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Hosts and hostages: mass immigration and the power of hospitality in post-war British and Caribbean literature

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This article examines the challenge to colonialist centre-periphery relations in post-war novels by white British and Caribbean writers. Concentrating on the relationship between political debates surrounding mass immigration and the marginalization of non-white migrants within British communities, I analyse texts that depict the threshold of the home as the politicized site of racial tension, namely Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners (1956), V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men (1967), Alan Sillitoe's Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1958), and Anthony Burgess's The Right to an Answer (1960). In varying ways, these texts depict the durability of centre-periphery relations at local levels through the informal segregation of the colonizer and the colonized. In doing so they point to what Jacques Derrida has outlined, in Of Hospitality (2000), as the power relationship inherent in policies of immigration, whereby the host-nation remains in control of the conditions upon which hospitality rests.

A comparative approach that examines literature of the colonizer alongside that of the colonized broadens the corpus of texts regarded as engaging in debates about post-war mass immigration to Britain. Migrant writers, such as Selvon and Naipaul, offer significant early responses towards the marginalization of British Commonwealth citizens. As Graham MacPhee notes, the literature of post-war migrant writers exposes the reality that the 'restructuring of community' around the

welfare state 'was shaped by an increasingly ethnically and racially based conception of nation, one which paradoxically tended to erase the history of imperialism that had engendered it'.[1] Concentrating solely on texts produced by postcolonial writers, however, can uphold the view that 'race' is an issue exclusively dealt with by non-white writers. Comparative analysis reveals how a range of writers from different backgrounds participate in debates about the marginalization of formerly colonized subjects within Britain's borders.

In postcolonial studies, a number of critics have recognized that focusing solely on the experiences of those from the former colonies presents the colonizer as an abstraction. As David Trotter remarks, colonialism has predominantly been understood as 'an encounter between a colonizing machine or system, on one hand, and a colonized subject, on the other. The colonizing subject has been elided, his or her subjectivity wished away'.[2] This elision has resulted, as Laura Chrisman maintains, in the imperial power remaining 'frozen in power and repressed [as] an absent "centre"'.[3] One method of interrogating this centre-periphery paradigm within postcolonial studies is by placing works by colonial and ex-colonial writers in dialogue with white British writers. In doing so, I investigate how both the colonizer and the colonized attempt to challenge imperial assumptions about racial difference that informed post-war policies of immigration and forced migrants onto the peripheries of British society.

In discussing the impact of mass immigration upon the colonial centre-periphery paradigm I will first analyse how prominent migrant writers depict the domestic space of the home as aiding their marginalization within Britain's borders. It will then be possible to challenge the view that white British writers disregarded, or even resisted, the impact of mass immigration on British culture and society. From

this, we can identify an early attempt by Caribbean and white British writers to comprehend the roots of racist opposition to immigration and commit to the establishment of a more equal and consensual society.

The Windrush generation and the limits of hospitality

The Lonely Londoners and The Mimic Men are set in London during the immediate post-war decades and respond to a period when Britain's identity as the 'heart of the world' was growing increasingly untenable. Abroad there was the gradual yet steady dismantling of the British Empire. At home, the arrival of large numbers of non-white colonial and ex-colonial subjects from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia meant that many in Britain encountered for the first time peoples who had for so long remained on the margins of the Empire. Selvon's and Naipaul's novels articulate the experience of those migrants who came to the imperial 'motherland' from the Caribbean. Rather than finding a welcoming nation, in which all citizens of the Commonwealth were seen as equals regardless of skin colour, their Caribbean characters remain on the margins of mainstream British society.

British attitudes towards post-war immigration involved a conflicted attempt to remove the inequities of the Empire whilst sustaining Britain's place at the centre of a global network of nations. In 1948, the British Nationality Act was passed, which established 'equality of status and rights throughout the empire' and the entitlement of all subjects of the British crown 'to live and work in Britain'.[4] Following the passing of the Act, 492 mainly non-white Caribbean migrants (including Selvon and his Barbadian contemporary George Lamming) travelled to Britain on the SS Empire Windrush, an event that, according to Ruvani Ranasinha, has 'become both the story of post-war immigration and the point at which Britain became a multi-cultural

society'.[5] The continued significance of the arrival of the Windrush can be seen in the fact that migrant writers operating in Britain throughout the 1950s and 1960s have since been labelled the 'Windrush generation'.

In the decade that followed the passing of the British Nationality Act and the arrival of the Windrush, immigration to Britain was promoted on the grounds that cheap labour was required for post-war reconstruction. Yet, many in Britain resisted the presence of non-white migrants and mass immigration became known in public debate as Britain's 'colour problem'. Anti-immigration campaigns involved violence towards non-white citizens, the most well-known examples being the 1958 'race riots' in Nottingham and Notting Hill.[6] Responding to the 'colour problem', the Macmillan government passed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962, which introduced strict immigration controls upon migrants from Caribbean, African and Asian countries on the basis that they refused to 'integrate' into British society.[7]

The shift from the earlier British Nationality Act to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act helped reinscribe a colonialist definition of 'Britishness' based on race. The dilemma faced by many non-white migrants of being a citizen of the British Commonwealth but not considered British is depicted in a number of works by 'Windrush generation' writers. In The Lonely Londoners and The Mimic Men the symbolic importance of domestic space offers both the promise of belonging and a barrier to unconditional acceptance within Britain's borders. In his lecture Of Hospitality, Derrida provides a productive means of articulating this dilemma. Addressing the paradox at the heart of the concept of hospitality, which is simultaneously unconditional and conditional, Derrida discusses what he sees as the:

> insoluble antinomy [...] between, on the one hand, The law of unlimited hospitality (to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest condition), and on the other hand, the laws (in the plural), those rights and duties that are always conditioned and conditional.[8]

What Derrida's conceptualization acknowledges is the importance of power, for the 'law of hospitality' requires the host to have fixed boundaries that establish the home as a space 'that makes possible one's own hospitality' and in turn one's status as host.[9] When an encroachment upon the home is felt to threaten the 'sovereignty' of the host, not only is the outsider regarded as 'an undesirable foreigner, and virtually, as an enemy', but '[t]his other becomes a hostile subject, and I [the host] risk becoming their hostage'.[10] Ultimately, absolute and unconditional hospitality is impossible as it would in turn destroy the distinction between 'host' and 'guest' and thus the bases upon which hospitality is granted. Following Derrida, we can conceptualize the interior/exterior boundaries of the home in Selvon's and Naipaul's texts as establishing the power relationship between host-nation and migrant and as sustaining a centre-periphery paradigm at a local level.

The Lonely Londoners tells the story of the first generation of Caribbean immigrants to settle in 'the Mother Country' primarily through the experiences of a small group of friends, affectionately referred to as 'the boys'.[11] The novel brings together the Western novel form and the Calypso ballad to narrate a number of loosely related stories. As Selvon explains, for migrants from the Caribbean, London 'turned out to be a kind of meeting place where the Jamaican met the Trinidadian and the Barbadian [for the first time] and they got to know one another, they got to

identify in a way as a people coming from a certain part of the world'.[12] Alongside the positive articulation of Caribbean unity, The Lonely Londoners, as MacPhee maintains, 'traces how the construction of Commonwealth migrants as "immigrants" (rather than as British citizens) and as "coloured" plays an important role in the reciprocal construction of Britain as a nation rather than an empire'.[13] The treatment of Caribbean migrants as 'other' exhibits a move away from 'Britishness' as being an identity available to all members of the Commonwealth and towards 'membership of a racially defined national community'.[14] What previous analyses have neglected in their examination of this aspect of the novel is Selvon's depiction of domestic space as aiding the exclusion of Caribbean migrants from that national community.[15]

From the outset, The Lonely Londoners draws attention to the way in which the political debates surrounding immigration are played out at local levels, particularly evident in the difficulty of Caribbean migrants to find accommodation in London. Written in a Caribbean vernacular, the third-person narration describes how 'English people starting to make rab about how too much West Indians coming to the country […] and big discussion going on in Parliament about the situation'.[16] The novel's Trinidadian protagonist, Moses Aloetta, is introduced as the person who 'know which part [of London] they will slam door in your face and which part they will take in spades'.[17] It is a description of the dilemma faced by non-white migrants that foregrounds the 'ghettoization' of those considered to be unwelcome outsiders within a nation they had been taught to think of as their motherland. Moses and his fellow Caribbean migrants may well be welcome to enter the former 'heart of the world', but crossing the border does not infer equality or acceptance.

As a means of articulating the gap between the official acceptance of non-white migrants as equal under the British Nationality Act and their sense of isolation

within British communities, Moses ironically appropriates the term 'English diplomacy'.[18] Comparing the treatment of black people in Britain and America, he states: '[I]n America, they don't like you, and they tell you so straight […]. Over here is the old English diplomacy: "thank you, sir" and "how do you do" […], but when you go in the hotel or the restaurant they will politely tell you to haul'.[19] This awareness of the show of hospitality masking the reality of inhospitality frames Moses's lamentation in the novel's conclusion that, 'Nobody in London does really accept you. They tolerate you, yes, but you can't go in their house and eat or sit down and talk'.[20] The inhospitable treatment of Moses and his friends points to the way in which internal barriers to acceptance are set up after migrants have crossed the nation's borders. The hotel, the restaurant, and the home represent the impenetrable heart of the nation, and their thresholds allow for the continuation of centre-periphery relations in post-war British society.

The landscape of The Lonely Londoners offers both the possibility of a unified Caribbean community and, at the same time, the marginalization of that community. Naipaul's The Mimic Men, by contrast, addresses the dilemma of some Anglicized colonial subjects who reject a migrant community but are also not wholly accepted as British. The novel is written in the style of a memoir and narrated in the first-person by Ralph Singh, a forty-year-old exiled politician from the fictional former British colony of Isabella, located in the Caribbean. The genre of the memoir foregrounds Singh's attempt to achieve a level of clarity and cohesion about his own identity. The difficulty of such a task for the colonial 'mimic man', however, is suggested by the memoir's fragmented form whereby each of the three parts, which relate to the three key periods of Singh's life, are narrated inconsecutively. As Singh states in the novel's conclusion, 'a narrative in sequence' would suggest it possible 'to impose

order on my own history'.[21] Part One depicts Singh's first visit to London as a student, Part Two concerns his childhood in Isabella and his return as an educated member of the country's independent government, and Part Three addresses his exile to England due to his Indian heritage. The disrupted chronology of Singh's life unsettles any notion of a clear distinction between the past and present, emphasizing his conflicted sense of affinity and dislocation from both his British 'motherland' and his former home of Isabella.

When he arrives in post-war London as a student, Singh describes how he lived in a 'book-shaped room' at the top of a boarding house.[22] From his viewpoint he does not see a rich and powerful motherland but bombsites underneath a 'livid grey sky', where 'thin lines of brown smoke [rose] from ugly chimneypots'.[23] Rather than a unified British community within which he could discover a sense of belonging, Singh explains: 'I felt all the magic of the city go away and had an intimation of the forlornness of the city and of the people who lived in it'.[24] It is a recollection that depicts London not as a great metropolitan centre, where migrants could find 'order' surrounded by a 'protective' environment, but as 'a conglomeration of private cells' where 'we are reminded that we are individuals, units'.[25] In characterizing the city as a crumbling, atomized and impersonal space, The Mimic Men undermines both the colonialist notion of Britain's capital as the 'heart of the world' and the migrant's dream of belonging to a welcoming and beneficent nation.

The domesticated space of the home, and Singh's inability to establish a sense of belonging following his exile from Isabella, foregrounds this disparity and emphasizes Singh's dilemma as an Indo-Caribbean British subject without a home. On discovering a burgeoning migrant community in London upon his return, the Anglicized former politician is convinced of his higher social status. As Veena Singh

states, The Mimic Men is concerned with those who 'look down on their own community, and also try to achieve the glory of the colonial culture'.[26] Adopting the pejorative use of the term 'immigrant', Singh describes how other exiled men and women who used to have political power in the colonies are forced to live 'in the lower-middle-class surroundings' of London where they 'pass for immigrants'.[27] Singh chooses to reject this way of life in favour of hotel accommodation, stating: 'I could not, like so many of my fellow exiles, live in a suburban semi-detached house; I could not pretend even to myself to be part of a community or to be putting down roots. […] I like the feeling of impermanence'.[28] Yet, Singh's choice to reside in hotels following his exile, rather than put down roots in a community of immigrants, foregrounds the paradoxical nature of his role as an Anglicized 'mimic man'. Just as, for Homi K. Bhabha, Singh represents 'a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English', his place on the periphery of both indigenous and migrant communities leaves him in a permanent state of impermanence, where he will remain a guest and never a host.[29]

The significant responses of 'Windrush' writers towards racial prejudice in post-war Britain have been acknowledged as 'participat[ing] in the transformation of centre-periphery relations at the end of Empire'.[30] Yet, they have also been examined in a manner that upholds the view that white British writers were complicit in the marginalization of Britain's non-white citizens through their silence on the issue of mass immigration.[31] It is certainly true that the literature on immigration by white writers is by no means as extensive or discursively unified as that of writers from nations with a history of colonialism. The suggestion that white British writers exhibit a widespread silence overlooks what Peter J. Kalliney has recently discussed as the 'inter-colonial contact' that was facilitated by 'metropolitan literary institutions' such

as the BBC and publishing houses.[32] Within these settings '[i]ntellectuals from different regions and continents could meet and swap ideas in the context of metropolitan organizations'.[33] Where Kalliney concentrates on established mid-century writers, including T.S. Eliot and George Orwell, it is possible to examine how writers like Sillitoe and Burgess, who emerged outside of Britain's metropolitan literary culture, intervene in debates relating to the marginalization of non-white migrants. It is precisely the diversity of approaches across a range of texts by both white and non-white writers that reveals the number of ambivalent and at times problematic depictions of the impact of mass immigration on British society.

Crossing the threshold

The domestic space of the home, viewed as establishing the fixed boundaries between acceptance and marginalization in The Lonely Londoners and as creating a separate migrant community in The Mimic Men, is disrupted by the arrival of African and Asian characters in Sillitoe's and Burgess's texts. The symbolic use of the home in these novels foreshadows what Sara Upstone has called the 'disruption of colonial ideas of space' evident in later texts by postcolonial writers.[34] According to Upstone, the supposedly 'natural' order of British colonial homes – involving a racial and gendered hierarchy of master, colonial wife, servant and colonized outsider – is politicized in postcolonial literature and revealed as an ideological construct, able to uphold ideas about segregation and the assumed superiority of British civilization. While this trope is more sustained in works by writers from nations with a history of colonial subjugation, Sillitoe's and Burgess's novels reveal a shared concern with the way in which political debates regarding immigration are played out at a domestic level in post-war England. Examining their engagement with debates about the

'colour problem' reveals their novels to be much more progressive on the issue of 'race' than previous readings suggest.

The plot of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning revolves around the twenty-one-year-old working class protagonist Arthur Seaton. Through Seaton the novel illuminates what Alan Sinfield calls 'the sex, violence and humanity of an unregarded (non-metropolitan) lower-class, youthful, urban scene', expressing an 'anarchic contempt for the state, the ruling classes, empire and political parties'.[35] This articulation of contempt for metropolitan establishments, and the novel's use of a specifically Nottinghamshire vernacular, has placed it as a prominent work of the Angry Young Men.[36] A previously unexamined aspect of the text is Sillitoe's use of the confines of the home to challenge the view of black African migrants as unwelcome in predominantly white working-class communities.

In Part Two, entitled 'Sunday Morning', Sillitoe addresses the treatment of Britain's non-white citizens within Nottingham's working class community through the minor character of Sam, a 'coloured soldier from the Gold Coast' and 'a friend of Johnny's who was with the REs [the Royal Engineers] in West Africa'.[37] The reference to Sam's status as an African member of the British Army points to his paradoxical position as a citizen of the Commonwealth and yet considered an 'outsider' to the British nation-state. Having been told to visit Johnny's family whilst in England to train as a mechanic, Sam enters the family home as an unknown outsider and a guest. By the end of his short stay, however, Sam is treated more like a member of the closely-knit family unit.

Pointedly, Sam's visit occurs in the build-up to Christmas, a period characterized by goodwill and universal hospitality. In this spirit, Sam's arrival prompts a friendly reaction and he is given a place to stay, is invited to share meals

with the family and is introduced to the community as a whole through visits to the local pubs. Rather than evincing what Moses in The Lonely Londoners ironically refers to as the 'old English diplomacy', Saturday Night and Sunday Morning depicts an environment of 'universal sympathy' that surrounds Sam, one where Ada – Johnny's wife – considers him to be 'like my own son'.[38] Undermining the view of white British working class communities as insular and overwhelmingly hostile to immigration, the novel – which was published in the year of Nottingham's 'race riot' – challenges the marginalization of non-white migrants and invites the reader to envisage a society that is accepting of racial and cultural difference.

This is not to suggest that Sillitoe's text provides an unproblematic portrayal of the treatment of colonial and ex-colonial migrants in the 1950s. Articulating the view of black Africans as 'backwards', Ada's youngest son Bert twice refers to Sam as a 'Zulu', comments that he 'thinks all telegrams are sent by tom-tom', and suggests that his darts ability is 'a legacy left over from throwing assegais'.[39] Bert's comments, however, represent a broader British view that is either ignored by the rest of the family or chastised, as when Ada tells him to 'shut up' after he states that Sam can only pay for things 'in beads'.[40] While Sillitoe presents the kind of view held by Bert to be out of place in the novel's setting, the novel is also arguably complicit in recirculating colonialist notions of the 'noble savage' in the narrator's descriptions of Sam as having a 'calm intelligent face' and as 'simple and unselfconscious'.[41] Such language can be seen as replaying a form of colonialist praise for what Marianna Torgovnick has discussed as the perceived 'idyllic closeness to nature' of black African societies.[42]

Sam's status in the text as a minor character, appearing in only one chapter, moreover, can be read as representative of the widely-held assumption in 1950s

Britain that the vast majority of migrants would not settle permanently. Behind the novel's depiction of good-natured and convivial relations between Britain's white and non-white citizens lies Sam's status as a guest, with all of the conditions that such a status implies: he is warmly welcomed into the household but there always remains the assumption that he will ultimately leave both the family home and the nation-state to return back to Africa. This condition is evident in the chapter's conclusion when Bertha asks Sam 'if he would write to her from Africa'.[43] Sam may have traversed the threshold of the home but within the family unit, and the novel as a whole, he remains in many ways a peripheral figure.

It is this assumption of the guest's ultimate departure that is interrogated in The Right to an Answer. The novel is narrated by the ex-pat businessman J.W. Denham, who returns from Tokyo to his suburban Midlands home to look after his ailing father. On this journey Denham meets a Sociology student from Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) called Mr. Raj, who is hoping to conduct research on English society's 'views on problems of racial relationships'.[44] Over the course of the novel, Denham's relationship with Raj moves from the convivial to the hostile, staging the power struggle between those in Britain wishing to marginalize non-white migrants and new arrivals seeking to assert their equality and demand the 'right to an answer' regarding their history of colonial subjugation.

Denham's father's home represents the final barrier to Raj becoming accepted as truly British and is the site where the distinction between resistance and acceptance becomes blurred. As we have seen, the protagonists of Selvon's and Naipaul's texts are unable to cross the final threshold which distinguishes the indigenous from the migrant citizen, while Sam in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning crosses this boundary but under the unspoken condition that he not outstay his welcome.

Burgess's Mr. Raj not only traverses this boundary but makes Denham's father's home his own after being invited to stay as a lodger, ultimately threatening what Derrida refers to as the 'sovereignty' of the host.[45] Reading The Right to an Answer as dramatizing the paradoxical nature of hospitality foregrounds the way in which the novel challenges static notions of racial and cultural difference and depicts mass immigration as a direct consequence of British colonialism.

Although Raj's and Denham's relationship provides the central thread of the novel, previous criticism has concentrated on the novel's depiction of the rise of permissiveness and mass culture within post-war British society. Upon his return to the Midlands from Hong Kong Denham discovers what he calls a 'post-war English mess' where the suburban inhabitants commit adultery and 'submit to the blue hypnotic eye [of the television] and the absence of the need for thought or solidarity'.[46] John J. Stinson notes that the relationship in the text between the moral redundancy of extra-marital affairs and the fragmentary impact of mass culture upon working-class communities suggests 'that an equation exists between moral neutrality and cultural and spiritual atrophy'.[47] Similarly, Bernard Bergonzi has characterized The Right to an Answer as depicting 'modern England' as 'a flat and dismal place, of petty lusts and feeble adulteries'.[48] Where the character of Mr. Raj is mentioned in these analyses it is often only as a device through which Denham's status as an ex-pat outsider, able to view post-war England from a detached position, is paralleled and exaggerated.

More recently, Burgess's biographer, Andrew Biswell, has acknowledged that, '[I]n truth [The Right to an Answer] is a novel about a foreign visitor who attempts with only limited success to integrate into English life' and it is Mr. Raj who is 'the true focus of Burgess's imaginative interest'.[49] Supporting this view, Burgess writes

in his autobiography that The Right to an Answer began as a 'highly moral story' about the breakdown of marital bonds and the prevalence of adultery in post-war suburbia, but that Mr. Raj 'emerged from my unconscious fully armed and, against my will, he took over the novel'.[50] Burgess's use of language in describing the writing process, whereby the creator of the world in which the story takes place is rendered submissive against his will to the demands of a previously marginal character, points to what is arguably a more central theme than adultery: the arrival in the former imperial centre of those who had remained for centuries 'out there' on the margins.

The threshold to the home is a key symbol in responding to wider political debates about mass immigration. When Raj struggles to find accommodation, Denham suggests that he stay in his father's spare room while Denham is away on business. When his father protests about 'having blackies in the house', Denham counters with the statement: 'They'll be in all our homes, [...] blackies of all colours, before the century's over'.[51] It is an exchange that sets up Denham's rejection of what he sees as his father's outmoded worldview regarding non-white migrants. More significantly, however, it also establishes the boundaries of the home as a microcosm of the nation, the threshold to which is being opened up to a new era of global migrancy.

Despite expressing a level of acceptance regarding post-war immigration from the colonies and former colonies, Denham's hospitality is revealed to be conditional when his own 'sovereignty' as host is perceived to be under threat. When he returns from Tokyo early following the news of his father's death, Denham discovers that the house has been decorated with objects belonging to Mr. Raj:

> I looked round the room, which seemed different. Had death made it seem different? No, it wasn't death, it was Mr. Raj. The room seemed to smell of Ceylon – rancid, aromatic. On the table was a table-runner, I now noticed, of Ceylonese design. And with a real shock, I saw that the Rosa Bonheur [painting] was gone. In its place was a Ceylonese moonlight scene [...] I smelled for traces of my father, but nothing seemed left. [...] But it wasn't just a matter of possessions; it was as though the house bore no real stamp of his having lived there – there was no after-flavour of my father, no echo.[52]

Raj has not simply moved into the spare room, where his presence could be managed and contained, but has taken over the whole house, thus supplanting any trace of Denham's father. The combination of sensory imagery, including what Denham can see and smell as well as the metaphorical use of 'after-flavour', points to the way in which Denham perceives Raj's presence to be all-encompassing.

When Raj returns to the house Denham instinctively adopts the role of the host, before acknowledging that a shift in power has occurred. He tells Raj: 'Take your coat off. Sit down. Make yourself at home. Although, perhaps it ought to be you telling me to make myself at home'.[53] Denham's new status as 'hostage' rather than host is further underlined by the fact that Raj is pointing a gun, bought for self-defence, having initially suspected Denham to be an intruder. The two argue, with Denham accusing Raj of being responsible for the death of his father through negligence. When Raj threatens Denham with his gun and blocks him from leaving the house, Denham reveals the unspoken racism that has informed his view of Raj as 'other' throughout the novel, shouting: 'How dare you do this to me in my own home. [...] You bloody stupid black bastard'.[54] Pointedly, Denham reaffirms his ownership

of the home and thus his power as host to dictate Raj's actions. Denham's regression into racism and his reduction of Raj to no more than a 'black bastard' reveals the limits of his hospitality and, by extension, the conditions upon which Britain's immigration policy rests. In perceiving Raj as a threat to his power of hospitality, Denham not only retracts that hospitality but also denies Raj's humanity in regressive and racist terms, objectifying him in terms of his skin colour.

Having established the living room – which is the domestic space that traditionally stages the host's hospitality – as the politicized site of tension between the host-nation and the new arrival, this tension is presented by Burgess as a legacy of Britain's history of colonial expansion. When Denham blames Raj for failing to look after his father properly, Raj retaliates by stating: 'Your father was very well looked after; perhaps, when one considers so many weighty historical factors, better than he deserved'.[55] On being pressed by Denham as to what his father specifically had done wrong, Raj maintains, 'It is not a question of what he personally had done wrong, [...] but of what people of his generation had done wrong by their ignorance or tyranny'.[56] Raj's allusion of Sri Lanka's history of colonial subjugation under the British turns the 'colour problem' on its head: rather than mass immigration being presented as a threat to British society – as many anti-immigration campaigns of the period maintained – it is shown to be a consequence of centuries of tyrannical colonial rule from which all Britons have benefitted.

Although The Right to an Answer's reaffirmation of racial conflict at the novel's climax suggests that the 'colour problem' is unsolvable, the tone of the conclusion is much more ambivalent. While Denham is the text's sole narrator, the last word is given to Raj by way of an extract of his sociological study into race relationships that Denham discovers in his father's spare room. In it Raj emphasizes

the need for love in its various forms to counter what he refers to as the astonishing 'capacity of people for hatred', and to allow mankind 'to think in terms of larger and larger groups to which he must give allegiance'.[57] The fragment of Raj's sociological study ultimately calls for the breakdown of existing centre-periphery relations that uphold racial and cultural barriers in a world of increased migrancy and globally connected economic systems.

Raj's call for allegiance at a supranational level is only a fragment of his study and is left unfinished, leaving the novel to close with the pointedly inconclusive sentence, 'Love seems inevitable, necessary, as normal and as easy a process as respiration, but unfortunately'.[58] The open-ended tone of pessimism in the final words undercuts the idealism of Raj's commitment to 'love', providing an appreciation of the problems ahead for a British society coming to terms with the legacy of colonialism. It is a conclusion that echoes the final image of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India (1924) in which Fielding asks that he and Dr. Aziz become friends. In response to Fielding, the Indian landscape and the architecture of power which has been built upon it – represented by 'the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace' – answer, 'No, not yet'.[59] Similarly, Denham concludes that Raj had 'come too soon for the blending' and that his thoughts on race relations in Britain were 'just a beginning'.[60] Burgess would later attest to the fruits of that 'beginning', writing in the epilogue to his non-fiction work Urgent Copy: Literary Studies (1968), 'The British withdrew from their colonies, but new colonies follow them home. We old colonial servants retire, but we find that we no longer have to yearn for the richness of a multi-coloured, multi-cultural society: it's growing here all around us'.[61] Rather than legitimating the marginalization of non-white migrants new to Britain through silence,

Burgess undermines the continuation of colonialist ideas about race and suggests that mass immigration is an inevitable and potentially positive legacy of colonialism.

A comparative approach to literature written during the 1950s and 1960s, reveals how the texts by Selvon, Naipaul, Sillitoe and Burgess, which were produced at the moment of extensive decolonization and mass immigration highlight the way in which the racial distinctions that had sustained imperialism were far from being dismantled along with the Empire and were in fact deepened in the imperial centre. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth-century, debates about immigration have been characterized by a paradoxical commitment to the notion of 'multiculturalism' and the exclusion of non-white migrants and their families from mainstream British society. It is not the case that only migrant writers challenge such imperial discourses while white British writers remain silent on the contradictory ideologies underpinning policies of immigration. Indeed, such a view flattens the preoccupations of migrant and diaspora writers and texts by white British writers. The novels examined here in many ways remain ambivalent on the lasting impact of mass immigration in Britain, but they also offer a space in which to think beyond an understanding of community framed by inclusion and exclusion based on racial and cultural difference.

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Notes

[1] Graham MacPhee, Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p.56.

[2] David Trotter, 'Colonial subjects', Critical Quarterly, 32.3 (Autumn 1990), 3-20 (p.3), emphasis original.

[3] Laura Chrisman, 'The imperial unconscious? Representations of imperial discourse', Critical Quarterly 32 (Autumn 1990) 38-58 (p.38).

[4] Kathleen Paul, Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.16.

[5] Ruvani Ranasinha, 'Changes in the canon: After Windrush', in The Post-War British Literature Handbook, ed. by Katherine Corkin and Jago Morrison (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.177-93 (p.177), emphasis original.

[6] For more on post-war anti-immigration campaigns see Dominic Sandbrook, Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles, 1956-63 (London: Abacus, 2011).

[7] See Paul Gilroy, *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack'*: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation (London: Hutchison, 1987), Bill Schwarz, '"The Only White Man in There": The re-racialization of England, 1956-68', Race and Class, 38 (1995), 65-78, and Kathleen Paul, 'Communities of Britishness: migration in the last gasp of empire', in British Culture and the End of Empire, edited by Stuart Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.180-99.

[8] Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, Of Hospitality, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.77,emphasis original.

[9] Derrida, p.53.

[10] Derrida, p.55.

[11] Sam Selvon, The Lonely Londoners (Essex: Longman, 2003), p.2.

[12] Susheila Nasta (ed.), Writing across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk (London: Routledge, 2004), p.14.

[13] MacPhee, p.122.

[14] MacPhee, p.123.

[15] For more on Selvon and The Lonely Londoners see John McLeod, Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.24-58, Nick Bentley, 'Form and Language in Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners', Ariel, 36.3 (2005), 67-84, Nick Bentley, Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp.263-92, and J. Dillon Brown, Migrant Modernism: Postwar London and the West Indian Novel (London: University of Virginia Press, 2013), pp.103-33.

[16] Selvon, p.2.

[17] Selvon, p.2, p.4.

[18] Selvon, p.20.

[19] Selvon, pp.20-1.

[20] Selvon, p.126.

[21] Naipaul, V.S., The Mimic Men (London: Picador, 2002), p.266.

[22] Naipaul, p.3.

[23] Naipaul, p.5.

[24] Naipaul, p.5.

[25] Naipaul, p.17.

[26] Veena Singh, 'A journey of rejection: V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men', in V.S. Naipaul: Critical Essays, Volume 3, ed. by Mohit K. Ray (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2005), pp.156-66 (p.156).

[27] Naipaul, p.7.

[28] Naipaul, p.9.

[29] Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 2004), p.87,emphasis original.

[30] Jed Esty, A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.200.

[31] See for example Elizabeth Maslen, 'The miasma of Englishness in the 1950s', in The Revision of Englishness, ed. by David Rogers and John McLeod (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp.40-51, and Caryl Phillips, 'Kingdom of the Blind', The Guardian (17th July 2004), http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/jul/17/featuresreviews.guardianreview1, accessed June 4th 2013.

[32] Peter J. Kalliney, Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.4.

[33] Kalliney, p.4.

[34] Sara Upstone, Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel (Surrey, VT: Ashgate, 2009), p.11.

[35] Alan Sinfield, Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain, 2nd edition (London: Continuum, 2004), p. xxiii.

[36] See Colin Wilson, The Angry Years: The Rise and Fall of the Angry Young Men (London: Robson, 2007).

[37] Alan Sillitoe, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (London: Flamingo, 1994), p.191.

[38] Sillitoe, p.196, p.200.

[39] Sillitoe, p.191, p.197, p.191, p.193.

[40] Sillitoe, p.193.

[41] Sillitoe, p.192.

[42] Marianna Torgovnick, Primitive Passions: Men, Women and the Quest for Ecstasy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p.13.

[43] Sillitoe, p.200.

[44] Anthony Burgess, The Right to an Answer (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), p.110.

[45] Derrida, p.55.

[46] Burgess, Right, p.3, p.68.

[47] John J. Stinson, Anthony Burgess Revisited (Boston: Twayne, 1991), p.65.

[48] Bernard Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.181. The relationship between 'race' and sexuality is another significant but overlooked aspect of the novel. It is not possible to examine this theme within the scope of this article but it certainly offers an area for further analysis.

[49] Biswell also notes that, '[T]he French translation of this novel changes its title to Monsieur Raj'. See Andrew Biswell, The Real Anthony Burgess (London: Picador, 2006), pp.200-1.

[50] Anthony Burgess, Little Wilson and Big God: Being the First Part of the Confessions of Anthony Burgess (London: Vintage, 2002), p.439, p.438.

[51] Burgess, Right, p.113.

[52] Burgess, Right, p.214.

[53] Burgess, Right, p.217.

[54] Burgess, Right, p.223.

[55] Burgess, Right, p.218.

[56] Burgess, Right, p.218.

[57] Burgess, Right, p.254.

[58] Burgess, Right, p.255.

[59] E.M. Forster, A Passage to India (London: Penguin, 1967), p.317.

[60] Burgess, Right, p.253.

[61] Anthony Burgess, Urgent Copy: Literary Studies (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), p.272.