great difficulty when presented with those who seem keen to resist definition. These 'in-betweens' (…) present Britain with a problem of categorisation."[24]

This racial identity is inevitably exclusive as people who do not meet the requirements become outcasts despite their personal feeling and their preconditions for belonging. Jackie Kay`s position is the best to illustrate this. Unlike other second generation immigrants, with

[19] Smith 234.
[20] Head 163-164.
[21] Head 163.
[22] Head 163-164.
[23] Head 163-164.
[24] Caryl Phillips, „White Teeth by Zadie Smith," *A New World Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002) 284.

whom this paper is concerned, she was brought up by a totally conforming family. Her only difference is thus the colour of her skin perceived as different mainly through the confrontation with the white exclusive society. As *The Adoption Papers* make clear, the verbal abuse she experiences makes sense of what she sees in the mirror and makes it more significant. Also the already mentioned generalizations remind her, as the addressee, of her "otherness". Kay`s skin colour makes her teacher expect her to be good at dancing, to have it in her blood. This makes her think of herself as different and question her identity. In her particular case all her doubts concentrate in one question: "What Is In My Blood?"[25] Kay`s own perception of herself simply clashes with the racially defined identity imposed by the society. Although she does not feel different, the prevalent notion that some people are more normal and some more different than others draws her attention to her skin colour as an alienating element. Similarly, her mother does not think of her adoptive daughter as black except when she is reminded about it: "To be honest I hardly ever think about it/ except if something happens, you know/ daft talk about darkies. Racialism.[26]

I have already shown that the second generation endured the hostility previously visited upon their parents. However, as a result of the above mentioned characteristics which distinguish them from the first generation, their perception of racism is much more sensitive and their experience of the phenomenon much more direct and disturbing as they, in spite of feeling and being at home in Britain, are treated as "others", as an oppressed black minority.[27] Unlike their parents, they do not understand why they should sustain it and content themselves with life in a black enclave, isolated from the white British society. Moreover, unlike the first generation of immigrants who believed themselves to be transient[28] and mostly came to the mother country to earn some money and return to their islands, the second generation immigrants seek to establish some sense of permanence.[29] As Mark Stein points out, "[i]n the texts by Windrush writers there is a peculiar romance with London, an attraction to the metropolis (Selvon); and romance, of course, brings with it a fair amount of volatility. The younger writers are more adamant as to where they belong."[30] Their opposition to racism is consequently much more instantaneous and more forthright. In the following extract, Caryl

---

[25] Jackie Kay, *Darling: New & Selected Poems* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2008) 30.
[26] Kay 30.
[27] „Migration, Racism and Identity" 251.
[28] C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2008) 237.
[29] Innes 237.
[30] Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004) 22.

Phillips describes his own experience:

> Our response was different from that of our parents, who often held their tongues in order that they might protect their children. We were invested in British society in a way in which they were not and it was clear to us that a British future involved not only kicking back when kicked, but continuing to kick until a few doors opened and things changed. We, the second generation, had to change British society with our intransigence, or what the police force called our "attitude", because British society was certainly not going to change of its own volition.[31]

This forthrightness of response manifested itself already in the 1970s that witnessed many race riots and inner city disturbances. The fact that these were taking place mainly in London, Liverpool and Bristol illustrates the complex relationship of the past on the present.[32] Of course these disturbances already took place in the 1950s and to mark the first generation as "the innocent" and the second as "the rebel" would be an oversimplification. Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s riots definitely differed not only in motive but also in intensity. As Phillips describes, "I remember every night being exposed to images on the television screen and each morning reading stories in newspapers, all of which depicted black youths who looked just like me as a disciplinary problem in the heart of Britain."[33] The youth gangs who made their skin colour and "otherness" the basis of their identity are in *White Teeth* represented by Millat`s crew and later by KEVIN. The members of Millat`s crew - Rajik, Ranil, Dipesh and Hifan – have already tried to make themselves acceptable by behaving properly and following the white society`s cultural codes. As this tactics did not work, they were forced to find other means of making themselves exceptional and visible: "People had fucked with Wajik back in the days when he was into chess and wore V-necks. People had fucked with Ranil, when he sat at the back of the class and carefully copied all teacher`s comments into his book. (…) But no one fucked with any of them anymore because they looked like trouble."[34] The group is characterized by many seemingly incongruous aspects such as an emphasis on their Eastern roots and imitation of their favourite characters of *The Clockwork Orange.* In the following extract, Smith describes the mix of cultures the group consists of:

---

[31] Caryl Phillips, "The Pioneers: Fifty Years of Caribbean Migration to Britain," *A New World Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002) 277.
[32] "The Pioneers: Fifty Years of Caribbean Migration to Britain" 277.
[33] "The Pioneers: Fifty Years of Caribbean Migration to Britain" 277.
[34] Smith 232.

> It was a new breed, just recently joining the ranks of the other street crews: Becks, B-boys, Indie kids, wide-boys, ravers, rude-boys, Acidheads, Sharons, Tracies, Kevs, Nation Brothers, Raggas and Pakis; manifesting itself as a kind of cultural mongrel of the last three categories. Raggastanis spoke a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati and English. Their ethos, their manifesto, if it could be called that, was equally a hybrid thing: Allah featured, but more as a collective big brother than a supreme being, a hard-as-fuck geezer who would fight in their corner if necessary; Kung Fu and the works of Bruce Lee were also central to the philosophy; added to this was a smattering of Black Power (as embodied by the album Fear of a Black Planet, Public Enemy); but mainly their mission was to put the Invincible back in Indian, the Bad-aaaass back in Bengali, the P-Funk back in Pakistani.[35]

KEVIN, Keepers of the Eternal Vigilance of the Islamic Nation, is another example of a group that defines itself in terms of common "otherness" in an exclusive society. In this case, the connecting factor is religion. Among its members are for example Millat, Hifan, Tyrone, Mo Hussein-Ishmael, Shiva, Abdul-Colin and Abdul-Jimmy. Mo`s reasons for joining the group illustrate generally the cause of establishing such organizations. As an owner of the most famous halal butchers in North London, he was many times a victim of serious physical violence and robbery. He had been knifed five times, lost the tips of his three fingers, had his legs and arms broken, his teeth kicked out, his shop set on fire. He even decided not to report it to the police as they, once he did it, attacked him as well. These violent acts were made by various people from various backgrounds who, however, shared their hate towards people like Mo and also their skin colour:

> These various people had various objections to him: he was a Paki (try telling a huge drunk Office Superworld check-out boy that you`re Bangladeshi); he gave half his corner shop up to selling weird Paki meat; he had a quiff; he liked Elvis ("You like Elvis, then? Do yer? Eh, Paki? Do yer?); the price of his cigarettes; his distance from home ("Why don`t you go back to your own country?''But then how will I serve you cigarettes? Boof); or just the look on his face. But they all had one thing in common, these people. They were all white.[36]

As Mo admits, the physical abuse politicized him and made him more attached to his faith. Thus, when he was offered a KEVIN leaflet explaining that a war is going on, he did

[35] Smith 232.
[36] Smith 473.

not hesitate to join it as his anger and despair suddenly found their meaning and he realized what it is that he wants:

> He wanted Brother Ibrahim to stand on that podium and dissect Christian culture and Western morals until it was dust in his hands. He wanted the degenerate nature of these people explained to him. (...) He wanted to see their art exposed and their science exposed, and their tastes exposed and their distastes. (...) He wanted to know why these people kept on beating the shit out of him. And then he wanted to go and beat the shit out of some of these people.[37]

In other words, he longs for his revenge – to hurt white people in the same way as they hurt him and his culture.

Taking into account the facts we already know about the second generation immigrants, it is clear that this behaviour cannot be dismissed simply just as "fundamentalism", an import from Middle Eastern Islamic countries. In fact, we have what the media have called "home grown terrorism" - a production of British society. The rebelliousness and disaffection which result from the ethnic suppression of the immigrants` children waits deep inside to be unleashed. In case of *White Teeth*, the Rushdie Affair works as the required cause for self-realization, an attempt for ethnic visibility and action.[38] As Phillips explains, "[i]n the end what the second generation were actually saying, brick, bottle, stone or book in hand, was, we are British, we won`t allow you to harass and marginalise us, and we are not going away. In fact, we don`t have anywhere else to go."[39]

Hybridity which is so apparent in case of Millat`s crew and other similar groups of young coloured boys or men is typical for this period. It results from the above mentioned aspects of the immigrants` position and the antagonisms and paradoxes that accompany it. The children of immigrants do not become genuine members of the British milieu; they do not adopt the culture of the former colonial power. It is the same with their parents` culture from which they are separated not only by birth but also by education. Instead, they often become part of a black British, third and hybridized culture.[40] This hybridization gives them such labels as "Asian-British", "Caribbean-British" or "African-British", or more particular

[37] Smith 474.
[38] Head 185.
[39] "The Pioneers: Fifty Years of Caribbean Migration to Britain" 277.
[40] King 811.

ones such as “Brixton-Jamaican”, “Cardiff-Bengali” or “Liverpool-Nigerian”. As *The Cambridge History of the Caribbean Literature* explains, they do not choose between past and future, origins and new home, former roots and assimilation. Instead, they are in the process of transition toward some new cultural identity:[41]

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O`Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checks…[42]

Caryl Phillips, a member of the second generation of immigrants, describes his own experience of growing up in England in the late 1960s and 1970s and his kind of hybridity - the plural notion of home - that resulted from it. As he points out, the key issue of his generation was identity. He says:

> We spoke with the same accent as the other kids, we watched the same television programmes, we went to the same schools, we did the same exams. Surely we were British. Well, of course, we were and eventually we insisted that we were even in the face of a nation which continued to invest in a racially constructed sense of itself.[43]

As he describes, he was constantly asked where he is from and his answer, which corresponded to his own conviction, which was that he is from Leeds or from Yorkshire, was always insufficient. This constant reminding him about his roots and the hostility of the government and the public he was aware of, made him question his Englishness, his identity. It undermined his sense of belonging and affected his ability to devote himself wholeheartedly to the idea of Britain as his home.[44]

---

[41] King 810.
[42] Smith 150.
[43] “The Pioneers: Fifty Years of Caribbean Migration to Britain“ 277.
[44] Caryl Phillips, “Conclusion: The ‘High Anxiety‘ of Belonging,“ *A New World Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002) 303-304.

A perfect example of this hybridity in *White Teeth* is Millat. As Smith describes it, "the problem with Millat`s subconscious (…) was that it was basically split-level."[45] On the one hand, he was trying hard to live as the rules of KEVIN suggest. This means following four main criteria, three of which assign him to be ascetic in his habits, to remember the glory of Muhammad and the might of the Creator and to fully understand Quaran. These did not mean a problem for Millat, unlike the fourth, which is to "purge oneself of the taint of the West."[46] The main reason for this is that he loves Hollywood movies which, from the Islamic or KEVIN point of view are "an example of *the moribund, decadent, degenerate, over-sexed, violent state of Western capitalist culture and the logical endpoint of its obsession with personal freedoms*."[47] His most favourite – the gangster movie - is the worst of all. Although he tries to do his best to avoid temptation (he for example throws away his video recorder), his self influenced by the Western life style does not give up so easily and when doing certain things he is still reminded of certain scenes from his favourite movies. Thus, two contradictory dreams, one connected with his Western self – to be a gangster, the other with the Eastern one – to be a Muslim, compete with one another, each of them supported by its particular half of Millat`s mind.

In case of Millat, there are many other situations which illustrate the complexity of his identity. Among these is, for example, the special particularity with which he places his praying mat for a prayer – "pointing it towards the Kaba, ensuring the mat was no higher than floor level, resting on no books or shoes, his fingers closed and pointing to the quibla in line with his ears, ensuring both forehead and nose touched the floor, with two feet firmly on the ground but ensuring the toes were not bent (…)"[48] - after having sex on it with Irie. Another time he smokes marijuana on the second day of Ramadan despite the fact that the rules of KEVIN consider it "a drug specifically imported by governments to subdue the black and Asian community, to lessen our powers."[49] Moreover, KEVIN also influenced Millat`s opinion on women and their clothes. Before joining KEVIN, he always liked his girlfriend to wear clothes that revealed certain parts of her body. After that, he, on the basis of their propagandist leaflets, begins to suspect her of "prostituting herself to the male gaze."[50] He

[45] Smith 444.
[46] Smith 444.
[47] Smith 445.
[48] Smith 461.
[49] Smith 296.
[50] Smith 350.

blames her for provoking white men to look at her and wants her to cover up. His approach to women and sex is also apparent from his speech to Karina in which he tries to persuade her to be obedient and silent: “Don`t do that … don`t offer it to me like a whore. Haven`t you heard of unnatural acts? Besides, I`ll take it if I want it – and why can`t you be a lady, don`t make all that noise!”[373] This naturally hurts Karina as she does not know what is happening with Millat. And, what is important to note, neither does he.

What needs to be mentioned is also Millat`s accent that “modulated wildly between the rounded tones of the Chalfens and the street talk of the KEVIN clan.”[51] As Smith says, to all outward appearances, Millat is a social chameleon. Underneath his carelessness, however, “there remained an ever present anger and hurt, the feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere.”[52] All these aspects of his identity show Millat`s ‘in-betweenness’, as Smith sums up, “Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, Zulfikar, the clashing of swords (…).”[53]

In *The Adoption Papers*, such hybridity is described in several ways at the same time. Firstly, it is the daughter`s relationship to both her birth and adoptive mothers which reflects “the tension between ties of blood and those of upbringing.”[54] Kay gives space not only to the mothers` feelings, but also describes what the daughter learns about herself in relation to her two mothers – her self-awareness developed through other viewpoints and lives. Her hybridity and postcoloniality lies in the fact that she was born to one woman, but calls another “mother”.[55] This makes her an ideal representative of the second generation immigrants who were born to one race but found their home in another.

Secondly, it works in terms of a break between “myself” and “my appearance” equaled with the gap between mother and daughter.[56] In the main protagonist, whiteness or Scottishness, represented by her mothers, exist alongside Blackness or her Nigerian roots, attested in her appearance.[57] Thus, the question “What is In My Blood”, as Kadiatu Kanneh

---

[51] Smith 351.
[52] Smith 269.
[53] Smith 351.
[54] Raajev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 38.
[55] Patke 38.
[56] Kadiatu Kanneh, *African Identities: Race, Nation, and Culture in Etnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1998) 184.
[57] Kanneh 186.

specifies, “is further complicated by the incommensurability between mother and racialised mirror-image.”[58] Here he is referring to the passage in which Kay confronts herself with her appearance: “I can see my skin is that colour/ but most of the time I forget,/ so sometimes when I look in the mirror/ I give myself a bit of a shock/ and say to myself *Do you really look like this?*/ as if I`m somebody else.”[59]

In the relationship of white mother and black daughter, the social construct of racial difference is of vast importance as it intrudes the dialogue between them and the imagined impossibility of mutual identification perverts their love.[60] Many white mothers who gave birth to black children, described their inability to identify with them across racial difference. The constructed notion of some people being different simply corrupts natural familial ties. As Kadiatu Kanneh puts it, “exposure, voyeurism and ‘biological’ nightmares abound and structure identities in powerful ways – often to such an extent that the fact of family belonging cannot transcend or compete with ‘visible’ racial belonging; one biological myth simply supersedes genetics.”[61]

In *The Adoption Papers*, the idea of mother not being able to identify fully with her child as it is not the expected carbon copy of her is reversed. It is the daughter who is unable to find her identity and self-understanding first through her white adoptive mother, later also through her white birth mother. Although for the adoptive mother her daughter`s skin colour does not matter (“colour matters to the nutters”), to the child it does. The fact that she has only very little information about her birth mother – she exists in her mind faceless - makes her feel “historyless”. Her mirror image does not tell her much about her identity and she wants to know her blood. Her motherlessness is further intensified by her historylessness:

> I don`t know what diseases
> come down to my line;
> the old blood questions about family runnings
> (…)
> I have my parents who are not of the same tree
> and you keep trying to make it matter,
> the blood, the tie, the passing down
> generations.[62]

[58] Kanneh 186.
[59] Kay 32.
[60] Kanneh 184.
[61] Kanneh 185.
[62] Kay 34.

Although some aspects of her past are slowly revealed – she finds out her original name, the hospital and time she was born and even finds her birth mother, this does not bring her much satisfaction. The answers to her question remain hidden mainly because of the racial division separating her from her birth mother – her longing for self-understanding is again "crossed by Whiteness."[63] The only thing they have in common is the chin. Neither her adoptive parents, nor her birth mother are "of the same tree."[64] Searching for her identity, she is unable to find it through any of them. Thus, similarly as the other second generation immigrants, as Millat, Magid or Irie, she is stuck in her hybridity between the unknown past – her origin with which the connection is quite tenuous[65] - and the known but alienating present.

In Kay`s work, this idea of hybridity is made more complex by the fact that she employs not two, but three voices – the White birth mother, the White adoptive mother and the Black daughter. Somewhere, although not directly present in the book, is also Kay`s father – a Nigerian, who is in a way the source of her difference. In *The Adoption Papers*, it is the father who seems to be the only person through whom Kay could find herself and her true identity and her situation thus stays unresolved till some possible future meeting with him. For the time being, in her search for a black cultural inheritance, she finds only her black political mother,[66] as the only person with whom she is able to identify becomes Angela Davis:

> Angela Davis is the only person (except for a nurse on TV)
> who looks like me. She had big hair like mine
> that grows out instead of down
> my mum says it is called an *Afro*.[67]

The Adoption Papers also "foregrounds the tension of the inter-racial by focusing on the social unit of the adoptive family."[68] Although the daughter struggles to find her history through her birth mother and thus for a while turns her back on her adoptive one, their relationship is very close. The adoptive mother is a caring figure who loves her daughter as her own. As Patke describes, their relationship "becomes a concrete instance that proves the

---

[63] Kanneh 186.
[64] Kay 34.
[65] Stein 7.
[66] Kanneh 186.
[67] Kay 32.
[68] Patke 38.

capacity of need, care, and love to accept and transcend racial distinctions without recourse to the sentimental or the platitudinous."[69]

Just as *The Adoption Papers*, *White Teeth* presents the reader with characters who fight to be accepted and shows their "pain of wanting to belong".[70] As Caryl Phillips said in his review of the book, "[i]n this respect, *White Teeth* is full of false smiles and contrived faces, masks that are repeatedly donned in order to better hide the pain."[71] Individual characters find their particular ways of dealing with their hybridity, with discrimination and marginalization. Some of them try to make themselves acceptable for the society they live in by changing their appearance. This aspect survives from the first generation to the second. Many of the immigrants still try to conform to the imposed standard of European beauty. As the very basics, the immigrants consider white skin and straight hair. Irie is a perfect example of this attempt for an outward assimilation. She is totally dissatisfied with her appearance:

> Irie believed she had been dealt the dodgy cards: mountainous curves, buck teeth and thickmetal retainer, impossible afro hair, and to top it off mole-ish eyesight which in turn required bottle-top spectacles in a light shade of pink. (…) And this belief in her ugliness, in her *wrongness*, had subdued her; she kept he smart-ass comments to herself these days, she kept her right hand on her stomach. She was all *wrong*.[72]

The mask that she attempts to create is thus that of "Englishness" used to cover her true origin. She hates all characteristics of her body which are connected with her half-Jamaican origin – the shape of her body, her hair, her brown eyes. She tries to do her best to change these. As Zadie Smith puts it, she is "unwilling to settle for genetic fate; waiting instead for her transformation from Jamaican hourglass heavy with sands that gather round Dunn River Falls, to English Rose."[73] She longs to be white, slender and delicate as she imagines the perfect Englishwoman should be. She is unable to accept herself as she is, mainly because of the all-pervasive standard of beauty which is quite contrary to what she looks like. Irie is quite convinced that her appearance, as long as it is different from the ideal,

---

[69] Patke 38.
[70] „White Teeth by Zadie Smith" 286.
[71] „White Teeth by Zadie Smith" 286.
[72] Smith 268.
[73] Smith 267.

is wrong. As Smith puts it, „[t]here was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a stranger land."[74]

Her first attempt to fight her genes is the visit at the hairdresser`s. She dreams to have "[s]traight straight long black sleek flickable tossable shakeable touchable finger-through-able windblowable hair. With a fringe."[75] To fulfil her dream, she is willing to undergo a painful and for her hair dangerous procedure, similarly as many other women who visit P.K.`s for the same reason. In the following extract she describes the female section: "Here, the impossible desire for straightness and 'movement' fought daily with the stubborn determination of the curved African follicle; here ammonia, hot combs, clips, pins and simple fire had all been enlisted in the war and were doing their damnedest to beat each curly hair into submission."[76] To have their hair "as straight as it ever going to be"[77] and that only for maximum of 3 weeks, the women are willing to sustain incredible pain caused by the chemical used for straightening an Afro and also the risk of losing their hair that is the case of Irie. Her desire to belong ends up in a shop offering a variety of hair originally belonging to some poor Indian girls who were so lucky as to be born with straight hair.

A similar mask expressing the pain of wanting to belong is Magid`s wish to be called Mark Smith, thus denying his original name Magid Mahfooz Murshed Mibtasim Iqbal. Magid longs to be the same as other boys, to do the same things and, what is most important, to be considered the same. After all, he does not differ that much. In many ways, he feels the same as other boys, there are only a few things that stand between him and the imagined Mark Smith. When his teacher tries to explain to the other children that they should tolerate other people`s culture, she asks Millat what kind of music he likes. The boy, however, in his desire to assimilate, answers that it is Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson. In connection with this, worth-mentioning is his and Irie`s attempt to persuade their parents to allow them to celebrate the Harvest Festival, which Samad denies as pagan. In the following extract, Smith describes what is behind this wish:

> But this was just a symptom of a far deeper malaise. Magid really wanted to be in some other family. He wanted to own cats and not cockroaches; he wanted his mother to make the music of the cello, not the sound of the sewing machine; he wanted to have a trellis of flowers growing up one side of the

[74] Smith 266.
[75] Smith 273.
[76] Smith 275.
[77] Smith 275.

> house instead of the ever growing pile of other people`s rubbish; he wanted a piano in the hallway in place of the broken door off cousin Kirshed`s car; he wanted to go on biking holidays to France (…) and this month Magid had converted all these desires into a wish to join in with the Harvest Festival like Mark Smith would. Like everybody else would.[78]

Another mask, this time in the literal sense of word, is worn by mad "Mr White-Face, an Indian who walks the streets of Willesden with his face painted white, his lips painted blue, wearing a pair of tights and some hiking boots."[79] In his case, the desire to be accepted is stretched to the extreme and sadly mocked. Another man considered mad is Mr Newspaper, who is "a tall skinny man in an ankle-length raincoat who sits in Brent libraries removing the day`s newspapers from his briefcase and methodically tearing them into strips."[80] Finally, this group of people is represented by Mad Mary, "a black voodoo woman with a red face whose territory stretched from Kilburn to Oxford Street."[81] An important characteristic of Mad Mary is that she does not like white people. This is almost incomprehensible for Poppy as such an idea – that someone could not like white people – has never occurred to her. Mad Mary roams the streets, terrifying white people, making them give in to her demands under threat of putting a curse on their business. When she first sees her, Poppy says to Samad, not realizing the depth of her question: "Poor woman, can you imagine what must have happened in her life to make her like that?"[82] It is the city which, as *White Teeth* informs "breeds the Mad."[83] Mad Mary, a woman not touched for more than 15 years, encountering discrimination and marginalization turned the idea of clear British genes upside down and started to discriminate and abuse white people.

Throughout *White Teeth*, the idea of pure race is questioned many times. There are many such "in-betweens" and it would be far from true to claim that among them are only immigrants and their children. As Caryl Phillips said, "these Abdul-Mickeys (or his brother Abdul-Colin), these working-class white men, like Archie, who marry Jamaican women 20 years their junior, these non-believing 'Muslims' such as Millat, these 'white birds' who go

[78] Smith 151.
[79] Smith 174.
[80] Smith 174.
[81] Smith 174.
[82] Smith 176.
[83] Smith 174.

weak at the knees for people such as Magid - such people present Britain with a problem of categorisation."[84]

The Chalfens, for example, represent the ideal clear genes; they are a seeming materialization of the above mentioned racial definition of British identity. However, their description seems more like a parody. Irie, before meeting them, is extremely nervous, as she had "never been so close to this strange and beautiful thing, the middle class"[85] and feels like "the prude who walks through a nudist beach, examining the sand."[86] She longs to be part of their family and to separate herself from her own. Throughout the book, Joyce continuously expresses her ignorance which clashes with the expectation of intelligence and wisdom resulting not only from the others` opinion but also from their own presentation of themselves. The children were sent here to study and learn as much as possible from the Chalfen family, in other words, to be made more English. Instead, Joyce becomes strangely obsessed with Millat just as her husband becomes with Magid. They tolerate Millat`s bad behavior, let him roll joints at their table. Their fascination and concern with the twins cause problems for their own children whom they disregard and make their family even more dysfunctional than it had already been.

Another example of questioning the idea that somebody of the clear genes exists is when Alsana looks up in the dictionary what a Bengali is. She finds out that Bengalis are descendants of Indo-Aryans. She then suggests that maybe she is Western after all and expresses her disbelief that somebody of such pure race, as the Englishmen claimed themselves to be, exists at all: "[Y]ou go back and back and it`s still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe. Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It`s a fairy-tale!"[87] From the diversity of characters, it is apparent how mixed the world of *White Teeth* is.

In *White Teeth*, nobody is of the "clear" genes, even the Chalfens are found out to be part of the Jewish diaspora. Only the fact that the family`s immigration to Britain took place earlier than that of the Iqbals or the Joneses and their skin colour make them seem more English. From *White Teeth*, however, it is clear that the traditional exclusive Englishness is

[84] "White Teeth by Zadie Smith" 284.
[85] Smith 321.
[86] Smith 321.
[87] Smith 236.

unattainable.[88] In fact, the ideal that the immigrants look up to and imitate is just an imaginative and absurd empty construct. In the end, Irie, of half-Jamaican, half-English origin, gets pregnant with either Millat or Magid, both having Bangladeshi ancestors. The child will thus be a perfect representative member of the mixed race Britain, as Stein described it, "a world where 'Indian' and 'English' do not refer back to an essentialized identity, but where, in fact, there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English."[89] Smith intentionally created a picture of a postmodern multicultural and multiethnic mixed world.

Both Smith and Kay obviously described the transformation of culture in Britain and expressed the need for a redefinition of British identity. The novelist Andrea Levy, born in London to Jamaican parents, expressed what the characters examined above would most probably identify with: "If Englishness doesn`t define me, then redefine Englishness."[90] *White Teeth* is quite positive in this regard, it "believes not only in the possibility of change, it also possesses a Utopian quality that suggests the multicultural clock cannot be turned back."[91] In *The Adoption Papers*, the transformation of the society and culture is described through the daughter`s circumstances. As Raajev S. Patke describes, these "illustrate how migration from former colonies has brought contemporary Britain to a forced negotiation with the possibility of a multi-racial society."[92] Familial identification is transformed to an abstract notion about ethnicity and, as Patke specifies, it demonstrates that "bonds developed through association and nurture can heal the damage caused by the severance of the bond of nature."[93] The adoptive mother and daughter`s relationship may transcend the natural birth bond on condition that both sides are equally involved. The positive, or again Utopian belief, is expressed by Kay in her adoptive mother`s speech: "Closer than blood. Thicker than water. Me and my daughter."[94]

---

[88] Stein 17.
[89] Stein xii.
[90] Stein 17.
[91] Stein xii.
[92] Patke 38.
[93] Patke 38.
[94] Kay 39.

4. Reconstruction of history

In the previous chapters, I have elaborated on the immigrants` position in British society. Although the two generations examined differ in many aspects, they share one fundamental characteristic: the social construct of a racially defined identity unfairly disadvantaged them in comparison with their white counterparts and they were not considered genuine British citizens. To be able to advocate this kind of exclusive Englishness, the authorities had to retrospectively correct the past and attempt to erase events and aspects that clashed with this idea. The history of Blacks in Britain was naturally among these.[1] As an example of this may serve the already mentioned Mr J. P. Hamilton, created by Zadie Smith in *White Teeth*, who strongly rejected the idea that somebody else than white Englishmen fought for their country in World War II. Thanks to the fact that the history of black Britons was successfully suppressed, authorities, such as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, or Enoch Powell, a Member of Parliament, could mark the 1950s as the beginning of the nation`s race problem and identify black people in Britain only as post-war migrants from the colonies.[2] They thus declined not only British colonial heritage and involvement in slavery but also the existence of the term "black Briton" as such.

As a consequence of this suppression of black British history and in reaction to what may be called state racism, many writers attempted to bring to life and draw people`s attention to the long history of a black presence in England. They wanted to give black people greater visibility in Britain`s national past,[3] advocate their right to be there and be accepted by emphasizing "England`s long history of transracial relations that was the outcome of its ever-expanding Empire."[4] Through their works, they re-established "connections between the West Indies and an English nation that disassociated itself from the slavery of its colonies."[5] As a point of departure for explaining black presence in a nation that has traditionally been white-identified, the writers usually use England`s implication in slavery.[6] The multiethnic and multiracial Britain, which is described in works by Smith and Kay, is thus presented not only a result of a post-Windrush immigration (dealt with by Samuel Selvon and Caryl Phillips) but

[1] Jenny Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery: A Literary Archaeology of Black Women`s Lives* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) 88.
[2] Sharpe 88.
[3] Sharpe 88.
[4] Sharpe 88.
[5] Sharpe 88.
[6] Sharpe 88.

presented as having a long, even ancient, history that began as a painful co-existence between British slave owners/traders and Black African/Caribbean slaves. Both Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen, whose works will be analysed below, "turned to the eighteenth century and the history of slavery as a means of bringing to life a suppressed history."[7] In their works, history becomes a source of collective memory and thus helps to re-build the broken black British identity.

The reason for a reconstruction of history was the lost historical background of the immigrants resulting from their leaving their countries of origin. As Salman Rushdie puts it:

> All migrants leave their pasts behind, although some try to pack it into bundles and boxes – but on the journey something seeps out of the treasured mementoes and old photographs, until even their owners fail to recognize them, because it is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging.[8]

This quotation emphasizes the need for a rooting in a past collective memory, which brings a collective sense of identification with the past. As Rushdie describes in the following extract, diaspora means being robbed not only of place but of time too. Consequently, the past needs to be constantly re-created:

> And what is the worst thing? It is the emptiness of one`s luggage. I`m speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containing a few meaning-drained mementoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time.[9]

This sense of deprivation of one`s own history connected with the family and an original home was naturally made worse by the black people`s exclusion from the history of their mother country. Rushdie further quotes Kundera who wrote that "[a] name means continuity with the past and people without a past are people without a name."[10] It is also for these reasons – to re-create continuity and belonging - that the writers turn back to history. According to Paul Gilroy, they "redefine what it means to be black, adapting it to distinctively

---

[7] C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2008) 240.
[8] Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Vintage, 1995) 64.
[9] Rushdie 87.
[10] Rushdie 88.

British experience."[11] They explain why black people are there and show that they did not become involved in the British Empire willingly. Thus, reconstruction of the past is closely connected with the immigrants` identity and may work as one of the means for self-recognition.

Although Phillips came to Britain as a one-year-old child, he realizes that his history in this country is much longer. As he claims, "all journeys have a beginning. Mine began on the west coast of Africa in a slave fortress."[12] One of these, Elmina Castle in Ghana, becomes emblematic of his ancestral "home" lost or found and of the original departure. It helps him face part of his Atlantic history and realize that his Atlantic "home" is in fact "triangular in shape with Britain at one apex, the west coast of Africa at another, and the new world of North America (including the Caribbean) forming the third point of the triangle."[13]

In *Cambridge*, Phillips attacks the roots of modern racism by questioning the very basis of its ideological formation.[14] As Sean Hawkins and Philip D. Morgan claim, "[i]n the Caribbean during the period of slavery, the racial animosity of whites toward enslaved blacks (…) was inchoate, for the obvious reason that the institution more than accomplished the job of keeping blacks in an inferior position."[15] In Phillips`s work the racial hierarchies are all-pervading. Different shades of black are distinguished – the lighter the skin, the more privileges one enjoys, and on the contrary. In Emily`s words: "A milkier hue signified some form of white blood, and it should be clear to even the most egalitarian observer that the more white blood flowing in a person`s veins, the less barbarous will be his social tendencies."[16] Moreover, the division of shades or the mixing of races is very formally observed and a set of terms exist which denotes a particular generation of mixed ancestry – from *mulatto* (a child of one black and one white parent), over *sambo*, *quadroon* and *mustee*, *to musteefino*. As Emily specifies, "the children of musteefino are free by law, and rank as white persons to all intents and purposes."[17]

---

[11] Gilroy 1987, in Alan Tomlison and John Horn, *Twentieth Century in Poetry* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1999) 154.
[12] "Conclusion: The 'High Anxiety' of Belonging" 305.
[13] "Conclusion: The 'High Anxiety' of Belonging" 305.
[14] Paul Sharrad, "Speaking the Unspeakable: London, Cambridge and the Caribbean," *De-scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994) 216.
[15] Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, "Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction," *Black Experience and the Empire*, eds. Morgan and Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 14.
[16] Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991) 25.
[17] *Cambridge* 53.

One of the means employed to question the basis of white supremacy in *Cambridge* are ambivalent characters. Emily is probably the most equivocal figure. She leaves England with a prospect that on her return she will have to marry a fifty-year-old widower with three children who will financially provide for her. She is aware of her subordinated position, of what is expected (and, primarily, what her father expects) of her. As she says, “I am simply a lady of polite status with little talent, artistic or otherwise.”[18] Still, she is thirty, yet unmarried and travels to the West Indies which is not very typical of a decent Englishwoman of her age and class at the time. As she admits, “[t]he truth was she was fleeing the lonely regime which fastened her into backboards, corsets and stays to improve her posture.”[19] Emily is obviously full of contradictions. As Paul Sharrad claims, “[o]n the one hand she is upper-class, Home-grown, and a surrogate male, being a plantation owner`s daughter. On the other hand she is an unaccompanied, and therefore vulnerable, female, and an ignorant newcomer.”[20] Despite her seeming emancipation and her constant attempts to be superior, she often, willingly or not, submits to men`s wishes and opinions. All male characters in the book primarily take her as a helpless woman, potentially as an object of courting. Mr Brown denies to wait for her with dinner and her orders for the black woman Christiania to leave her table go unnoticed and her powerlessness often forces her to retire to her “soft and feminine chamber, uncharacteristic of the Great House.”[21] In her case, white supremacy clashes with the subordinated position of a woman which undermines her authority.

With her shifting roles and changing state of mind, also her personal ambivalence towards slavery is connected.[22] According to Jenny Sharpe, her diary “reveals the racial prejudices in even the most benevolent of European attitudes.”[23] At the time of her departure, she believes that her journey could convince her father of iniquity of slavery and her journal should help her to better recount “what pains and pleasures are endured by those whose labour enables him to continue to indulge himself in the heavy-pocketed manner to which he has become accustomed.”[24] She criticizes those who only superficially support the abolition of slavery and “inwardly cling to their old prejudices.”[25] She thinks of the slaves as of

[18] *Cambridge* 14.
[19] *Cambridge* 4.
[20] Sharrad 202.
[21] *Cambridge* 74.
[22] Sharrad 211.
[23] *Cambridge* 105.
[24] *Cambridge* 7.
[25] *Cambridge* 8.

“children of the sun” who have been violently torn from their families and native country. With her arrival on the island, however, her approach quickly changes. Her deeply rooted feeling of white supremacy and her subordinated position of a woman makes her easily influenced by men`s opinions to which she quickly succumbs. Soon she, for example, proclaims that she is ”not accustomed to eating (…) [her] meal in the company of slaves.”[26] Her expression is full of generalizations and prejudices. Based mainly on what Mr McDonald, Mr Rogers and Mr Brown told her. She considers black people lazy, cowardly, judges their clothing on the basis of European standards – she says that they violate “laws of taste which civilized peoples have spent many a century to establish”[27] - and is often disgusted when seeing them half-naked. She also accepts the opinion that their condition of servitude is natural.

Her rapidly deteriorating approach to the slaves is apparent in the way she titles them. Upon arrival, she feels some discomfort when hearing the captain calling the pilot “nigger”[28]. She herself, however, talks about him as “the negro”[29] as opposed to the “white gentleman”[30] whom she encounters on the shore. And soon “the children of the sun”[31] change to “the negro stock”[32], the black boy Aberdeen is called “that imp of satan”[33], Stella, her closest companion, a “sooty illiterate”[34] and Christiania a “coal-black *ape-woman”*[35]. She mistakes black children for monkeys and pigs and the dehumanization of the slaves is apparent also in the way she talks about them, which is scarcely distinguishable from her talking about some vermin or annoying insect. She reports that the slaves display, for example, “a savage curiosity”[36] or “animal fidelity of the dog”[37] and when meeting them she has to put a handkerchief to her mouth and nose so that she avoids their smell.

Her white supremacy is most obvious in her relationship with Stella. Although she considers Stella her closest companion in the West Indies, she would never allow her to share the table with her. The reason is her skin colour to which she constantly makes reference.

---

[26] *Cambridge* 73.
[27] *Cambridge* 66.
[28] *Cambridge* 17.
[29] *Cambridge* 17.
[30] *Cambridge* 20.
[31] *Cambridge* 41.
[32] *Cambridge* 38.
[33] *Cambridge* 60.
[34] *Cambridge* 79.
[35] *Cambridge* 73.
[36] *Cambridge* 21.
[37] *Cambridge* 54.

When Stella tells her that she does not know her father because he was sold to another estate, she suspects that maybe "this is her black way of disguising some greater embarrassment."[38] When the black woman asks her to call her Aunt Stella, she declines as "this ebony matriarch"[39] bears no relation to her real aunts Mabel and Victoria. Stella is always loyal, sits at Emily`s bed when she is ill or scared and always takes care of her. But even her loyalty is considered only typical of her people. Stella`s skin colour and Emily`s perception of herself as of superior race constrains the development of any relationship between them.

Paradoxically, generalizations pronounced by the white ruling class in the West Indies are often based on aspects of the slaves` identity which are the result of colonialism and slavery. Here I am referring to constant references to the slaves` promiscuity and ignorance of commitments to their partners. Mr McDonald, for example, claims that "negro relations would appear to have much in common with those practiced by animals of the field, for they seem to find nothing unnatural in breeding with whomsoever they should stumble upon."[40] Later, Emily expresses her opinion that "[a]lthough the family is deemed the basic social unit, marriage is a mere charade and unfaithfulness a matter of course."[41] This critique of the West Indians` approach to marriage and relationships appears also in *White Teeth*, although it describes a much later period. Here, Joyce talks about the difficulties Afro-Caribbeans experience in an attempt to establish long-term relationships and finds this inability extremely sad. In *Jamaica-The Search for an Identity*, Katrin Norris deals with the Caribbean`s attitude towards marriage and childbearing and decides that it "is a direct inheritance from slavery, when owners discouraged marriage between their slaves because of the mistaken belief that frequent changes of partners made their women more fertile, and also because they were more easily marketable in single units."[42] Obviously neither Emily nor Joyce realize their own nation`s contribution.

Emily also comments on slave women`s desire to become mistresses of their white masters. The aspect of black women`s sexuality is deeply elaborated on in Dabydeen`s "Song of the Creole Gang Women". As Dabydeen claims, the poem is, apart from other aspects, their "cry of sexual frustration and the cry for sexual relief."[43] Slave women are described in

---

[38] *Cambridge* 36.
[39] *Cambridge* 36.
[40] *Cambridge* 36.
[41] *Cambridge* 67.
[42] Katrin Norris, *Jamaica-The Search for an Identity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 12.
[43] David Dabydeen, *Slave Song* (Geding, Denmark: Dungaroo Press, 1984) 43.

the process of planting cane with their abdomens and waists bandaged. This is their way to keep the intestines in place in the process of their constant bending and raising themselves and thus to prevent strains and belly-aches in old age as well as to preserve their ability to bear children.[44] The image of blood serves not only to refer to their suffering – “Like a bird meshed, torn upon twigs/ Hear how it cries, how it bleeds on the air”[45] – but also as a token of their fertility[46] which is often exploited by their masters – “And belly bursts out like blood-flow shrieking.”[47] Both their fertility and their motherhood, which often results from their being raped by their masters, are described as burdens and it is a relief to get rid of them for a while: “Babies strapped like burdens to our backs/(…)/ Dirty skin, distressed, shake off our babies/ When we reach waterside shake off our wombs.”[48]

Moreover, Emily also criticizes slave women`s perception of motherhood which also is deeply affected by slavery. As Emily claims, “none of the sacred responsibilities which ennoble the relation of child to parent is present in this world. Unfettered by requirements of support and education, the grace of the parental affections is lost to both father and mother, and it becomes mere breeding, bearing, and suckling, and nought beside.”[49] Sexual labour of female slaves contributed considerably to the slave owners` profit.[50] Every child they gave birth to was as an issue “added joyously to the list of the slave population in the plantation-book.”[51] To increase the number of children their female slaves produced, the owners assigned pregnant women lighter workloads, gave them more attention and rations and rewarded them with bonuses.[52] Infertile women, on the other hand, could expect to be treated “like barren sows and be passed from one unsuspecting buyer to the next.”[53] Although she admits the importance of breeding as “the acquisition of fresh African slaves is no longer legal”[54] and of the privileges fertile women enjoy, she is ignorant as to the effect it may have on the female slaves` experience of motherhood and is shocked by the women`s approach

[44] *Slave Song* 45.
[45] *Slave Song* 45.
[46] *Slave Song* 45.
[47] *Slave Song* 45.
[48] *Slave Song* 45.
[49] *Cambridge* 40.
[50] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005) 145.
[51] *Cambridge* 68.
[52] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000) 51.
[53] Hill Collins 51.
[54] *Cambridge* 68.

who, after giving birth to a baby, holds it up with the words: “See misses, see! Here nice new nigger me born to bring for work for misses.”[55]

Similarly, when Emily disapproves of the slaves` English, she shows her ignorance of the fact that this language was imposed on them as foreign and they were deprived of the chance to communicate in their own African languages. Without any constraints she calls it “vitriolic and abusive language”. Her disdain is obvious from the following extract in which she expresses her opinion on the way Stella speaks: “I had no desire to hear my mother-tongue mocked by the curious thick utterance of the negro language, so she might abandon her comical jargon and adopt English.”[56] In ”Song of the Creole Gang Women”, David Dabydeen used this European notion of creole as “broken English” to reflect the brokenness and sufferings of its users.[57]

The terrible conditions of the slaves working on sugar plantations are illustrated by Emily`s claim that “white men and animals are unsuited to this form of drudgery. (…) Negroes [are] able to sustain the hard conditions much better than the livestock.”[58] As Richard S. Dunn illustrates, “men did the work of animals. Such tasks as planting and cultivating, performed on English or North American farms by horse-driven ploughs and harrows, were carried out in the Indies entirely by hand.”[59] In “Song of the Creole Gang Women”, Dabydeen`s female slaves complain: “Work, nothing but work/ Morning noon and night nothing but work/(…)/ Pain, nothing but pain/One million thousand acres cane/ O since I was born - stab! stab! stab! stab! stab!/ So sun in my eyes like thorn.”[60] They are working in the terrible heat in which Emily is not even able to leave the shade of the house.

Similarly as *Cambridge*, Dabydeen`s poem chronicles the domination inherent in plantation life.[61] The slaves are considered commodities – part of the owner`s property. Their individual identity is cruelly suppressed; they do not even own themselves: “Booker owns my cunt/ Booker owns my children/ (…)/ So Booker searches deep in my flesh/ Because Booker

---

[55] *Cambridge* 68.
[56] *Cambridge* 29.
[57] Alan Tomlison and John Horn, *Twentieth Century in Poetry* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1999) 197.
[58] *Cambridge* 85.
[59] Richard S. Dunn Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973) 198.
[60] *Slave Song* 45.
[61] Tomlison and Horn 197.

owns my arse/ And Booker owns my cutlass."[62] Emily`s journal suggests that they are satisfied in their subordinated position. As she depicts, "the greatest fear of the black is not having a master whom they know they can turn to in times of strife. (…) The blacks are so well aware of the comforts that are to be enjoyed under massa`s rule, that many, particularly those beyond that prime of life, will never accept manumission."[63] However, Cambridge`s narrative denies this. Apart from him, also Christiania, whom Emily believes to be only a kind of African witch, is described as a woman whose sad history – she was spurned by her father after her mother`s death - caused her current unstable state of mind. Both Phillips and Dabydeen re-create humanity of the slaves as they let them talk and express their suffering and deeply hidden desires for self-recognition and freedom. Humanity of the slaves is asserted by depicting them as free individuals with personal beliefs and feelings.[64] Also the idea of their natural inferiority is thus demented throughout both Dabydeen`s and Phillips`s works.

Both of them also described the absurdity of such extreme suffering and cruelty happening only for the profit of British society. Emily describes the excessive habits of white merchants in the West Indies, prominently displaying their newly acquired diamonds and string pearls: "[L]uxuries abounding where decencies are often found to be lacking."[65] In England, Cambridge encounters a new consumer society whose rising demand for sugar to sweeten bitter tea and coffee is blind to the slaves` sufferings. In *Turner*, Dabydeen comments on what extreme brutality was caused by the slave traders` prospect of profit. As he claims in the preface to the poem, "[i]t was not unusual for ship captains to order the drowning of sick slaves (who would fetch a low price on landing in the Caribbean), and to claim their insurance value on the basis of goods lost at sea."[66] As George P. Landow specifies, "insurance on slave-cargoes covered only those drowned at sea and not slaves who perished from brutality, disease, and the dreadful conditions on board."[67]

Cambridge`s introduction to his narrative - "Pardon the liberty I take in unburdening myself with these hasty lines"[68]- shows that he is aware of the silence his people are committed to. From its very beginning, his narrative explores his historylessness: he was torn

---

[62] *Slave Song* 45.
[63] *Cambridge* 38.
[64] Sharpe xxiv.
[65] *Cambridge* 117.
[66] David Dabydeen, *Turner: New & Selected Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) ix
[67] George P. Landow, J. M. W. Turner`s *Slave Ship*, *Images of Crisis*, 15 July 2007, 17 July 2010 <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/crisis/crisis4e.html>.
[68] *Cambridge* 133.

from his family at the age of 15 and in his mind he has only a faded portrait of his parents and siblings. Being forced to leave his home, he expected never to see the people who loved him nor his country again. As he says, “[o]ur history was truly broken.”[69] Being betrayed by his fellow countrymen, in connection with his kidnapping he also discusses the terrible influence of European merchants on his own people:

> In our unsullied state we are a simple and unwarlike people. It is only the cursed avidity for wealth, and the consequent cruelty, knavery, and practice of diabolical arts by English navigators that has turned the hearts of my simple people from natural goodness, and honest affection, towards acts of abomination.[70]

The description of the slaves` voyage from Africa to the Caribbean – the Middle Passage – that follows is also the major concern of David Dabydeen in *Turner*. As Patke points out, it “was unchronicled in its time, at least from the point of view of the enslaved. The experience was chronicled largely from the side of the slavers.”[71] Thus, as Phillips gives voice to Cambridge, Dabydeen also expresses the need to redress the imposed silences of the past.[72] In *Turner*, Dabydeen`s concern is “the shackling and drowning of Africans.”[73] According to Patke, *Turner* “speaks on behalf of all those who made a forced and perilous journey westwards.”[74] This naturally also includes their descendants who search for their identity in the past – as the case of the above mentioned Caryl Phillips illustrates. Dabydeen`s “ancestral slave”, metaphorically reborn in the poem, connects slaves with their descendants – 20th century migrants. Thus, Dabydeen created a space in which past and present meet.

When Manu ripped away his necklace and the beads scattered around, he predicted the loss of history the future immigrants will face. The children scramble to gather them: “Each child clutching an accidental handful/ Where before they hung in a sequence of hues/ Around his neck, the pattern of which only he/ Knew-from his father and those before – to/

---

[69] *Cambridge* 138.
[70] *Cambridge* 134.
[71] Raajev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 85.
[72] Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 219.

[73] *Turner: New & Selected Poems* ix.
[74] Patke 86.

preserve."[75] Colonialism obviously broke the history of the colonized. The children – 20th century migrants – get no guidance how to put the jouti necklace together again, how to re-create continuity with their ancestors and their past. The only advice Manu, "holder of the secrets of the tribe"[76], gives to the descendants of the slaves is

> [t]hat in future time each must learn to live
> Beadless in a foreign land; or perish.
> Or each must learn to make new jouti,
> Arrange them by instinct, imagination, study
> And arbitrary choice into a pattern
> Pleasing to the self and to others
> Of the scattered tribe; or perish. Each
> Will be barren of ancestral memory
> But each endowed richly with such emptiness
> From which to dream, surmise, invent, immortalise.
> Though each will wear different coloured beads
> Each will be Manu, the source and future
> Chronicles of our tribe.[77]

Manu`s prophecy is positive and negative at the same time; expresses both hope and a vision of struggle and difficulties. As he says elsewhere, "time future was neither time past/ Nor time present, but a rupture so complete/ That pain and happiness will become one, death/ And freedom, bareness and riches."[78] Not to "stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers,"[79] to make comparably "rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging,"[80] the immigrants will have to slowly and carefully gather the beads and try to re-arrange them, create one`s own necklace, one`s own pattern of history and continuity. Similarly as when he invents names and histories for the victims of the Atlantic slave trade, for the drowned and forgotten souls depicted only anonymously in Turner`s painting,[81] here Dabydeen also emphasizes the individuality of the slaves and their descendants. As Nasta sums up, Manu`s prophecy is a powerful hymn "to the future patterning of chronicles which will write the

[75] *Turner: New & Selected Poems* 33.
[76] *Home Truths* 219.
[77] *Turner: New & Selected Poems* 34.
[78] *Turner: New & Selected Poems* 33.
[79] Rushdie 64.
[80] Rushdie 64.
[81] Patke 86.

world through different eyes."[82] Yet, despite the differences in the patterns, the immigrants will all bear the common memory of slavery, colonialism and sufferings of their ancestors.

Similarly as it connects past and present, Dabydeen`s poem symbolically connects geographical places and cultures. The sea in *Turner* symbolizes the connection of the worlds which were involved in slavery. Also the ship depicted in Turner`s painting works as a symbolic connection joining the points within the Atlantic world and thus enables Dabydeen to refer back to the long history of British racial relations and draw a connecting line between the centuries of slavery and 20th century diaspora.[83] As Susheila Nasta points out, the sea is "a creative repository for the diasporic imaginary, a space which exists both within and outside geographical, temporal and spatial frames of a linear historiography, a sea which opens a passage to the vision of other skies."[84]

To further expose the racial hierarchies, the observations of the white ruling class pronounced in the first part of *Cambridge* are questioned in the second. According to Paul Sharrad, „Cambridge`s slave narrative (…) succinctly contradicts or undermines almost every observation Emily has made."[85] Emily`s comments on the slaves` way of clothing are deprived of their authority by Cambridge`s note that the Englishwoman is "a trifle overdressed for the heat."[86] Similarly, Cambridge mocks the way the merchants communicate and reverses Emily`s critique of West Indian English: "Day and night our ears were forced to admit their English talk which, at this stage, resembled nothing more civilized than the manic chatter of baboons."[87] Furthermore, Cambridge is afraid that the white men, whom Emily perceives as gentlemen, will eat him as they seem to be extremely fond of flesh. He is also shocked by their appearance as it is obvious when he describes them as "men of no colour, with their loose hair and decayed teeth."[88] When describing their brutality and savagery done just for primitive aims – profit – he rejects Emily`s idea of white supremacy and higher degree of development. As Paul Sharrad sums up, "[h]is first encounter with whites reverses

---

[82] *Home Truths* 219.
[83] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double* Consciousness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) 16-17.
[84] *Home Truths* 219.
[85] Sharrad 203.
[86] Sharrad 203.
[87] *Cambridge* 135.
[88] *Cambridge* 134.

the stereotypic perceptions of black speech, cannibalism and lack of human feeling found in the rest of the book."[89]

> Such malice as these men of very indifferent morals exhibited, I had never witnessed among any people. Their most constant practice was to commit violent depredations on the chastity of female slaves, as though these princesses were the most abandoned women of their species. These white vulgarians disgraced not only their nation, but the very name of man.[90]

His encounter with England again discloses aspects of English society of that time which would be considered far from civilized. Although the slave trade is already illegal, black people are often treated with brutality, African children still sold for amusement in London "bird and beast shops" and a black companion is a favourite fashionable appendage. Similarly as Emily in the beginning of her narrative, Cambridge draws the reader`s attention to the pretence and hypocrisy connected with the abolishment of slavery in England. Cambridge`s new master informs him that he should consider himself his domestic, not his servant. As Cambridge adds, "he spoke in a manner which suggested abhorrence of the trade which had occasioned his fortunes to increase."[91] In the beginning he considers him a criminal but soon finds out that "he was but one of a large multitude of contented plunderers happily accommodated in the bosom of English society."[92]

Under the influence of his English instructors, Cambridge accepts European values and ideas that some people are better than others and becomes "civilized", as he himself claims: "My uncivilized African demeanour began to fall from my person, as I resolved to conduct myself along lines that would be agreeable to my God"[93] Miss Spencer, his instructor whom he greatly admires, is of the, at the time common, opinion that "black men were descended from Noah`s son Cham, who was damned by God for his disobedience and shamelessness in having relations with his chosen wife aboard the Ark. This wicked act produced the devilish dark Chus, the father of the black and cursed Africans."[94] He is also taught that "good persons (...) minded the Bible."[95] His religious education and mission to

---

[89] Sharrad 203.
[90] *Cambridge* 138.
[91] *Cambridge* 141.
[92] *Cambridge* 141.
[93] *Cambridge* 144.
[94] *Cambridge* 144.
[95] *Cambridge* 144.

instruct other people about the incompatibility of Christianity and slavery enable him to leave England for Africa "with the character of a man in upper rank, and a superior English mind, inferior only to the Christian goodness in my heart."[96]

Both writers also employed similar techniques of rewriting history. Phillips borrowed existing historical material – colonial accounts of slavery such as archival letters, diaries, documents – and reworked it. By doing this – creating fictional documents very similar to real ones - he partly questions the validity of the 18th and 19th century documents on slavery as they are structured by unequal power relations and do not allow space to those most critically involved in it.[97] To expose the racial hierarchies, Phillips in the first part introduces a Victorian perspective conducted through Emily`s diary. According to Jenny Sharpe, this is "a pastiche of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel diaries by women like Lady Nugent, Janet Shaw, and Mrs. Carmichael, as well as J. B. Moreton`s *Manners and Customs of the West Indies* (1834) and M. G. ("Monk") Lewis`s *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* (1834)."[98] In the second, he allows the reader to see slavery through the eyes of an African-born slave. This is based mainly on *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789). Similarly as Equiano, Cambridge did not want to be known only under one name and was a man of more than one world, more than one identity. However, unlike his model, who in his contacts with Europeans discovered that he was an African, Cambridge`s mind becomes colonized.[99] The third part, which seems to be an actual account of the murder but is in fact strongly prejudiced and subjective, is an actual historical document – an excerpt from Mrs Flannigans *Antigua and the Antiguans* (1844) – a travel diary. It is interesting that Phillips gives no indication of their source and thus, as Sharpe claims "blurs the distinction between fact and fiction."[100] Giving more perspectives on the same event, Phillips makes the effects of racial hierarchies more apparent.

Similarly Dabydeen`s *Turner* takes as its starting point the 1835 J. M. W. Turner`s painting *Slaves Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying,* which recreated the 1783 Zong case also connected with Equiano who attempted to publicize and contest it.[101] Although created in different centuries, they were equally up-to-date in their times and both the picture

---

[96] *Cambridge* 155.
[97] Sharpe 105-106.
[98] Sharpe 105.
[99] Morgan and Hawkins 2.
[100] Sharpe 106.
[101] Innes 260.

and the poem, "offered a powerful protest against the direction and moral tone of English politics."[102] Turner`s epigraph "Hope, hope, fallacious hope where is thy market now?" could thus express also Dabydeen`s concern with the future of slaves` descendants.

As it is obvious, both authors rewrote history with a similar aim. Apart from those mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Phillips questions the basis of white supremacy. The idea of superior race is artificial and extremely fragile. Moreover, it is connected with slavery and its brutality. Phillips thus shows how absurd it is that such an idea survived for such a long time and influences the 20th century immigrants and their children. The superiority as such is questioned and the racial stereotyping of black men is confounded by introducing the possibility that a brutal and vengeful slave Cambridge could in fact be an educated Christian.[103] Moreover, Phillips developed the irony even further. Although the reader would expect it, Cambridge is not a rebellious character but quite the contrary. It is true that in the beginning, he regards the English with disdain and mocks the idea of their superiority. This, however, soon changes and he develops a belief in the superiority of Western civilization and Christianity. From an African-born slave, he changes into a "virtual Englishman."[104] The most apparent paradox Phillips incorporated in Cambridge`s story is that his Christian conversion "does not lead to freedom but to reenslavement and death by hanging."[105] For Cambridge freedom is unachievable as his colour prevents him from being a true Englishman.[106]

Just as important is Phillips`s ironic depiction of supposedly superior white characters. Who in Cambridge could be considered superior? Emily, as a woman full of prejudice and under patriarchal influence? Those who brutally treat the slaves and punish them by using a whip? Or those who profit from the slave trade? There is nobody in *Cambridge* who, although of white skin, can claim superiority and freedom of mind. Even Cambridge "does not speak from outside the racial hierarchies that his testimony exposes."[107] Slavery colonised not only the Africans, but also the English as it involved them in brutal acts, accustomed them to luxuries and profit and encouraged them to be blind to cruelty and human suffering. Phillip`s aim was, as Sharpe claims, „to expose the racial hierarchies that persisted long after the evils

---

[102] Gilroy 14.
[103] Sharpe 112.
[104] Cambridge 156.
[105] Sharpe 114.
[106] Sharpe 115.
[107] Sharpe 105.

of slavery were widely recognized."[108] Somewhere behind his work is the yet unattained, maybe unattainable, sentence pronounced by Cambridge that "we were all made in God`s image, though some of us be cut in ebony."[109]

[108] Sharpe 105.
[109] *Cambridge* 150.

5. Conclusion

The influence of colonialism on the characters I examined, as well as on their creators, was indispensable. The period of slavery introduced ideas that were invented to advocate the harsh treatment and dehumanization of the Africans, which surprisingly survived till contemporary times. Also in the twentieth century these were used mainly to advocate unfair behaviour. As I have illustrated in the chapter dealing with the second-generation immigrants, in such situations, black Britons` involvement in the Empire was denied:

> In some situations, the British Empire actively encouraged black subjects to think of themselves as British, especially when it called on them to make military sacrifices. Yet in other situations imperial authorities often refused to reciprocate these forms of loyalty, attempting to disqualify non-white subjects by imposing essential categories on them, such as African, black, or 'native'; these, they believed, were permanent and immutable identities that would maintain the racial boundaries of what it meant to be British.[1]

The continuity of ideas can be found in the works I examined. The vast majority of characters I studied – Cambridge, Selvon`s men, Leila and Michael, Samad and his sons Magid and Millat, Irie and others – suffer from displacement, have to face discrimination, hypocrisy and pretence and are judged on the basis of prejudices and stereotypes. They all struggle to belong, although each chooses a different method of coping with their loneliness, uprootedness and hybridity. They all are people "who have been displaced and who lack a comforting or stabilizing history or tradition."[2]

The harm colonialism has done is apparent mainly in the black immigrants` perception of themselves. As Winston James noted, "[a] somewhat subconscious element of self-doubt if not self-contempt afflicted the African section of the population during and after slavery."[3] Their inferiority complex and negative self-image results in their constant attempt to conform to what they are constantly reminded is the standard, in other words, in their desire for white-ness.[4] This is again typical for all generations I dealt with.

---

[1] Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, „Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction," *Black Experience and the Empire*, Morgan and Hawkins, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 3.

[2] Caryl Phillips and Jenny Sharpe, "Of This Time, of That Place", *Transition, No. 68 (1995) pp. 154-161,* 29 March 2010 < http://www.jstor.org/stable/2935298 >.

[3] Winston James, "Migration, Racism and Identity," *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain,* James and Harris eds. (London: Verso, 1993) 237.

[4] Raajev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 173.

As Hawkins and Morgan claim, “the British Empire did not have a clear end. (...) [I]ts many legacies suggest that in some senses it has not ended but merely changed, albeit irrevocably, as its cultural and social bequests continue to play out both in former colonies and in the former metropole.[5] A similar thought is developed by Rushdie who, following E. P. Thompson, talks about Britain as “the last colony of the British Empire.”[6] As Dominic Head explains, “Rushdie is concerned about the failure of Britain to embrace the inevitable fact of its postcolonial future, and sees it as ‘a crisis of the whole culture, of the society`s entire sense of itself.’”[7] Also Caryl Phillips calls Britain a “mongrel” nation and says that it is still unable to face history that has produced current diversity of the society.[8] My thesis, I hope, gave evidence of this cultural and social crisis by describing how the ideological colonial legacy along with the British denial of commitments resulting from their imperialism influenced not only the immigrants` but also their descendants` ability to complete the diasporic journey and put roots in Britain.

[5] Morgan and Hawkins 8.
[6] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2002) 161.
[7] Head 161.
[8] „White Teeth by Zadie Smith“ 286.

Bibliography

Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: contesting identities*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Brittain, Emily, et al. *Black & Minority Ethnic Women in the UK*. London: The Fawcett Society, 2005.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Dabydeen, David, et al., eds. *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

---. *Slave Song*. Geding, Denmark: Dungaroo Press, 1984.

---. *Turner: New & Selected Poems*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1994.

Dunn, Richard S. *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973.

Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double* Consciousness. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Innes, C. L. *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

James, Winston. “Migration, Racism and Identity.” *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain.* Eds. James and Harris. London: Verso, 1993.

---. “The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain.” *Black Experience and the Empire*. Eds. Morgan and Hawkins. Oxford: Oxford Universtity Press, 2004.

Kanneh, Kadiatu. *African Identities: Race, Nation, and Culture in Etnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures.* London: Routledge, 1998.

Kay, Jackie. *Darling: New & Selected Poems*. Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2008.

King, Adele. “Poscolonial African and Caribbean literature.“ *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*. Eds. Irele and Gikandi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004.

Ledent, Bénédicte. *Caryl Phillips*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Morgan, Philip D. and Hawkins, Sean. „Blacks and the British Empire: An Introduction.“ *Black Experience and the Empire*. Eds. Morgan and Hawkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Nasta, Susheila. *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

---. “Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon`s London Novels.” *Other Britain, Other British*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. East Haven, Conn.: Pluto Press, 1995.

Norris, Katrin. *Jamaica.* London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Patke, Raajev S. *Postcolonial Poetry in English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Phillips, Caryl. *Cambridge*. London: Bloomsbury, 1991.

---. *The Final Passage*. London: Picador, 1995.

---. *A New World Order.* New York: Vintage Books, 2002.

Rushdie, Salman. *Shame.* London: Vintage, 1995.

Selvon, Sam. *The Lonely Londoners*. New York, NY: Longman Caribbean Writers, 2009.

Sharpe, Jenny. *Ghosts of Slavery: A Literary Archaeology of Black Women`s Lives*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Sharrad, Paul. “Speaking the Unspeakable: London, Cambridge and the Caribbean.” *De-scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. London: Penguin Books, 2001.

Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004.

Sudbury, Julia. *‘other kinds of dreams’: black women`s organizations and the politics of transformation*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Tomlison, Alan and Horn, John. *Twentieth Century in Poetry*. Florence, KY: Routledge, 1999.

Wall, Cheryl A. *Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition*. London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Walvin, James. *The Black Presence*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1971.

Weil, Simone. *The Need for Roots*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Internet sources:

Landow, George P. “J. M. W. Turner`s Slave Ship.“ *Images of Crisis*. 15 July 2007. 17 July 2010 <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/crisis/crisis4e.html>.

Phillips, Caryl and Sharpe, Jenny. “Of This Time, of That Place.” *Transition, No. 68 (1995), pp. 154-161.* 29 March 2010 < http://www.jstor.org/stable/2935298 >.

Pressly, Linda. “The ‘forgotten’ race riot.” *BBC News Online*. 21 May 2007. 15 Nov. 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6675793.stm>.

“SS Empire Windrush.” *ICONS. a portrait of England*. 2 July 2010 <http://www.icons.org.uk/theicons/collection/ss-windrush/biography/windrush-biography>.