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The Depiction of Immigration in Samuel Selvon's Selected Short Stories

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Práce se zaměří na povídky ze sbírky *Ways of Sunlight* od Samuela Selvona, které zobrazují život karibských imigrantů ve Velké Británii v období po druhé světové válce. V teoretické části se autorka bude zabývat britskou černošskou literaturou, migrací, imigrační politikou a životem výše zmíněné etnické menšiny v Británii v daném období. Studentka rovněž vysvětlí potřebné termíny. Analytická část se bude především soustředit na zobrazení života imigrantů v povídkách, autorka také pojedná o problémech, kterým migranti čelí, a pokusí se vystopovat podobné a rozdílné prvky, s kterými texty pracují. Práce bude založena na kvalitních sekundárních zdrojích a zakončí ji přehledné shrnutí daných zjištění.

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NÁZEV

Vyobrazení přistěhovalectví ve vybraných povídkách Samuela Selvona

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vyobrazením přistěhovalectví ve vybraných povídkách z Cest světla, sbírce povídek napsané Samuelem Selvonem. Teoretická část popisuje postkoloniální a západoindickou literaturu, dále historii přistěhovalectví z oblasti Západní Indie do dnešní Velké Británie a obecně karibskou zkušenost. Analytická část je komparativní studie, která se zabývá čtyřmi povídkami z Londýnského sekce povídek a zkoumá, jakým způsobem je přistěhovalectví vyobrazeno a hledá podobné a odlišné prvky.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Samuel Selvon, Cesty světla, přistěhovalectví, rasismus, diaspora, postkoloniální literatura

TITLE

The Depiction of Immigration in Samuel Selvon's Selected Short Stories

ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis focuses on depiction of immigration in selected short stories from *Ways of Sunlight* written by Samuel Selvon. The theoretical part covers postcolonial and West Indian literature, history of immigration from West Indies, and overall Caribbean experience. The analytical part is a comparative study that selects four short stories set in London and examines similarities and differences in how they depict immigrant life.

KEY WORDS

Samuel Selvon, Ways of Sunlight, immigration, racism, diaspora, postcolonial literature

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Introduction

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to conduct a comparative study of depiction of immigration in Samuel Selvon's short stories, by study of his collection of short stories called *Ways of Sunlight*. The anthology consists of two sections: Trinidad based stories and London based stories. This thesis focuses on the London section only.

Aforementioned collection of short stories revolves around daily lives of West Indians in Trinidad and London, respectively. The London section records their migrant experience and struggles connected with their search for a new home. The West Indian immigrants mainly deal with racial prejudice, unfavourable living conditions, accustoming to different climate and most of all, hostility felt from the English people. They also deal with the issue of belonging and a sense of broken identity. Moreover, *Ways of Sunlight* is potentially biographical and this fact is taken into account in its literary analysis.

The theoretical part of the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive background necessary for a complex study of the selected short stories.

The first chapter introduces the term black British literature and argues its definition and significance. The chapter gives a brief overview of development of such literature and discusses the nature of being a black British writer in the postwar era. Subsequently, it examines its relation to the dominant narrative discourse and its role in creating a distinctive black British identity.

The second chapter focuses entirely on history of immigration from the Caribbean and West Indies and directs attention towards the West Indian community in Britain. It overviews the history of British West Indies on its path through from being a colony to gaining independence. West Indian diaspora to Britain and the main reasons behind it are explained. The chapter then proceeds to provide a summary of the most important immigration legislation that has been passed since 1948. The question of racism towards immigrants is discussed. Then the chapter examines the West Indian community and predicaments it is forced to face in immigration, including and not limited to housing, employment and education.

The third chapter focuses specifically on West Indian literature, its history and themes. It compares the first generation writers to the second generation writers and presents their main themes.

The fourth chapter talks about the short story collection *Ways of Sunlight*. It is put into context of Selvon's literary production and the structure of the book itself is presented. *Ways of Sunlight* is a topical, episodic and most of all, noticeably autobiographical piece. That claim is justified and supported by specific examples taken from selected London stories. This chapter also explains Selvon's use of creole and broaches the subject of cultural hybridism.

The fifth chapter is a comparative literary study of four selected London stories: "Calypso in London", "My Girl and the City", "Brackley and the Bed", and "Obeah in the Grove". The stories were chosen for their portrayal of varying immigrant experience and different perspectives they offer. "My Girl and the City" is a very poetic and positive celebration of London and stands out from the other stories for its standard and lyrical English. On the other hand, "Brackley and the Bed" fully employs the power of West Indian creole both in dialogues and the language of narration. "Calypso in London" and "Obeah in the Grove" both represent West Indian customs taken to Britain. They also both bear witness to individual hardships, such as inability to get work or decent housing.

The final chapters are Conclusion, Resume in Czech and a list of secondary resources cited or consulted while writing this thesis.

1. Black Literature within British Cultural Tradition across the Postwar Period

The term black British literature serves as an umbrella term and covers amongst other also West Indian literary production. When we say black British literature, we mean literature "created and published in Britain, largely for a British audience, by black writers either born in Britain or who have spent a major portion of their lives in Britain."¹

Of course, there are no neat boundaries which would allow us to systematically place black British writing in time or space. Black communities existed in Britain long before that; people were coming to and living on the islands for centuries and, subsequently, black British

¹ David Dabydeen, *A Reader's Guide to West Indian and Black British Literature* (London: Hansib Publishing, 1988), 10.

literature is to be considered as old as the Empire itself. There is a number of texts pre-dating the Second World War and exclusive mention of one era would do great injustice of erasure to earlier authors, such as Olaudah Equiano and his autobiography of 1789, to present one example for all.

However, the Second World War poses a significant event in British history and accelerated the collapse of the British Empire. Following Nationality Act of 1948 (which created a legal status of equal British citizenship for both Britons and Commonwealth citizens, and granted them unobstructed access to the country²) prompted a massive influx of immigrants from colonies. As a consequence, the postwar era brings a shift in perception of black community and thus becomes a fairly distinctive and quite interesting time period worth of further literal analysis, especially with regards to Caribbean immigrant experience. For that reason the main focus lies on the postwar era, while providing general historical background for context.

The postwar immigration era is considered to begin with the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush, the ship that brought around 500 Jamaican migrants to London the very same year the Nationality Act of 1948 came into effect. Others were to follow in large numbers in mid-1950s, and between 1954 and 1958 almost 100,000 migrants arrived. The Windrush pioneers marked the oncoming change of postwar and postcolonial Britain and bore witness to the changing face of Britain. Writers coming to Britain in years closely after were able to capture and reflect on the transformation in their literary production.³

Samuel Selvon and George Lamming, to name some of the representatives of the Caribbean fiction, were some of the first West Indian authors addressing this transformation, Selvon along with Lamming both coming to Britain in the early migration wave of 1950s. *The Pleasures of Exile* by Lamming is an examination of the influence colonialism had on both involved parties – the colonised and the colonizing.

1.1 How to Define 'Black'

However, before we delve deeper into any further analysis of black British writing, we need to answer an important question. What does it mean being 'black' in the British context? James Procter notes that "there are crucial differences in the etymologies of 'black' in the

² "Nationality Act, 1948," accessed March 28, 2016, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1948/56/pdfs/ukpga_19480056_en.pdf.

³ "Black British Literature since Windrush," Wambu Onyekachi, accessed March 28, 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/literature_01.shtml.

United States and the United Kingdom.”⁴ Procter then continues to explain that while in the US the term ‘black’ traditionally denotes a racial community, in the UK the term refers rather to a political category.⁵ It covered people sharing the same postcolonial experience of migration. Being ‘black’ included settlers of African, Asian, Caribbean and Indian origin, and other parts of the Commonwealth. It is therefore difficult to talk about black British literature as a homogenous literary movement; Salman Rushdie in his essay on ‘Commonwealth Literature’ in 1983 even goes as far to call the category a “chimera”. Why is it so?

The first argument against black British literature as a category would be that there is no such term as ‘white’ British literature, either. By opting to create such category as ‘black British’, we inadvertently also create the opposite. Following the set pattern, let us call it ‘white British’ literature. Obviously, we do not formally recognize the latter. Divisions based solely on skin colour would be politically incorrect at the very least. At this point, it is convenient and rather useful to interpret the term as a political category including people sharing the same postwar and postcolonial experience, as explained by Procter above. So much for that argument.

The second argument is that ‘black’ and ‘British’ are both complex terms literary critics have trouble categorizing. ‘British’ is problematic due to the often multinational nature of these writers – a considerable number of them were first born in colonies, later lived in Britain, and at one point in time moved to another country. The question is whether we can still call them British. By that measure, Samuel Selvon is as much a Trinidadian and Canadian author as he is a British one. Nevertheless, Selvon in particular can be safely labelled as British considering the time he spent on the isles and the close intertwined relationship between Trinidadian and English literary school. Should we measure Britishness simply by citizenship or place of residence, or by some kind of attachment to Britain, it makes categorisation much easier.

Another point is that ‘black’ in this context is serving as an umbrella term for all non-white British colonial subjects. Even then the limits are fuzzy; we may find an author such as Pauline Melville listed under black literature, although ethnically white. Black literature consists of a number of quite diverse literary and cultural traditions. It is not unified. What ties those literary traditions together is a matter of political representation in the face

⁴ James Procter, *Dwelling Places. Postwar Black British Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 5.

⁵ Procter, *Dwelling Places*, 5.

of growing social and racial inequality in the postwar years. Moreover, Mark Stein argues that “grouping texts together as black texts, or as women’s writing, or as post-colonial or gay, are acts in history, because such interventions condition the significance and the meaning that texts attain in any given reading.”⁶

Those are the questions we have to face when we first encounter the so called black British literature. As opposed to Stein’s opinion, the idea that interventions in the form of grouping texts together condition the way we read such texts actually seems to broaden our understanding of the literary production in question rather than limiting it. We may not only read it as independent pieces but also in their historical and social context, necessary to decipher all possible meanings.

1.2 Sense of Belonging: Cultural Identity and Diaspora

Regardless of this to some extent artificial grouping, common themes can be traced. Throughout the years, the core focus of black British writing is on the theme of identity and freedom. The search for identity takes on many forms:

“A sense of identity is formulated by and along the journey’s road; it is interwoven, in part, from the conditions upon which "settlement" is negotiated, fought, and renegotiated. The journey, according to bell hooks, is allied to and within multiple and overlapping identities that beget their own discourse; identities, particularly, that are informed by "personal rites of passage," for example, immigration, (en)forced migration, relocation, enslavement, colonization, education, and regionalization.”⁷

The literature deals with being ‘other’ – different cultural backgrounds, dual nationalities and even religious issues. There is portrayed a transition between ‘black and British’ to ‘black British’. This is even more prominent with second generation writers.

The texts also question migrants’ sense of belonging and their position within society. How do they identify themselves in a self-presented white man’s nation? Williams raises an interesting argument about black British writing and its goal; he says that it does not try “to create a separate-but-equal narrative to run alongside the dominant cultural narrative of the nation, nor is it an attempt to assimilate the story of the Other into the dominant

⁶ Mark Stein, introduction to *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), xv.

⁷ Deborah J. Rossum, "A Vision of Black Englishness," *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review* 5.2 (1997), last modified March 15, 1999, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-2/rossum.html#1>.

narrative.”⁸ It is rather attempting to redefine the dominant narrative and explore and “unpack” the sense of British cultural identity. Instead of trying to build an independent and equal branch of British writing, the work of these writers challenges the traditional concept of the dominant and the marginalized to merge them into one new, fluid and diverse cultural identity. This unpacking is a trend appearing increasingly in our new, globalised society as well.

On the other hand, Williams also comes to a conclusion that while reconfiguring the dominant narrative discourse, the issue of political and social injustice remains wholly omitted. I disagree. Historically, portrayal of inequality in arts is an integral part of social discourse and one of its most powerful tools. One example to illustrate: the 1950s and early 1960s worsening housing situation in Britain meant not only inaccessibility of decent and affordable housing (be it the subject of ‘darkness’ of skin or plain unavailability of places to rent) but also creating of unkept secluded black neighbourhoods much resembling slums in less frequented city areas. London’s Brixton, still a predominantly black district since, serves as an example.

In his poem called “Telephone Conversation”, Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Prize for Literature laureate, shows being subjected to colour bar (named after the BBC’s radio project *The Colour Bar*).

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. “Madam,” I warned
“I hate a wasted journey – I am African.”
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurised good breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.
“HOW DARK?” ... I had not misheard ... “ARE YOU LIGHT OR VERY DARK?”⁹

The artistic portrayal of miserable living conditions became one of the many ways to expose the day-to-day struggles.

⁸ Bronwyn T. Williams, “A State of Perpetual Wandering: Diaspora and Black British Writers,” *JOUVERT: Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 3.3 (1999), accessed April 10, 2016, <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v3i3/willia.htm>.

⁹ Wole Soyinka, “Telephone Conversation,” accessed April 10, 2016, <http://allpoetry.com/poem/10379451-Telephone-Conversation-by-Wole-Soyinka>.

Even though the term black British literature did not become current until the 1970s, it is the postwar era and particularly the 1950s where we can trace the shift to the contemporary form of black British writing. This knowledge is essential to fully understand the writers' aims and their choice of topics.

The first writer of West-Indian origin to record immigrant experience is George Lamming in his novel *The Emigrants*, where he describes a passage between worlds and touches the topic of a personal rite of passage. The characters of the book are those one would likely meet on a ship heading to Britain in the 1950s (and those Lamming in most probability actually met); West-Indian intellectuals heading to Britain seeking recognition and people leaving their native villages in search of work or with a vision of a better future ahead. Other authors such as V.S. Naipaul, Zadie Smith, Samuel Selvon and Jackie Kay followed.

Nowadays, black British literature continues to gain world-wide recognition and build its reputation, and seems to be quite successful so far, as the Nobel Prize for Literature for V.S. Naipaul in 2001 and Derek Walcott in 1992 and other numerous awards continue to prove.

1.3 Postwar Era

As was already suggested in previous paragraphs, black British culture is not limited only to the postwar period; however, the *Windrush* era shaped a distinct black British identity. The postcolonial surge of immigration introduced a fundamental change in political and social awareness of 'blacks' living in Britain. As Procter says, "by the 1950s, there was a consciousness of black people as a separate group that had not been there between 1932 and 1938."¹⁰ Their arrival shifted public opinion and early immigrant writers picked up on that and reflected on the change in their work, depicting segregation, racial discrimination and political and social inequality. The 'immigration restrictive' laws of 1968, 1971 and 1981 only deepened a rift between newly founded immigrant community and the rest of the inhabitants. New settlers struggled with a lack of dignified jobs, with insufficient housing (and restricted access to the rest due to their skin colour) and openly hostile atmosphere. This struggle later on led to social unrest, but also initiated the Black power movement, reclaiming the term 'black' and redefining it – 'black' is no longer a slur, 'black' is beautiful.¹¹

¹⁰ James Procter, *Writing Black Britain 1948–1998: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 63.

¹¹ Procter, *Writing Black Britain*, 96.

This course of events and the process of redefining is not unknown even to our modern society – from recent years we may mention the aftermath of the Fergusson shooting (2014) in the US and world-wide follow-up movement #Black Lives Matter. Social media as a new medium joined in as well, contributing for instance with the trending hash tag #Black Out, under which users once again try to redefine the general notion of being ‘black’ by positive representation.

Although, as we have already established earlier, etymology of ‘black’ differs from the US to the UK, the core idea of this contemporary form of social activism remains ever the same; redefining the dominant cultural narrative as non white-centric and inclusive of people of colour and of diverse religious and cultural background.

2. History, Immigration and Community

This chapter briefly introduces the history of the Caribbean region, in particular the regions under British colonial rule and how their path to independence in the decolonisation process after the Second World War. A better part of this chapter will focus on postwar migration from West Indies to Great Britain, its characteristics and timeline. It will also address the Caribbean migrant community and what obstacles they had to face in their newly found home.

The broadly defined Caribbean region consists of thousands of islands, bordering or surrounded by the Caribbean Sea. The islands are, including but not limited to, parts of: Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, the United Kingdom, the United States, and even France and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

During the Columbus colonial era, Spanish Empire was the first to establish colonies there, followed by other European powers, the British, the Dutch and the French. European conquistadors brought with them to the Caribbean colonies a large amount of slaves for agriculture and manual labour; descendants of those slaves live on the islands until now. The process of colonisation took place in the 17th and 18th century.

The decolonisation transpired in two major waves: during the interwar period and after the Second World War. In the first wave was Commonwealth left by for example Australia and Canada, who still recognize the British queen/king as their formal head of a state. The second decolonisation wave came in the postwar period. The first Caribbean nation to gain independence was Haiti already in 1804. The British-held colonies’ path of independence first

mostly led through West Indies Federation phase, until they gained full independence, for Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, or Barbados in 1966, for example. Some of the territories remain legally under British governance still today, such as Cayman Islands, and they are called British overseas territories. The Commonwealth of Nations existing today is a free association based on shared history and cultural values.

Although the colonial era successfully introduced British West Indies into international trade and politics, the British rule had its clear negative features. In the colonisers' minds, the White Man's burden justified imperialism and cultural oppression. "As elsewhere, colonisation in the Caribbean did not only entail the economic, political and military domination of the indigenous and colonised population, it also involved a sometimes overt, but often surreptitious process of cultural oppression."¹² The West Indian community in Britain suffered social and racial discrimination, which ultimately led to riots and originating of Black Power Movement, aiming to diminish racial oppression in the postcolonial society.

2. 1 West Indian Immigration to Britain

As already established, the milestone in postwar immigration was the year 1948 and its arrival of the SS Empire Windrush. That is not to say there was not any migration before – but said year recorded the first massive influx of immigrants from West Indies. That lasted for the next decade or so, from 1950's to 1960's. They came recruited from their own native islands and on their own. The first wave migrants comprising of mostly young men were followed by the second wave, during which other relatives (wives, children and even parents) came to join the men and began to settle down.

Albeit British citizens by law, the United Kingdom has not always been treating the immigrants equally – they encountered problems in all spheres of life, particularly in accessing education, finding suitable housing and public life in general. They were denied public services and were perceived as a disruptive element in the predominantly white society. The sheer number of immigrant arriving to Britain at once resulted in passing several immigration-restrictive laws, which cut down the number of new arrivals in the next years.

The first important document in connection to immigration is the Nationality Act of 1948, already explained in one of the previous chapters. But to remind us, it granted British citizenship and equal status to anyone coming from former British colonies. Still, once the

¹² Winston James and Clive Harris, *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain* (London: Verso, 1993), 233.

shortage of workers has been resolved, further arrivals were undesirable. To put it plainly, Britain sought labour, but not people.

The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 changed the British immigration policy as it removed the equal status right from Caribbean-based newcomers and limited the number of migrants by government-issued vouchers to settle. The Act clearly targeted migrants based on the colour of their skin.

The amending Commonwealth Act of 1968 further ruled that applicants also needed to have secured employment to be admitted to the country. It also authorised the deportation from the United Kingdom of citizens convicted of offences punishable by imprisonment. The Act still permitted reunification of families, which is why mostly women and children came to Britain during the second immigration wave.

The Commonwealth Act was superseded by the Immigration Act of 1971. The Act brought a new concept of patriality and introduced right of abode. A person with right of abode was “a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC) who was born, adopted, naturalised or registered in the UK or Islands”.¹³ It successfully reduced primary immigration to a large degree.

The British Nationality Act of 1981 reclassified citizenship of the United Kingdom and colonies into three categories: British citizenship, British dependent territories citizenship and British overseas citizenship.

2.2 West Indian Community in Britain

As a general rule, immigrants of West Indian origin were considerably disadvantaged in comparison to white Britons. We know that the most problematic areas of life included employment, accommodation and education. This subchapter briefly takes a closer look at each of them and then takes a look at racism displayed against immigrant minority.

Unemployment was a serious issue amongst black people. Even though they were recruited to come to work in the United Kingdom, they rarely reached positions corresponding to their education and work experience. They entered low-paid positions, often of unskilled and manual nature that other people would not do. Their wages are generally lower than those of

¹³ “Right of Abode (ROA),” GOV.UK, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-of-abode-roa/right-of-abode-roa#roa1-what-is-the-right-of-abode>.

their white co-workers. Even highly educated West Indians, intellectuals and artists alike were forced to work odd jobs.

Housing issues were related to generally unsatisfactory housing situation in Britain, but were also the outcome of discriminating people of colour as prospective tenants. “Disadvantage is reflected in the type of tenure, size, age and conditions of housing.”¹⁴ As a result, West Indians tended to concentrate in secluded neighbourhoods outside city centres. Since first wave settlers were joined by their relatives later on, the living quarters were overcrowded and overall had lower quality. It does not mean there would be so severe shortage of quality apartments; they were simply much more likely let to white tenants.

Children of immigrants were undermotivated, unsupported by the schooling system and generally discriminated against. “West Indian children were constantly and right through the schooling system treated as uneducable and as having “unrealistic aspirations” together with a low IQ.”¹⁵ As a result, few black children pursue higher education or aspire to attend universities. They are condemned to a life in poverty and experience frustration from state institutions.

Similarly to the present-day immigration crisis, the public opinion radicalized and resulted in rising number of hate crimes. Racism display became commonplace and silently tolerated. People of colour remained segregated in secluded city parts and formed tight isolated communities. Animosity between the white population and the immigrant community grew and social seclusion and racial prejudice advanced on institutional level. “Step by step, racism was institutionalized, legitimized, and nationalized.”¹⁶ This situation did not improve even for the second generation of West Indians, already born in Britain.¹⁷ The next generation was not afraid to get vocal about the issue, and just as willing to claim their equal rights in strikes and riots. “The rebellion of black youth in the inner cities was the logical, and, as is now clear, inevitable response to racist attacks. It was the culmination of years of harassment.”¹⁸ The racial riots spoke of severe disruption within the British postcolonial society and challenged the public view of immigrants as second class citizens.

¹⁴ Shamit Sagar, *Race and Politics in Britain* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 61.

¹⁵ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, 389.

¹⁶ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 381.

¹⁷ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, 387.

¹⁸ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, 395.

2.3 Postwar London vs. “Caribbean Dream”

London in postwar years looked nothing like the modern-day London we know, or even a century later after that. World War II had devastating effects on the city. Since the early September of 1940, Churchill’s city was blitzed and bombed by the Luftwaffe for 57 consecutive nights¹⁹. It suffered heavily the aftermath of Nazi bombings, which transformed whole districts into bare land covered in rubble. On top of that, food was still sparse and thus rationed among its inhabitants²⁰. It was the Brits and their “stiff upper lip” attitude and fortitude that saw London rebuilt and allowed it to thrive once more later on. In short, this broken version of London possessed little of the qualities we come to seek out and expect from the capital city of Britain. It was still a very much wrecked and inhospitable place to live. However, it had one thing to offer that people in the Caribbean needed and wanted the most; work.

Jobs were there to be had in all possible spheres of work for those who came. For the first wave arrivals from former British Empire, getting work was not an issue. “The newcomers to Britain had answered the country’s “call” for manual labour to re-build its town and cities - particularly in construction, transport and nursing - after the wartime devastation.”²¹ Influx of immigrant labour was supported even on a governmental level, in an attempt to reconstruct and rebuild the damaged country as quickly as possible. As a result, workers from former colonies came in thousands. Most often, they took on positions of unskilled labour, but they also found employment in other public services. Among the many workers from West Indies taking on positions of manual labour were, however, also a number of intellectuals and artists, finding themselves unable to find a job in their field of education. Samuel Selvon, though an educated journalist and a prolific writer, was also forced to work odd jobs in order to support himself financially.

The massive immigration waves from West Indies to Britain were aptly described by Louise Bennett, a Jamaican poet, whose native island experience reflected the nations-wide phenomenon.

¹⁹ “Churchill’s London Then and Now: How London Was Rebuilt after WWII,” The Telegraph, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/winston-churchill/11379285/Churchills-London-then-and-now-How-London-was-rebuilt-after-WWII.html>.

²⁰ “Rationing in WW2,” BBC, accessed January 15, 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing_in_ww2.

²¹ Clayton Goodwin, “UK It has not been all milk and honey,” *New African* 473 (2008): 82, accessed January 17, 2017, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=b8f56897-0089-4576-b647-a909a92386de%40sessionmgr104&hid=103>.

“By de hundred, by de t’ousan
From country and from town,
By de ship-load, by de plane-load
Jamaica is Englan boun.

Dem a-pour out o’ Jamaica,
Everybody future plan
Is fe get a big time job
An settle in de mother lan.”²²

On top of that, Louise Bennett’s poem shows that the Windrush Era newcomers had one more common goal in coming to Britain, or rather a vision - a vision of a “mother country”. It is a concept deeply embedded in minds of all colonial subjects. It is a vision of a better future for them all, in nature not unlike the well-known American dream. The quintessential difference being, of course, that our so called Caribbean dream sets sights on its mother country as its goal and means of success (as opposed to American dream, where starting anew and severing all past ties with mother country was required). To sum up, newcomers from West Indies dreamt of elegant and cultured environment, abound with job opportunities, and new life.

Unfortunately, those visions and dreams were harshly confronted with postwar London reality. It meant difficulties finding suitable living quarters and dignified jobs, dealing with bleak and cold English winters, persistent winds and rain, and general hostility of the English people. They constantly encountered obstacles in their daily lives, for example in the form of colorism.²³ It was no exception to be denied housing opportunities due to a “no coloureds” rule and the same may be applied to job hunting, as we will see after all in Selvon’s work.

²² C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 112.

²³ Colorism is a form of institutional racism, discrimination based on skin colour. Alternatively, it means discrimination within a community of people of colour based on “lightness” of skin or ability to “pass as white”. For instance, a person with dark skin tone and prominent African facial features would experience considerably higher discrimination than a person with only lightly toned skin and more Caucasian appearance.

Even though migrants were actively encouraged and recruited to come to work to Britain, they have been often denied equal opportunities and treatment.

Under these conditions, West Indian migrants in London in 1950's and 1960's went through a gradual process of assimilating and settling down. Ensuing arrival of women and children following men from the first wave marked forming of first families and a fully fleshed community in the proper sense of the word.

3. British Caribbean Literature

The term Caribbean literature generally encompasses all literature produced in the Caribbean region. The literature, as a result of colonial history of these territories, is produced in English, French, Spanish, or Dutch, or in one of many creoles. More specifically, works in English written by authors from the former West Indies are called Anglo-Caribbean, West Indian or British Caribbean literature.

The native inhabitants were removed from the islands in 16th and 17th century with the start of colonial slave trade, and their culture, consisting mainly of oral traditions, had little to no cultural mark on the newly founded slave societies.²⁴ There was no established literary tradition to build on; and for a long time, literature was a privilege of intellectuals. Oral narrative remained prevalent; writing and reading simply was not fashionable.

This, naturally, made for a difficult starting position for aspiring professional writers. Virtually every important writer, Lamming says, seems to have wanted to 'get out' and leave the island.²⁵ Jamaican poet James Berry also describes the Caribbean atmosphere of helplessness in 1940s as that

“We didn't want to grow up without knowledge of the world. We certainly didn't want to grow up like our fathers who were stuck there, with a few hills of yams, a banana field, and a few animals. We were a generation without advanced education or training, anxious about our future“.

Berry concludes with saying that „and here we were, hating the place we loved, because it was on the verge of choking us to death.“²⁶ Berry here expresses the feelings that parallel

²⁴ “The Importance of History in Caribbean Writing,” David P. Lichtenstein, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/caribbean/history/whyhis.html>.

²⁵ George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960), 41.

²⁶ James Berry, introduction to *Windrush Songs* (Hexham: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 2007), 9.

with many writers of his generation; disillusionment with the life on the islands and a desire to escape with a vision of a better future ahead for them and their families.

As a result, most authors pursuing a professional writing career moved to another country, to Canada, the United States, and Britain, particularly London being the first choice. In immigration, the authors strived for more metropolitan and educated atmosphere, work and financial stability (and thus being able to start writing for a living), wider audience for their works and, in a way, they also searched for a sense of belonging. By the colonised, Britain was perceived as a mother country, home they finally arrived at, however ambivalent feelings towards Britain they shared due to the slave trade history. These feelings are continuously present in the texts; brought up on classic British literature, to West Indians Shakespeare's or Austen's works felt as much familiar as the daily reality of the islands. London's back streets and Piccadilly Circus lived in their imagination through works of fiction and upon arriving to Britain, these places held the idea of domesticity in the alien new country. At the same time, newly-arrivals were confronted with racial oppression and feelings of superiority rooting from slave history of their native islands.

The year 1948 meant a revolution in the sense of freedom to move and obtain citizenship in Britain. Subsequently, the Caribbean literature developed mainly after the Second World War and found its most famous and prolific writers, such as George Laming, Samuel Selvon, and V.S. Naipaul. Caribbean poetry emerged in 1970s and 1980s and based its form on oral tradition. So far the West Indian literary scene has been predominantly masculine. Women writing began in 1970s and 1980s. The next decades belong to second generation writers examining their dual identity.

Colonial heritage of British West Indies is very prominent in Caribbean fiction. Caribbean literature, like any other literature, covers a wide range of topics, but colonialism and interests in past rather than in future plays an important role. The colonial history is also a history of cultural oppression and erasing indigenous culture. The inner conflict about personal identity and uprootedness may stem from slave trade history.

Selvon himself reflects on hybridism of his personal identity. "It's all well and good to appreciate what the world is like and what people are like, but, who the hell am I? And where do I fit into it, have I got roots, am I an Indian? Am I a Negro? ... What is a

Trinidadian?”²⁷ He continues by searching his national identity and history. “After all, the island hasn’t got a great deal of history or civilisation behind it ... India has a civilisation thousands of years old. I can’t even make that pretension. So, I remain, in a way, somewhat displaced...”²⁸ The colonial influence meant that Caribbeans grew up consuming double cultural heritage, both their national and British. It is perhaps why they feel such familiarity towards Britain and so often choose to migrate there. After arrival they soon realize their mistake and feel somewhat torn, not truly belonging on either side. West Indian migrant experience is what unequivocally brought this literature to international audience. The authors often draw from their personal experience.

The first generation writers employ themes of alienation, loneliness and sense of belonging. They maintain strongly culturally and cognitively linked to their country of origin. In opposition to that, second generation writers assimilated and adapted to British ways and consider Britain their primary home. They have experienced rising racial discrimination and anti-immigrant rhetoric. They became politically active and took part in public protests. But the crucial difference between the first and second generation is in their expectations and illusions:

“What characterised an earlier black British literature, the migrants’ otherness, emanated from their coming to England and searching for a particular kind of perceived Britishness that did not necessarily exist. Black writers born in England have none of these illusions. They are developing within the British landscapes and social groups that they have been born into, writing about their own impressions of Britain from a new British perspective.”²⁹

The first generation writers are concerned with their passage to Britain, the second generation writers are concerned with acceptance and sense of belonging.

²⁷ Peter Nazareth, “Interview with Sam Selvon,” *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1979): 426.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ R. Victoria Arana and Lauri Ramey, *Black British Writing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 107.

4. Background to Ways of Sunlight

4.1 Ways of Sunlight

Samuel Selvon's literary production can be divided into two main categories: those works written in Trinidad and those written in London. *Ways of Sunlight*, along with *Moses Migrating*, represents the transition between the two, in one way or another. *Ways of Sunlight* is an anthology of 19 short stories published in 1957. Of the 19 stories, 9 are set in Trinidad and 10 of them are set in London. The Trinidadian section deals with 1940's and 1950's life in Trinidad, while the London section deals with experience of the diaspora ("the dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland"³⁰) in London during 1950's, when migration from West Indies to Britain peaked.

The Trinidadian section is concerned with family, education, the conflict between old ways and new ways, tradition, and life in a community. Most of the Trinidadian stories are set in countryside in close-knit, almost isolated units of people. The remaining stories are set in towns, where the foreign influence is much more noticeable and more easily accepted. We come to see the characters in day to day situations, observe their behaviours and their strong relationship to their land.

The London section also follows lives and adventures of the West Indian community, but in a fundamentally different setting and from a different (more difficult) position. We follow their lives as migrants in London, struggling to adjust and assimilate to a different society. In these stories, Selvon through his characters explores the themes of loneliness, segregation, life as an expat, racial prejudices, and also questions of identity, personal and national, and interpersonal relationships, both on a personal level and on a national (West Indian - English) level. We are made aware about their new life in a foreign land and watch their struggles.

Even though the stories are often told in a humorous way and contain comical elements, the resulting picture is sometimes a mixture of sad insight into the lives of characters, joined with nostalgia. Their day to day (and sometimes existential) struggles and decision-making is put in a light-hearted way. Yet, we can easily trace down and analyze some of the characters' deepest fears and worries, and watch how their decisions affect their lives.

³⁰ "diaspora," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/diaspora>.

For example, in “Brackley and the Bed”, we follow the lives of Brackley and Teena. Brackley lives in an apartment with one bed. When Teena arrives and moves in, Brackley is forced to sleep on cold hard ground in the middle of winter. Unable to bear it any longer, he proposes to marry Teena in order to be able to sleep on the bed with her. Here, unknowingly, forced by unsatisfactory living conditions, he is giving up his single-man life and enters a family life (and marries a woman from his own community at that, rooting himself to West Indian heritage once more). In the end, he is removed from the bed once more upon arrival of his relatives after the wedding. However comical the story may seem and we can laugh at Brackley’s misfortune, the bitter undertone and hints at bad living conditions are easily noticeable. In a sense, we are witnessing little tragedies and hardships of expat’s living in a non-violent form.

The “transitional” status of *Ways of Sunlight* has already been mentioned. It functions as an imaginary bridge between Selvon’s Trinidadian and London literary production. This is what perhaps makes it its most valuable quality, as it is partly biographical. Having been written with still fresh memories of Selvon’s native island and simultaneously with raw new experience of migrant life, the collection provides air of authenticity. It gives us a powerful and fully-fleshed reflection of Selvon’s own life. Selvon’s other pieces written after years of living in exile tend to idolize and flatten life back on the islands and fail to wholly reconnect with Trinidadian spirit. *Ways of Sunlight* manage to smoothly transition between two worlds: Trinidadian countryside, through Trinidadian towns to multicultural metropolis of London, two diametrically different worlds. The collection at hand, of course, is still a piece of imaginative fiction and not a documentary. But the personal experience connected with narrative style helps to convey effectively the feelings of (un)rootedness and presents a very close picture of real migrants’ lives.

In the meantime, *Ways of Sunlight* remains strictly episodic and topical (set in specific time and place) and introduces us to only bits and pieces of protagonists’ lives. In “Calypso in London”, for instance, the offhand remark about “the Suez issue” dates Mangohead’s story quite clearly in 1956. Interestingly, though, with said bits and pieces, Selvon manages remarkably well to set the tone of characters’ whole lives. While episodic in nature, there is a certain pattern to it, almost as if the characters are moving in circles. In “If Winter Comes”, Brakes falls into a circle of borrowing money just to survive through winter. In case of this particular story, he decides to run a sou-sou to obtain quick cash but in turn needs to borrow more money to pay off the last participants of sou-sou. (Sou-sou is an informal saving

technique popular among Caribbean and African immigrants. Sou-sou is based on regular contributions to a common fund by a group of people. Every cycle, the whole collected sum is given to one person from the group. This way, the person to collect the money in the first cycle has a quick access to a possibly large sum of money, while for the person from the last cycle it may function like a savings plan.³¹) Be it mundane daily routine or hustling for survival, Selvon captures it with exceptional care and attention for detail. His own experience necessarily comes through. Episodic structure allows us to follow multiple storylines and provides us with plurality of views, as if from within the West Indian community. At the same time, the individual storylines are strictly separated by time and place.

The result is a charming collection of vignettes of Caribbean and London life. In a way, we could perceive and analyse *Ways of Sunlight* as Selvon's personal rite of passage of sorts. Then, shall we treat the anthology as biographical, intended or not? As mentioned beforehand, the piece still remains imaginative fiction, but our analysis would be incomplete without taking the biographical factor at least into account, if not using it as our main interpretative tool. However, that is not the goal of this thesis. It focuses on depiction of immigration, while allowing for biographical factor where relevant. Anyhow, the concept of the death of an author is still in play; if a reader identifies with a piece in a way other than intended by its author, their understanding may be just as valid (or even more) as the original message. Undoubtedly, *Ways of Sunlight's* portrayal brought the London West Indian community of migrants into spotlight and initiated international interest in Anglophone Caribbean fiction. So, regardless of its undeniable literary qualities, Selvon's collection in question could be safely read mainly as a testimony to immigrant experience, his or anyone else's.

The analysis will focus on depiction of immigration and Caribbean experience as a whole on the pages of the London section of stories.

4.2 Selvon's Use of Language, Cultural Hybridism and Creolisation

The term 'creole' originally referred to a white man of a European heritage, born and raised in a tropical colony. The term later shifted its meaning to indigenous people and soon named the languages spoken by indigenous people in the Caribbean area. Yet the most common use of the term in English was to mean 'born in the West Indies,' regardless of race. Caribbean is not

³¹ "'Sou-sou': Black Immigrants Bring Savings Club Statewide," Marlie Hall, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://thegrio.com/2011/05/20/sou-sou-black-immigrants-bring-savings-club-stateside/>.

ethnically nor culturally pure, it is a mix of many influences. Selvon was a Creole himself – half Scottish, half East Indian.

Selvon's heroes are diverse as well – they come from all around the West Indies. Selvon is famous for his usage of Creole in his writing, not only in direct speech but also in the language of narration.

“... when I started to work on my novel *The Lonely Londoners* I had this great problem with it that I began to write it in Standard English and it would just not move along ... It occurred to me that perhaps I should try to do both the narrative and the dialogue in this form [Trinidadian form of the language] I started to experiment with it and the book just went very rapidly along... With this particular book I just felt that the language that I used worked and expressed exactly what I wanted it to express.”³²

Writers like Selvon, Lamming, and Lovelace from the Caribbean are portrayed as “being torn between two languages.”³³ In the Creole speaking Caribbean islands, Selvon combines West Indian slang and Standard English syntax to mimic the speech patterns of the Caribbean black immigrant working-class people. Selvon produces an ‘authentic’ and ‘realistic’ representation of this particular multi-cultural group of black immigrants.

Creole language is considered as ‘low’ being that of the colonized people, and English, obviously, is considered ‘high’, being the language of colonizers. Labels such as ‘high’ and ‘low’ clearly represent the attitudes of both the colonizers and the colonized. The work with Creole in literature is highly experimental and a part of a reclaiming decolonization process – English language being one of the main colonizing tools from the beginning. Samuel Selvon, as a postcolonial novelist, uses a language to suit his style by subverting the language of the colonizer. In the Caribbean, language and culture are intertwined. “During the age of transition from colonialism to postcolonialism, the Caribbean writers were torn between these two languages in a complex political and linguistic situation.”³⁴ In the beginning, in order to maintain an international and/or British audience, writers such as Selvon settled for a linguistic compromise, using Standard English to represent the voice of the narrator and

³² Nazareth, “Interview with Sam Selvon,” 421.

³³ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Ed. in Patrick Williams and Laura Chirshman, *Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 111.

³⁴ “Caribbean Creole Language and Creolization in the Selected Fiction of Selvon,” accessed January 17, 2017, http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/91291/8/08_chapter%202.pdf.

Creole for the dialogues. Selvon later on in his career shifted to full-time use of Creole when convenient and benefiting the stories.

Samuel Selvon is a man caught between two cultural traditions. At the forefront of Selvon's writing is the experience of creolisation and cultural hybridism. European and Asian cultures inevitably interacted and transformed each other. The hybridity and creolisation can be observed in many layers and in a variety of domains. Selvon throughout his work freely combines Creole slang, calypsonian elements and Standard English at once.

5. Depiction of Immigration in Selected Short Stories

5.1 Calypso in London

Calypso: "a popular type of satirical, usually topical, West Indian ballad, especially from Trinidad, usually extemporized to a percussive syncopated accompaniment"³⁵, "a Caribbean song about a subject of current interest; this type of music"³⁶

The first of Selvon's London stories is a skillful reworking of a calypsonian theme. Firstly, it is literally a reworked version of Selvon's earlier piece, a story called "Calypsonian", published in 1952. "Calypso in London" translates some elements from Port of Spain and moves to London's East End.³⁷ On a side note, from a both cultural and language point of view, the comparison between these two tales would be fascinating (i.e. use of Creole, and comparison in setting Trinidad vs. London).

Secondly, the story itself is a prime example of Selvon's calypsonian ballad style of writing. The narration technique is very much close to Trinidadian oral tradition and in its structure resembles calypsoes, so popular in Trinidad in their period. He later perfected his calypsonian style in *Turn Again Tiger*, published just one year after *Ways of Sunlight*. Sandra Pouchet Paquet says that "*Turn again Tiger* offers firm evidence that Selvon's early fiction implicitly absorbs and extends an oral tradition exemplified in the calypso ballad."³⁸ Calypsonian ballad style may have felt so natural to Selvon, if only for the sole reason that he himself once dreamed about being a composer. Or we may argue that it allowed him to portray his Trinidadian characters more authentically.

³⁵ „Calypso,“ Collins Dictionary, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/calypso>.

³⁶ "Calypso,“ Oxford Learners Dictionary, accessed January 15, 2017. <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/calypso>

³⁷ John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the metropolis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 31.

³⁸ Susheila Nasta, *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1988), 210.

And lastly, the storyline revolves around composing an actual calypso, hence the title of the story.

Since the use of Creole in this particular story is so functional, allow us to briefly elaborate. Unlike in “Calypsonian”, in “Calypso in London” we can clearly see the London dialect and vocabulary seeping through characters’ expressions. Aside from typical West Indian Creole, they also use typical British words, such as “cuppa”. In those little details, we can see that the process of assimilation into British society had already begun and presents nice hints at fusion of West Indian and British culture.

We can be fairly certain about the year the story takes place, due to the mention of the “Suez Crisis”. That sets this story firmly in 1956. Therefore, Mangohead, the main protagonist, and his friends belong to the first immigration wave that came to postcolonial London.

We are firstly introduced to Mangohead, a St Vincent born immigrant. Later in the story we meet his companions Hotboy and Rahamut, both from Trinidad by origin. We do not learn the names of any of the English characters appearing in the story. They are merely referred to as “English fellars”, or an “English assistant”, respectively. This clearly indicates that the main focus is on Mangohead and his friends. “The boys” are only ever addressed by their nicknames. Selvon’s clever use of language works as nomen omen and binds tightly characters to their tropical origin.

“Calypso in London” follows Mangohead’s unfavourable predicament. In his own words, “one winter a kind of blight fall”³⁹ on him. We find him in the middle of a biting London winter, unable to find work nor “bounce a borrow”⁴⁰ from any of his friends, let alone get a warm greeting from his landlady. He used to have a job in construction during summer but unaccustomed to cold, he suffers when winter comes. For that, he is made fun of by his English co-workers, who tell him to go back to tropics where he came from. They also tease him; “too cold for you, mate?”⁴¹ The bleak winter wears him down.

Consequently, he gives up his job and wanders through London streets, but he is miserable.

“This time so, I don’t have to tell you how the winter grim in London - I mean, I don’t think it have any other place in the world where the weather so powerful, and Mangohead drifting

³⁹ Samuel Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight* (London: Longman Caribbean Writers, 1957), 113.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

through the fog and the smog and snow getting in his shoes and the wind passing right through him as if he ain't have on any clothes at all.”⁴²

Mangohead describes feelings that resonated in many immigrants coming to Britain. Coming mostly from tropical islands, snow, smog and fog⁴³ were the exact opposite of the climate they grew up in.

Back in the story, the jobless Mangohead goes to various factories in the city and tries to land a job, but he is unlucky. Places refuse to hire him, although they reportedly have vacancies. Towards the end, he fails to get a job in a cigarette factory. Hoping to get a little borrow or at least a cup of tea, he goes to a tailor shop run by his friends Rahamut and Hotboy, whom previously lent him money. On the way there he is suddenly “feeling creative” and composes a few lines of calypso about hardships of living as immigrant in London, believing it will somehow convince Hotboy to lend him another ten shillings.

“It had a time in this country
When everybody happy excepting me
I can't get a work no matter how I try
It look as if hard times riding me high”⁴⁴

Hotboy is not happy to see Mangohead and correctly assumes that he only came to borrow money. Nevertheless, he likes his calypso - but proposes that a more topical subject, like the Suez issue, might interest more people and he could sell the calypso for more money. Hotboy takes over the calypso and continues composing it. While deep in thought, Mangohead tricks him into agreeing to borrow him another ten shillings and makes Rahamut to pay him off on Hotboy's behalf. Then he hurriedly leaves the shop before the deception is revealed. Later he learns that Hotboy indeed did sell the calypso for an unknown amount of money.

Hotboy is a character worth another thought. He is described to “have a mysterious way of living”. Partly living in old memories of Trinidad, he boasts on being one of the best calypsonians Trinidad ever had and dreams of comeback with another great calypso. Mangohead knows about his weak spot and uses it for his own gain. While for Hotboy composing calypsoes means keeping alive his cultural heritage (and reviving his bard-like persona at that), for Mangohead it serves as means of survival. Unlike white English

⁴² Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 114.

⁴³ Postwar London and other major industrial cities in particular suffered from severe air-pollution, mostly from usage of low-grade coal, which resulted in choking smog and claimed thousands of lives. In 1956, Clean Air Act was passed.

⁴⁴ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 115.

employers, in the end it is the West Indian community that provides Mangohead and Hotboy with enough sustenance through selling the calypso. The calypso in the story has double agency: to bear witness to individual hardships of living immigrant life in postcolonial London, and to spread Caribbean culture. Calypsonian music is quite typical for Caribbean region; and calypso as a music genre gaining popularity amongst common Londoners laid foundation for forming future multicultural society inclusive of West Indian influences.

In “Calypso in London”, the city is rendered as a grey, unwelcoming place. That is expressed primarily through weather, as we watch shivering Mangohead wandering through streets. The characters stand in contrast to that; they are all undeniably creative and active against the cold, unmoving reality.

Overall, “Calypso in London” is a story of an individual that survives through help from his own community. Light-hearted in style, it reveals perpetual fight to live a good life. Mangohead’s quest for warmth and a little bit of money takes us from freezing trenches to a cosy Indian tailor shop, where magic in the form of calypso happens. Calypso, contained both in the title and in the narrative style, serves as a symbol of Caribbean culture, intermingling with English cultural narrative and effectively changing it.

5.2 My Girl and the City

The last of London stories is, just like “Calypso in London”, set in the year of the Suez Crisis. We learn as much from newspaper headlines (“A man sleeps on a bench. His head is resting under headlines: Suez Deadlock.”⁴⁵). However, it couldn’t be any more different.

“Calypso in London” is distinctively West Indian through and through. “My Girl and the City” is on the contrary written in standard, very poetic and descriptive English, where Creole could hardly be traced. The vocabulary is elevated and very “English”, as is the choice of motifs. The narrator highlights typically British activities, like riding the tube’s Inner Circle line, reading *Evening News*, or working the crossword puzzle in the *Evening Standard*. There are also references to popular advertisements of the time, like ‘There is no substitute for wool’⁴⁶, or ads promoting Amplex and Hall’s wine. The enthusiasm about everything British is apparent.

⁴⁵ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 172.

⁴⁶ See http://monologues.co.uk/Public_Information/No_Substitute_for_Wool.htm.

We do get the hint that the narrator is a foreigner (perhaps Selvon in person?). He recalls “the first time I ever queued in this country in ‘50”⁴⁷ (which would be the year Selvon arrived to the coast of Britain). Other than that, we are clueless to the narrator’s origin. But it seems safe to assume that Selvon picks up on his migrant shared theme and “my Girl and the City” simply offers a different perspective and experience of a newcomer. The narrator sincerely loves London. Even the generally negatively connoted aspects of London life (i.e. grim winters) are taken and re-interpreted in an endearing way. Jane Grant further elaborates on this and adds that

“the feeling of passionate involvement with London as a city which this story describes is perhaps all the more remarkable for being written by a foreigner who had only lived in London for a few years. And while this story is certainly a celebration of a love affair with a girl, it is at the same time a celebration of the city within and around which this love affair takes place.”⁴⁸

It is indeed a love story within a love story. It is very much a celebratory poem in style, a flowing monologue from the writer’s perspective. The narrator is able to find beauty and excitement in London even when others do not, in all seasons and in unusual places – during downpour when everybody else hides, and in dark alleys in the middle of a night (eating fish and chips, for that matter, how British is that). It accounts for a very idealistic view of London.

The story is set in central London among its famous landmarks swarming with people. And yet, one of the intermittent themes appearing throughout the story is loneliness. The theme of personal isolation and loneliness is an underlying aspect of Selvon’s writing. We do not have to go very far for an example; virtually every main character in *Ways of Sunlight* deals with their life on their own. The same applies for the narrator of “My Girl and the City”. At times, he stops to ponder about his situation.

“You could be lonely as hell in the city, then one day you look around you and you realize everybody else is lonely too, withdrawn, locked, rushing home out of chaos: blank faces, unseeing eyes, millions and millions of them, (...)”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 174.

⁴⁸ Selvon, introduction to *Ways of Sunlight*, xxv.

⁴⁹ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 174.

He alludes to the alienating nature of a big metropolis. Even when surrounded by crowds, one can still feel lost and removed from the society. The anonymity and impersonality of a big city tires him. He feels lost in huge crowds and in the relentless movement to and fro. At the same time, the motion mesmerises him into immobility. He compares the movement of people to waves on the Thames. He admits to have known a great frustration and weariness. All things said, seen and noted, what else is there to do? “All these things, said, have been said before, the river seen, the skirt pressed against the swelling thigh noted, the lunch hour eating apples in the sphinx’s lap under Cleopatra’s Needle observed and duly registered: even to talk of frustration is a repetition.”⁵⁰ The solitariness of a metropolis and inability to connect to anyone is draining. He catches the eyes of a girl at a train station; but the eye contact is brief, blank and unsatisfying. It is a fleeting experience and one of many; and he completely forgets about the girl the very same day. But the city is there and it is beautiful. Perhaps that is why the celebration in the story focuses entirely on the city - yet fails to mention any love towards its inhabitants (save for the girl, whom he has fallen in love with).

All in all, the story is a love affair with the city and with all British, written with enthusiasm and idolatry only believable to someone genuinely in love with the idea of the city.

5.3 Brackley and the Bed

Just like the previous short stories, this one also contains clues as to its time setting. It contains a reference to the Colonial Office, a department by the British government that overlooked colonial affairs. Since Trinidad and Tobago was a British colony only until 1962, the story must have taken place in the years before that.

The short story stands out due to its language. The extent of Creole usage is unprecedented. The West Indian critic Kenneth Ramchand wrote: “This is as far as any West Indian author has gone towards closing the gap between the language of narration and the West Indian Creole speaking characters.”⁵¹ Typically, the creolised English usage is confined only to the dialogue.⁵² In “Brackley and the Bed” it is also a language of narration. It is another example of the calypsonian ballad. Selvon reveals as much in the very first paragraph, wherein he writes that we will learn more of the story “as the ballad goes on”⁵³.

⁵⁰ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 173.

⁵¹ Marlis Hellinger, Ulrich Ammon, editors, *Contrastive Sociolinguistics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), 284.

⁵² Hellinger, Ammon, editors, *Contrastive Sociolinguistics*, 283.

⁵³ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 139.

The hero of the story is Brackley, an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago, who has come to London to escape an imminent threat of marriage with Teena and with hopes of finding a good paying job. So far, he lives his single life with occasional female company, meeting “boys” and relying solely on himself. He does not have a job at the moment nor tries to find one. Throughout the story, Brackley plays a mostly passive role and is easily manipulated. He tries to fit into the British society by mimicking them and adapting to British ways. He plays rummy (a card game) with friends and builds his confidence around material property. His bed (and his claim to it) becomes a central motif of the story.

Brackley realizes that he is on his own and depends only on himself to survive. That is demonstrated in the moment he admits he amasses food and rations it to make it through winter. But overall, he lives a lazy, uncomplicated life. The story turns when Teena unexpectedly arrives to England to live with him. He tries to scare her away to go back to Tobago immediately upon her arrival. “What you think the Colonial Office is, eh? You think they will do anything for you? You have a god-father working there?”⁵⁴ The skepticism towards any help or kind treatment coming from the Colonial Office is palpable.

Teena symbolically arrives at Waterloo station, the first London destination of Caribbean migrants travelling on Atlantic-traversing ships.⁵⁵ From there, she moves in with Brackley and quickly begins reorganizing his life. She rearranges all furniture in his flat, makes him pay for heating (old-fashioned gas meters in 1950’s needed to be fed with shillings for the gas to come through⁵⁶), takes over the care of household and forces him to get a job. Brackley does manage to get a job, but it is the kind of job an immigrant would be able to get - unskilled and manual labour, surely badly paid. But what is more important for Brackley, Teena goes on sleeping on the bed, while he must sleep on cold hard ground in the middle of winter. A pattern emerges as the weeks pass by; he leads none of the single-man’s life he was used to, no rummy with boys, and no female company. Ultimately what bothers him the most is the bed. Finally he decides to marry Teena in order to be able to sleep on the bed once more, with Teena to help keeping him warm. Unfortunately, Brackley does not have his happy ending - Teena’s auntie is coming over to England as well and she will be sleeping on the bed with Teena, leaving Brackley on the floor once more.

⁵⁴ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 140.

⁵⁵ Rebecca Dyer, “Immigration, Postwar London, and the Politics of Everyday Life in Sam Selvon’s Fiction,” *Cultural Critique*, No. 52, *Everyday Life* (2002): 108.

⁵⁶ „Heating the House with Gas Fires in the 1940s and the 1950s,“ Pat Cryer, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.1900s.org.uk/1940s50s-heating-gas.htm>.

Teena is a reminder of the old ways of life in the West Indies. She cooks in a real West Indian fashion and perhaps most importantly, back living on the islands, she was his bride-to-be. Teena and Brackley's relationship demonstrates male female dynamics within Caribbean society, in which the relationship is based on pragmatism and mutual advantageousness in lieu of emotions. "The concept of westernized romantic love is, to some extent, missing in societies such as this in which instrumentality rather than affection appears to be the primary motivation in forming relationships, at least to the point of sharing a common household."⁵⁷ Men like Brackley expect sexual fulfillment (Teena keeping him warm), taking care of household chores like cooking, cleaning, care for children and other needs. Women expect from men securing their well-being by financial support of her person, their children and perhaps also more distant members of her family.

Speaking of families, what is happening in "Brackley and the Bed" is typical for the mid 1950's West Indian community. In the first immigration wave arrived mostly single men in productive age. After they settled and were able to provide a stable income, they were joined several years later by women and children and began to enter marriages and form families. Thus, the West Indian community was fortified on a family level and secured its future continuing existence.

"Brackley and the Bed" is a funny story about Brackley's discomfort and an unplanned marriage. It depicts reuniting pioneer migrants with their relatives and presents a female element to the story. Brackley faces a conflict between the new (British) and the old (Trinidadian) ways. Ultimately, the decision is made for him by others. Heavy use of Creole both in dialogues and narration is Selvon's unique trademark.

5.4 Obeah in the Grove

Obeah: a system of belief among blacks chiefly of the British West Indies and the Guianas that is characterized by the use of magic ritual to ward off misfortune or to cause harm."⁵⁸

The story is situated in Ladbroke Grove, a shabby unpopular area to live in. There is a house owned by an English landlord and a landlady, who want to sell it, as it is about to fall apart. However, they cannot do that with the tenants still occupying rooms. There was a way, a trick to make the tenants to move out, based on general hostility against people of colour. One

⁵⁷ „Sam Selvon,“ World Literature in English, accessed January 15 2017, <http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/worldlit/caribbean/Selvon.htm#Henry>.

⁵⁸ „Obeah,“ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/obeah>.

needed to let out vacant rooms to dark-skinned people and whites moved out within weeks, one by one. So, the landlords put up a notice saying that “coloured people were welcome”. At this point we meet Fiji, Algernon, Winky and Buttards, all of them from Jamaica. They see the notice and though excited, they are suspicious. “It always have a catch when they say coloured people welcome.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, they move in. Racial segregation is instant and obvious; boys could not even get a greeting from the white tenants. And the plan works ironically like a charm.

When the four boys discover the truth, they decide to extract a revenge on the English landlords. Fiji comes up with a plan to carry out obeah, a piece of black magic intended to cause harm and bring ill luck on those affected. Others are scared of using it, but agree to the plan nonetheless. They curse the house and the owners and proceed forthwith to move out. In the matter of days, the landlady breaks her leg, the landlord loses his job and they cannot find a single buyer for the house. The house itself starts to crack, the roof is falling down and the walls begin to crumble. It is rumored to have been jinxed and neighbours are afraid to pass too near.

“Obeah in the Grove” attests to poor accommodation situation for dark-skinned immigrants. They were repeatedly denied housing options simply based on their skin colour and origin. We have already talked about the colour bar - the darker the skin, the worse treatment. “White passing” migrants had more favourable initial position. The landlords in our tale do take in the four Jamaican boys but they follow their own agenda which has nothing to do with being broad-minded and accepting. They take advantage of their vulnerability for their own intentions. In general, white English people are biased against Caribbean immigrants and systematically discriminate them. It paints a disheartening picture of English - West Indian relationship.

Another theme employed in the short story is superstition and belief in witchcraft. The boys bring their West Indian beliefs and culture to London in the form of obeah.

“Obeah in the Grove” examines a slightly different angle of immigrant experience than the other analysed short stories. It broaches the subject of racial prejudice and hostility aimed at entire nations. It does not concern itself with its “side effects” (like menial jobs); it addresses directly the core of the problem, racism. It deals in absolutes: white versus black. English

⁵⁹ Selvon, *Ways of Sunlight*, 157.

versus non-English. It magnifies a colonised/colonising dichotomy. Racism in the story becomes the primal source of conflict.

6. Conclusion

Samuel Selvon is undoubtedly one of the most famous and prolific West Indian authors up to today. In 1950 he was among the Windrush pioneers arriving to Britain with hopes of achieving a brighter future, getting a meaningful job and leading a comfortable life. Selvon also yearned wider international audience for his work. His writing can be divided into two parts: works written in Trinidad and works written in Britain. *Ways of Sunlight* does not neatly fall into any of these categories. It is transitional in nature and draws its power from it. It contains the best of his Trinidadian production and authentic experience of his new life as a West Indian immigrant in London. *Ways of Sunlight* is undoubtedly autobiographical in nature, as it reflects on his first-hand experience as a first generation immigrant coming to Britain.

Being himself of mixed origin, Selvon was in constant search for his own identity and sense of belonging, and it quickly becomes a recurring theme we can trace in his writing. His characters in the short story collection are often experiencing loneliness, alienation, frustration and injustice. But they are also creative, resourceful and have support in the form of West Indian community.

Selvon is a man of two cultural traditions and goes through a process of creolisation. That is partly conveyed through his specific use of language and employing Creole not only in dialogues, but also in the language of narration.

The stories mirror his internal process of decolonization and deal often in a humorous way with his new status as expatriate.

7. Résumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vyobrazením přistěhovalectví ve vybraných povídkách Samuela Selvona. Konkrétně se zabývá sbírkou povídek Cesty světla (*Ways of Sunlight*), a to její londýnskou sekcí.

Teoretická část této práce jednotlivě představuje britskou černošskou literaturu a její význam a vývoj. Dále přibližuje historii karibské imigrace a poskytuje základní orientační body britské imigrační politiky, dále zahrnuje přehledný soupis legislativy vydané během let 1948 a 1971. Práce poté seznamuje s životem karibské menšiny žijící na území Británie, konkrétně pak v Londýně. Tato práce se zaměřuje na negativní aspekt soužití západoindických přistěhovalců a bílé londýnské populace. Pojednává zejména o nevyrovnaných podmínkách na trhu práce, o problémech spojených s hledáním přijatelného ubytování a všeobecně o bující rasové nesnášenlivosti ve spojitosti s masivní migrací po druhé světové válce. Následuje seznámení s historií a hlavními tématy karibské literatury. Jako další je představeno samotné analyzované dílo, *Cesty světla*. Práce dále stručně zmiňuje Selvonovo užití kreolu jakožto prostředku střetávání vícero kulturních tradic. V samotné analýze se pak práce soustředí na čtyři vybrané povídky: *Calypso in London*, *My Girl and the City*, *Brackley and the Bed* a *Obeah in the Grove*.

Britská černošská literatura existovala od nepaměti, přinejmenším od prvopočátku obchodních vztahů s oblastí Asie a Karibiku. Do té doby však její množství ani témata nebyla natolik význačná. To se zásadně mění za existence Britského Impéria a za doby jeho největšího koloniálního rozmachu. Následné vlny dekolonizace a zejména doba po druhé světové válce však dala vyniknout velmi specifickému druhu literatury zabývajícím se sociokulturními otázkami a reflektujícím společenské a kulturní změny v poválečné společnosti.

Nabízí se však argument, zda a jak lze britskou černošskou literaturu klasifikovat. Je to snad na základě barvy pleti, či místě pobytu? Národnosti? Existence černošské literatury jakožto homogenního literárního směru je zpochybněna. Autoři dále poukazují na problém v samotném náhledu na tuto kategorii. Nemůžeme mluvit o černošské literatuře, aniž bychom bezděčně nevytvořili zároveň literaturu bělošskou, která, pokud známo, není nijak vydělována. Musí tedy dojít ke zcela zásadnímu obratu vnímání účelu takové literatury a vyhnout se politicky nekorektnímu způsobu myšlení.

Vhodná cesta interpretace černošské britské literatury se jeví skrze její schopnost nabourávat a obohacovat dominantní narativní linku tehdejší převážně bělošské společnosti. Vybízí k celospolečenské debatě a rozšiřování obzorů diskuzí. Nesnaží se vytvořit paralelní alternativní linku nezávislou na „oficiální“ kultuře; spíše se snaží se „rozbalit“ tu stávající a rozšířit pojetí britské identity a obohatit ji o prvky z jiných kultur a náboženství tak, aby vytvořila

multikulturální prostředí bez jediného „správného“ výkladu. Tato literatura tak položila základ budoucí multikulturální a globální společnosti.

V tomto výkladu je třeba přiznat černošské literatuře její status jakožto hodnotné a nezávislé. Je dále možné vysledovat společná témata, a to témata pocitu jinakosti a rasové a sociální vyloučenosti. Ve výsledku se snaží o reinterpetaci slova „černoch“ a přiřadit jí pozitivní konotace. Práce dále okrajem zmiňuje podobné trendy i v současnosti a poukazuje na ně.

Další v pořadí je kapitola zabývající se historií imigrace z Karibiku, obzvláště druhou polovinou dvacátého století.

Dříve než začneme mluvit o imigraci je vhodné rámcově představit historii této oblasti, zvláště s přihlédnutím k její koloniální minulosti. V karibské oblasti se postupně vystřídalo vícero koloniálních evropských velmocí – vedle Británie také Francie, Nizozemí a Španělsko. V průběhu 17. a 18. století našeho letopočtu dochází k rozsáhlé kolonizaci, která mimo jiné přináší i obchod s otroky, čímž bylo zásadně ovlivněno demografické a etnické složení obyvatel ostrovů. Dochází kromě vykořisťování práce také ke kulturnímu útlaku a prosazování britské kultury na úkor té domorodé.

Země Commonwealthu začaly získávat nezávislost ve dvou hlavních vlnách dekolonizace. Ta první proběhla mezi světovými válkami a osamostatnily se země jako Kanada a Austrálie, které dodnes pojí k Británii silné kulturní pouto. Mimo jiné stále uznávají britskou panovnici (popř. panovníka, je-li) jako formální hlavu státu.

Druhá, a pro nás zajímavější, vlna dekolonizace proběhla po druhé světové válce. Nationality Act z roku 1948 garantoval všem britským subjektům plná práva jakožto britského občana. Tudíž nic nebránilo masovému přívalu imigrantů přicházejících za prací. Symbolem v tomto ohledu se stala loď zvaná SS Empire Windrush, která přivezla první vlnu přistěhovalců do země. Největší nápor pak země zažívala do roku 1971. O britské imigrační politice budeme mluvit za chvíli.

Přistěhovalci příjezdivší do země ostatně neměli zrovna lehkou úlohu: náhlé vlny přistěhovalectví obrátily veřejné mínění negativním směrem a přistěhovalci zažívali rasovou a sociální diskriminaci ve všech možných směrech veřejného života. Problémy byly s ubytováním, sehnáním práce, někdy byly přistěhovalci odepírány veřejné služby.

Politická scéna až na výjimky podporovala antipřistěhovaleckou rétoriku a během několika let představila hned několik právních aktů, které měly přístup do země omezit.

Tím prvním byl akt z roku 1962 a v zásadě stanovoval limity přistěhovalectví. Byl ovšem velmi specificky vystavěn a formulován tak, aby se týkal konkrétní skupiny lidí, v tu dobu nejpočetnější skupiny příjíždějících – byl tedy bezpochyby diskriminační.

Rok 1968 přinesl více rafinovaný způsob – představil povinné vouchery a možnost deportace na základě soudního rozhodnutí. Stále však umožňoval princip sjednocení rodin, takže v této době častěji příjížděli příbuzní, manželky a děti.

A konečně, rok 1971 uvedl termín patriality (z latinského patria, otčina, vlast) a right of abode („právo na domov“). Tyto termíny ve svém výkladu přiznávaly nárok na britské občanství, a to příbuzností, sňatkem či naturalizací. Tímto se v podstatě zastavil příliv primární imigrace.

Rok 1981 pak už jen čistě funkčně rozdělil britské občanství na tři typy.

Jak již bylo řečeno, i když náš typický karibský přistěhovelec dosáhl na britské občanství, negarantovalo mu to pohodlný a spokojený život; stále se potýkal s projevy rasové diskriminace.

Poválečný Londýn obecně nevypadal tak, jak ho známe dnes. Byl rozsáhle poničený nacistickým leteckým bombardováním. Jedním z důvodů, proč se Londýn stal vyhledávanou destinací pro přistěhovalce, byla náhlá vysoká poptávka práce, za účelem co nejrychleji obnovit zdecimované město. Vláda dokonce aktivně nabírala a rekrutovala v zahraničí. Avšak zdá se, že více stála o pracovní síly, než o lidi samotné. S tímto vším, včetně nepřátelské nálady místních, se pojila jistá deziluze a rozčarování a zpochybňování vlastní úlohy ve společnosti. Deziluze a otázka osobní identity se tak stala ústředním tématem anglofonní karibské literatury.

Toto lze do jisté míry i vztáhnout na náš hlavní objekt zájmu – Cesty světla. Obsahuje dvě sekce: sekci povídek dějově zasazených v Trinidadu, převážně na venkově, a sekci Londýnskou. Tato kniha je i svým datem vydání doslova na pomezí dvou světů: je psána v době, kdy Selvon odchází do exilu. Obsahuje tak věrný a reálný popis Trinidadu a zároveň zpracovává velmi čerstvé zkušenosti a poznatky z jeho britského exodu. Její význačnou charakteristikou je také užití kreolu, do té doby v této míře bezprecedentní. Je to poprvé, co se jazykový prostředek doteď považovaný za „nízký“ dostává do popředí. Kreol tu plní vícero

funkcí. Zaprvé dodává karibským postavám punc autentičnosti tím, že užívá jejich přirozenou mluvu. Ale z jiného hlediska je také vyobrazením mísení kultur a osobnostní hybridity. A to je ve výsledku hlavní průvodní linkou pro všechny postavy ze všech londýnských povídek: adaptace a vkládání vlastního kulturního odkazu do mainstreamové kultury země, do které přicházejí.

Londýnské povídky vybrané pro analýzu jsou čtyři. Jejich hlavní přistěhovalecká témata jsou následující:

Calypso in London

Hlavního představitele Mangoheada ve své podstatě trápí dvě věci: mrazivé londýnské počasí a neschopnost sehnat si práci. Díky svému původu je u potenciálních zaměstnavatelů vytrvale odmítán. Rozhodne se tedy jít jinou cestou, a to cestou svého kulturního dědictví a skládá pro výdělek calypso.

My Girl and the City

Tato povídka slouží jako zářný kontrast oproti ostatním ve své sekci. Jako jediná totiž užívá velmi poetickou, standardizovanou angličtinu v celém svém rozsahu. Je to velmi procítěná oslava lásky k dívce a lásky k městu. Autor a vypravěč v jednom zde prezentuje velmi romantický obrázek města, s jeho skrytými zákoutími a geniem loci. Přesto je vypravěčem patrně také přistěhovalec a nabízí tak pro porovnání i jinou perspektivu, tentokrát tu pozitivní.

Brackley and the Bed

Tento příběh sleduje osudy Brackleyho, jak k manželce přišel a naopak přišel o postel. Ukazuje nám postupný příjezd žen a rodin v druhé přistěhovalecké vlně a počátek vzniku rodin v karibské komunitě. Lze také interpretovat jako střet nového a starého; zatímco Brackley se již plně přizpůsobil britskému životnímu stylu, jeho budoucí žena je symbolem tradice a kontinuity trinidadské kultury.

Obeah in the Grove

Jako poslední přichází na řadu Obeah in the Grove. Pojednává o rasové diskriminaci, vyhraněných vztazích mezi bílými obyvateli a přistěhovanci a v neposlední řadě také problémy s bydlením. Hrdinové se rozhodnou vypořádat s manipulativními a ziskuchtivými

domácími po svém; použijí na ně obeah, čarodějnické prokletí působící újmu. Je to o prolínání kulturních tradic a pověřivosti a v neposlední řadě také příběh o vydařené pomstě.

Kniha vyobrazuje různé stupně integrovanosti do britské společnosti a poukazuje na reálné problémy přistěhovalecké menšiny. Ačkoli je tón vyprávění většinou laděn humorně, skrývá se za ním mnohdy trpkost a neveselost a prozrazuje úsilí, jaké musí běžní lidé denně vynakládat, aby přežili.

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