

TC

**ATILIM ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

**IDENTITY PROBLEMS AMONG MINORITY GROUPS
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLAND**

BERNA BATTAL KARLITEPE

Tez teslim edilebilir.

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**Ankara, 2008
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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial writers such as Buchi Emecheta, V.S.Naipaul and Timothy Mo write about the problems immigrants face in twentieth-century-Britain. Their main aim is to show how immigrants are kept silent and how they are segregated. They feel homeless and they come face to face with discrimination. They cannot explain themselves to the society. They cannot find suitable jobs and also they have no one to support them. Some of the immigrants are welcomed neither by their kin nor by the British society. In order not to lose their identities and to make their traditions survive, they do their best. First of all they reject everything but later they begin to adjust themselves to the English society. They want to give meaning to their life in Britain and they want to be a part of it. So the next period in the lives of immigrants is the adaptation period. Besides the negative aspects in England, the most important problem immigrants have is an identity problem. Immigrants want to continue their traditions and they want to live the way they used to live at home and they do not change themselves. As a result they lead an isolated life and feel homeless and not wanted. Therefore, they want to return to their homelands. Yet, when they go back, as soon as they are home they discover that the country they wanted to return to has changed and it is no longer the same country. It is not only the country that has changed but in the meantime they themselves have changed, too. So not knowing what to do they are stuck in between two cultures. Then they begin to consider returning to the country they thought was not for them. After their second attempt to make a living in the adopted country in this case Britain, they begin to adjust to their new society. Thus begins their period of integration.

In the three novels *Second Class Citizen*, *The Mimic Men* and *Sour Sweet* the writers Buchi Emecheta, V.S.Naipaul and Timothy Mo respectively focus on the process of adaptation their characters go through. In Buchi Emecheta's novel, *Adah*, the main character who has lived in a colonised country has always dreamt of going to Britain. She thinks that she will be happy if she goes to Britain. But her dreams do not come true because when she goes to Britain she faces racial prejudice and she begins to compare Britain with her native Nigeria. She rejects the norms in England

and she feels displaced and homeless. This leads her to have an identity problem. She cannot free herself from her Nigerian identity. But in the end she adapts herself to the English society and assumes an English identity. Francis, Adah's husband on the other hand, remains in the rejection period. He tries to mimic white people but the feeling of inferiority makes him stay away from English society. He cannot adapt himself and lives with his Nigerian identity and finally returns home.

In V.S. Naipaul's novel the main character Singh has grown up in a colonised society, therefore he has an identity problem. He can fit himself neither into Isabella nor into England when he goes there. He has a strong feeling of displacement and homelessness. All his life he searches for a place he can call as his home. After years spent both in Isabella and in England and other countries he travelled to he understands that he can be happy in England. He gets adapted to the English society and overcomes his feelings of conflict, and displacement.

In Timothy Mo's novel, Lily the mother rejects the norms in England and she wants her Chinese identity to survive but in the end she is integrated to the English society. Chen, the father, also rejects the society but he cannot adapt himself and disappears from the scene. Mui, Lily's sister, does not experience the rejection period. At first she mimics white people and then she reaches the adaptation period. Man Kee, Lily's child, is ready to be adapted because he was born in England and he does not have the cultural baggage to prevent his adaptation. The grandfather cannot go beyond the rejection period and he continues to keep his Chinese identity. Mui's child has a better chance for assimilation because Mui is eager to be like the English and is ready to raise her child as one.

To sum up, immigrants face an identity problem when they migrate. Some can get over the problem of identity. Before they can have the identity of their new country they go through a long process which consists of rejection, adjustment and adaptation and integration periods. The final stage is the stage of assimilation but since it means giving up one's culture and identity completely it is hard to reach this stage and it is more likely for the second or third generation immigrant families to get assimilated. However, even some of the new-generation immigrants continue living in their adopted country still preserving their old identities.

ÖZET

Buchi Emecheta'nın *Second Class Citizen*, V.S.Naipaul'un *The Mimic Men*, Timothy Mo'nun *Sour Sweet* adlı romanları yirminci yüzyıl İngiltere'sinde yaşayan göçmenlerin problemlerini ele almaktadır. Yazarların asıl amacı, göçmenlerin nasıl etkisiz bırakıldığını ve onlara karşı nasıl ayrımcılık yapıldığını anlatmaktır. İngiltere'ye gelen göçmenler çok fazla sorun yaşamışlardır. Yaşayabilecekleri bir yer bulabilmeleri konusunda zorluklarla karşılaşmışlardır. Kendilerini yersiz yurtsuz hissedip, ayrımcılıkla yüz yüze gelmişler; toplumda kendilerini ifade şansı bulamamışlardır. Çalışabilecekleri bir iş bulamadıkları gibi, herhangi bir destek de görmemişlerdir. Bazı göçmenler hem kendi soydaşlarının, hem de İngilizlerin ayrımcılığına maruz kalmıştır. Özlerini kaybetmemek ve kendi kültürlerini devam ettirmek için ellerinden gelen her şeyi yapmışlardır. Göçmenler ilk başta her şeyi reddedip sonra da kendilerini topluma adapte etmeye çalışmışlardır. İngiltere'deki hayata anlam vermeye çalışıp, İngiltere'deki hayatın bir parçası olmak yani topluma adapte olmak istemişlerdir. Ama İngiltere'deki bütün olumsuz koşullar, göçmenlerin kimlik problemi yaşamalarına neden olmuştur. Göçmenler kültürlerini sürdürerek yaşamak isterler fakat bu konuda başarılı olmazlar. Bu nedenle de kendi ülkelerine geri dönmek isterler. Ancak, dönecekleri ülke bıraktıkları ülke değildir artık. Dolayısıyla, ne yapacaklarını bilmedikleri için, iki kültür arasında sıkışırlar. Sonunda kendi kültürlerini arka plana atıp İngiltere'ye geri dönerler ve fark etmeden değişmiş oldukları için artık yeni ülkelere daha rahat adapte olurlar. Bu üç romanda yazarlar, karakterlerinin adaptasyon süreçlerini ve bu süreçte yaşadıkları olumsuz olayları konu edinmişlerdir.

Buchi Emecheta'nın romanında ana karakter Adah'nın, her zaman için İngiltere'ye gitme gibi bir rüyası vardır. Adah'da koloni olan bir ülkede yaşamıştır. Onun için eğer İngiltere'ye giderse orada mutlu olacağını düşünür. Ama onun rüyası gerçekleşmez. Çünkü İngiltere'de ırkçılıkla karşılaşır ve iki ülkeyi kıyaslamaya başlar. İngiltere'deki normları reddeder ve kendini oraya ait hissedemez. Bu onun kimlik problemi yaşamasına neden olur. Ama sonunda huzura ulaşır. Kendini İngiliz toplumuna adapte eder ve İngiliz kimliğini alır. Adah'nın kocası Francis her zaman

reddetme döneminde kalır. Beyaz insanları taklit etmeye çalışır ama içindeki aşağılık duygusu onun İngiliz toplumundan uzak durmasına neden olur. O kendini adapte edemez ve Nijeryalı kimliğini sürdürür sonuçta da ülkesine geri döner.

V.S.Naipaul'un ana karakteri Singh her zaman için bir çelişki içindedir. Sömürge olan bir toplumda yaşadığı için, her zaman kimlik problemi yaşamıştır. Huzuru ne İngiltere'de, ne de Isabella'da bulabilmiştir. Kendini bir yere ait hissedememiş ve yuvam diyebileceği bir yeri olmamıştır. Ama sonunda İngiltere'de mutlu olacağını anlayarak kimlik probleminin üstesinden gelir. İngiliz toplumuna adaptasyonu gerçekleşir ve içindeki çelişkiden ve de bir yere ait hissedememe duygusundan kurtulur.

Timothy Mo'nun romanındaki anne karakteri Lily, İngiltere'deki normları reddedip, kendi Çinli kimliğini yaşatmaya çalışmıştır. Ama sonunda İngiliz toplumuna uyum sağlamıştır. Ailenin babası Chen de toplumu reddetmiştir. Ama öldürüldüğü için uyumu gerçekleşmemiştir. Lily'nin kız kardeşi Mui, reddetme dönemini yaşamamıştır. Beyazları taklit etmiş ve sonunda uyum sağlamıştır. Lily'nin oğlu Man Kee de İngiltere'de doğduğu için ve kültürel bir birikimi olmadığı için asimile olmaya hazırdır. Dolayısıyla İngiliz toplumuna uyumu gerçekleşmiştir. Büyükbaba her zaman reddetme döneminde kalmış ve kendi Çinli kimliğini sürdürmüştür. Mui'nin çocuğunun asimile olma şansı vardır, çünkü annesinin İngiliz olma isteği, çocuğunun İngiliz olmasına yardımcı olacaktır.

Sonuç olarak, göçmenler göç ettiklerinde kimlik problemleriyle karşılaşır. Bazıları kimlik probleminin üstesinden gelir ve İngiliz kimliğini alarak huzura ulaşır, bazıları ise eski kimlikleriyle yaşamlarına devam ederler.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, Britain, together with much of the world has witnessed an immense movement of peoples “brought about by racial, political, and economic liberalization and the lowering of protective barriers”(King, 2004:2). Actually, the introduction of foreigners to Britain, had started after the end of World War I. British Government requested workers for the rebuilding of the country after the war. Many people from the colonies responded to this request and went to England with the hope of finding employment. After they were needed no longer, these workers were asked to return to their homelands. Some did as they were bid but quite a few refused to go back and settled in Britain permanently (King, 2004:2).

Following World War II, with the dissolution of the British Empire, a new wave of immigrants rushed to England, fleeing either from unemployment, hence from poverty or from interethnic tensions, civil wars, and tyrannies that were prevailing in their home countries (King, 2004:13). Some others came as student grantees to further their education, but after they completed their studies, they did not go back home and chose to stay in Britain. Whatever their reasons for coming to Britain were, the foreigners had different excuses. Some of them felt that because they had British passports they had the right to come and live in the “motherland” which, they thought was responsible for their welfare (Rosemary 3). Some others, on the other hand, felt they had to find a new home in Britain. However, regardless of their reasons for coming to Britain, they all faced racism in the form of discrimination in employment and housing and in many cases they were met with violence (Lessing 59). Nevertheless, despite the experience of racism the earlier immigrants faced, the increasing ease and low cost of international transportation and the slackening of British border regulations led more and more people from the colonies to come to Britain to settle there and form a part of the British society (King, 2004:2). Thus, in the aftermath of the colonial period, Britain was no longer the centre of an empire with its commonwealth countries in the periphery but she became an international place of a racial and cultural mix and this marked the beginning of a new cultural development in Britain, that is, the postcolonial period.

But the term postcolonial, as Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins claim in their *Post-colonial Drama*, is a misused temporal concept because it is not used to mean an Independence Day of a colonised country which would mark the ending of all colonised practices of discrimination and unequal treatment (1996:2). In usage however, the term has come to mean a period in which social, political, economic and cultural practices are designed in response and in resistance to colonialism (“Reiland Rabaka” <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu>). Therefore, postcolonial writers choose to write their own histories and legacies using the colonisers’ language for their own purposes (“Postcolonialism” <http://en.wikipedia.org>) because as Edward Said puts it, literature has a great impact on

...the re-establishment of a national cultural heritage, in the re-instatement of native idioms, in the re-imagining and re-figuring of local histories, geographies, communities. As such then literature not only mobilized active resistance to incursions from the outside but also contributed massively as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within the realm of the colonized.

(3)

Postcolonial literature is not only produced by those who stayed at home in the colonised country but also by the immigrant minorities who, as people of colour write to protest against the prejudices and discrimination they face in the host country, while expecting to be accepted and treated as part of the host society (King, 2004:6). They write about their own experiences, therefore their texts are the reflections of immigrant reality which comprises of the themes of displacement and homelessness, of identity, of racial prejudices in the host country and their process of adaptation. The major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement which gives rise also to the post-colonial crisis of identity. Indeed, as D. E. S. Maxwell points it out, “[a] valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, which results from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour” (Ashcroft 9), or it may be the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality. The

dialectic of place and displacement may have been created because of a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Apart from historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity becomes a feature of all post-colonial literatures in English. Social and linguistic alienation in the texts result only from overtly oppressive forms of colonization such as slavery or conquest. The oppressive practice must go beyond the usual categories of social alienation such as master/slave; free/bonded; ruler/ruled, even if they are important and widespread in post-colonial cultures. The practice of “Englishness” leads people to alienation within the first generation of settlement, and to seek an alternative, differentiated identity. Alienation can be identified with the construction of “place”. A gap opens between the experience of place and the language and it is seen as a feature of post-colonial texts. This gap occurs among immigrants who lack in language to describe a new place. So alienation becomes inevitable until the colonizing language has been replaced or appropriated as English (Ashcroft 9).

Immigrants want to escape from the social practices of the English society. They do not want to conform to its aesthetic and social values, to the formal and historically limited constraints of gender, and to the oppressive political and cultural assertion of metropolitan dominance of centre over margin. But still they need its language which will allow them to express their sense of “Otherness”. Landscape, seasons, climatic conditions are distinguished from the place of origin as home/colony, Europe/New World, Europe/Antipodes, metropolitan/ provincial and there are still problems in expressing the sense of “Otherness” in a positive and creative way (Ashcroft 11). The colonisers, for their part, refuse to turn the “Other” into the same. For them the “Other” can never speak for itself as the “Other”. Colonists wipe out the possibility of post-colonial identity. For the postcolonial to write in the imperial tongue calls for a problem of identity, to be thrown into mimicry. The choice of language is a choice of identity (During 125-6). Because of being treated negatively by the British people, the immigrants face an identity problem. They want to be a part of the British society with their own identities but

the society forces them to assimilation. Immigrants first of all reject the norms in Britain. They compare their own countries with Britain They cannot adapt themselves. They feel displaced and homeless. Later they begin to mimic white people and get used to the life in Britain. Yet the society does not let them integrate. Therefore, they feel themselves forced to remain exiles. In time, immigrants learn to accept everything in Britain and then they learn to adapt and they are integrated with the society. It is not until the second and third generations that immigrants begin to get assimilated.

The native identities of immigrants are in conflict with the new identity they are expected to form in the new country. Members of the diaspora are obliged to build up their identities in between the two cultures, that of their origin and that of the country they have migrated to (Hall,1995:226). In Victor Turner's words, they are "Liminal personae" some of whom attempt to integrate with their new environment, trying not to sustain their ancestral ties, while some others withdraw to their ancestral home and identity because the state of liminality is too excruciating for them (qtd.in Canlı 14). Yet some others belong to neither world and float in between. Most migrants feel rootless and displaced (McLeod 216). Therefore, they are inflicted with a strong desire to find a place of belonging, in other words a "home". Finding a home is especially important for the diasporans because home is a place where an individual's identity is shaped. In other words, there is an affinity between "home"and identity. As Carl Jung professed "it is the archetypal of the self" (George,qtd in Canlı 14).

Immigrants may also experience the imperial ideology of "The Other" in the new country. They are forced to remain silent and they are not given a chance to prove themselves and explain the problems they face and are forced to remain exiles. As Arnold Itwaru puts it, to be an exile is to know one's estrangement. It is to know that one does not belong there (qtd in Canlı 14). This attitude of "Othering" the immigrants is the result of racial discrimination the reason for which is a constructed sense of "Englishness"(Hall,1995:226). This, in Edward Said's words, may be defined as a British "style of dominating, restructuring and having authority" over

the minorities”(1995:88). But home is always the place where the “Other” is kept out and the individual feels one and the same with the rest. So to find a “home” is an essential condition for the diasporans to integrate with the society. Therefore postcolonial writers are deeply concerned with the problem of finding a “home” and thus establishing an identity.

Writers like Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo, V.S.Naipaul are exiles as Bruce King claims, because for him they are alienated from their place of origin, from the lands in which they live, and from the immigrant communities (1992:39). The writers in the postcolonial period write about people who are trying to find a place in the world after a breakdown, a collapse caused in part by the difficulties of homelessness, of trying to survive in an alien world. They either have gone abroad to find a cultural home or have had the important years of their education abroad. But this does not indicate that they are totally cut off from their roots. Instead, because of having problems in the new society, they adopt new strategies of redefining themselves in relation to the land of origin. They find a way to explain themselves and it is writing. For them only through writing they can find self expression. For example, Naipaul has become a Third World writer, while Emecheta has adapted the Nigerian novel of cultural assertion to an English feminism. As for Mo, his novels have become “a treatment of incompatibility and untranslatability between European and Chinese society, culture and language”(King,1992:41). Naipaul sees the novel as a way of imposing order to the disorderliness of the changing world. Only through narrative people can make sense of the world they live in (King,1992: 42). But with commitment to English, the writer becomes an exile and it is in language the exile finds a home to replace society (King,1992: 43).

When the lives of postcolonial writers are examined, similarities between their life stories and the events in their works are seen clearly. Buchi Emecheta was born in Nigeria to Igbo Christian parents. She lived with her relatives who opposed her desire for education. She was married at the age of sixteen and she bore five children. She worked as a librarian in England to support her husband and family while her husband studied. Their marriage broke up after her husband’s burning the

manuscript of her first book. Buchi Emecheta never gave up writing and she became a well-known writer. When her life is compared to her book *Second Class Citizen* one can easily recognise the similarities between herself and her character Adah (King, 2004:333).

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, who was born in Trinidad is a Trinidadian-born British writer of Indo-Trinidadian descent, currently resident in Wiltshire, England (King 349). He is the descendant of indentured labourers shipped from India. A scholarship to Oxford brought him to England. It was at a time of decolonisation. He began to travel for long periods in India and Africa. On these travels he was trying to understand the meaning of culture and history like his character Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* (“David Pryce-Jones” <http://nobelprize.org>). According to a biography by Patrick French, Naipaul in his life tormented his wife, visited prostitutes and kept a mistress like the character in his book *The Mimic Men*. In 1990 Naipaul was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II and in 2001 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature (King 349).

Timothy Mo who was born in Hong Kong in 1950, had a Cantonese father and an English mother. He was educated in Hong Kong and England. After graduating from St John's College, Oxford, he worked as a journalist. Timothy Mo emerged in the 1980s as one of the most important novelists writing about bi-cultural diversity, reflecting both his Anglo-Chinese background and his concerns for the effects of imperialism and colonial rule in South-East Asia (“Timothy Mo” <http://www.contemporarywriters.com>).

The writers Buchi Emecheta and V.S.Naipaul came to Britain in their adult years and they ended up becoming writers. Timothy Mo was not like the other writers. He went to Britain at an earlier age and was born of a mixed marriage. He also became a writer.

When the novels of these writers are examined it becomes clear that there are some differences in perspectives and techniques. Buchi Emecheta’s main

character Adah, goes through a lot of problems in her life time. She has never been happy in her homeland because of the strict traditions and norms. But she is determined to step over the norms and to do this, she educates herself and gains the respect of British people in Yoruba. She dreams of going to Britain to live a better life and to reach her aim, she gets married to a man who is going to Britain to study. From then on, her problems increase. With her arrival in Britain, her disappointment starts. She understands that Britain is not what her father has told her. She had never thought that she would face discrimination and that she would be a second-class citizen but she becomes one. In Britain she is welcomed neither by her countrymen nor by the English. At the same time she is obliged to face her husband's aggressive attitudes. Her aim in going to England was to have a better life and after her arrival she wants to be a part of the English society. Yet she understands that the English society is not ready to welcome her. Even though she is shocked to see the attitudes of the English, she never gives up her dreams. At last she adapts herself to the society, is accepted and finally feels herself at home. Emecheta writes this novel from a women's point of view.

V.S.Naipaul in *The Mimic Men* prefers to show the problems from a man's point of view. Naipaul's character Singh, goes to Britain to get a good education. The book starts in a hostel, with the character telling his own life. All his life Singh fights with his feelings of homelessness and displacement. He goes to England but he cannot be a part of the society. Then he returns to his country but he cannot feel comfortable in his country either. In order to prove himself, he goes into politics and again goes to England to make his country gain its rights. But he fails. Later he understands that what he tries to do is wrong and he gives up his political career. He is eager to find a place which he can call home. His feelings of displacement continue all through his life. At last he comes to understand that his home is England. Finally he can adapt himself to the English society.

Timothy Mo chooses to give an objective point of view and writes his novel *Sour Sweet* from both men's and women's point of view. Chen, the father, Lily, the mother, Man Kee, the son and the grandfather have hard times in England. Lily

experiences many conflicts in raising her child. She does not want her son to be raised like the English children. So she tries to teach her child the Chinese traditions. She teaches him to respect the family members. Lily is always the mother for all the members of her family and lives under the influence of Chinese customs and she rejects the English norms and behaviour patterns. Like Lily, Man Kee has hard times in his school life in England. He rejects talking in English and eating English food because he has a mother who teaches him Chinese ways all the time. On the other hand, he observes his English environment and the people around and although at first he rejects the English way of life, later he begins to adapt himself to the society. After her arrival in England, Lily's sister Mui silently refuses to conform to her new environment but all day long she lies in bed and eagerly watches soap operas on television. With the images of the English way of life Mui receives from television programmes, she tries to be like the English girls. She even becomes pregnant outside marriage. Later on she marries and opens a fish and chips restaurant and becomes an English citizen. When compared with the other members of the family she is fully adapted to the society. On the contrary, the grandfather fully rejects the society in England. He continues living as he used to live in China. He cannot feel himself comfortable in England. Mui's daughter is raised by Mui like English children and therefore she will have no adaptation problems. Her assimilation will be inevitable.

As it is already stated the three novelists write their novels from different perspectives. It is not only a difference of point of view that distinguishes the novels but also there is a difference of technique. When the books are examined, it can be said that *The Mimic Men* and *Second Class Citizen* can be named as autobiographical. Because the events in the novels are similar to the writers' own lives. *Sour Sweet*, on the other hand is not an autobiographical novel because it does not give any clues about Timothy Mo's life. Timothy Mo in his book reflects his observations of the immigrant experience around him because he came to England as a child. But Buchi Emecheta and V.S.Naipaul went to England in their adult years and they have had first-hand experience of the negative attitudes of the English.

The process of integrating with a new environment, that is finding a place of belonging, a “home” in an adopted country, thus achieving self-realisation and building a secure, self-identity which comprises of “a feeling of biographical continuity, ability to communicate with other people, ability to filter out dangers that threaten self-integrity and enough self-regard to sustain self as alive” (Giddens, qtd in Canlı 23) becomes complete only after experiencing a series of different stages. After leaving the country of origin and arriving at the country chosen, an immigrant would feel himself completely displaced because landscape, seasons, climactic conditions are different from those of the home country. Because of his cultural baggage, the immigrant resists the aesthetic and social values of the new society. He refuses to conform to the formal and historically limited constraints of gender and to the oppressive political and cultural assertion of metropolitan dominance of centre over margin. He constantly compares his homeland with the new country and finds his own country better and rejects the norms of the new country. This initial period of resistance which according to Homi Bhabha,

is not necessarily an oppositional act of the political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the ‘content’ of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power-hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth.(33)

What follows the resistance period is “mimicry” which, is a period of imitating “the forms and values of the dominant culture”(Gilbert,1997:35). This immigrant strategy of mimicry, even though it is adopted in the hope of being accepted by the host society, enables the immigrant “to remain at least partially different” (Gilbert,1997:35) and prepares him for adjustment to the new culture. This is a period of cultural exchange accelerated by sharing the “same space and relations of often illusory equality (Gilbert, 1997:36). The next is a phase when the immigrant

begins to feel accepted by the host society and feels no longer alienated, discriminated against and displaced. In short he is at home and is one with the natives of the new country. He still retains his own identity but no longer feels himself as the “Other”. It is only after abandoning his full native identity and taking on the new land’s identity that he is fully assimilated. But it does not occur until there are second or third generation immigrants are living in the host society. The aim of this thesis is to show that this process of integration is a common experience of all diasporans and to illustrate the process in the three novels by Emecheta, Naipaul, and Mo.

CHAPTER I

SECOND CLASS CITIZEN BY BUCHI EMECHETA

In *Second Class Citizen* Buchi Emecheta talks about the identity problem of her characters after their migration to England. Like other post-colonial novels, Emecheta's works are rooted in the contrasting senses of place and displacement. Her characters in her novel are concerned with their own personal development or else they deal with the recovery of an effective relationship. Emecheta's characters are caught up between two worlds, to neither of which they fully belong and in the novels their sense of self has been challenged by dislocation which is the result of their migration ("Buchi Emecheta" <http://www.contemporarywriters.com>). Buchi Emecheta in the *Second Class Citizen*, talks about her main character's desire to go to England from Nigeria to live a better life and to secure her children's future. In her novel, she focuses on people's point of view about England before and after going to England. She aims at showing her readers the problems of immigrants after leaving their home-countries and the racial prejudice they face. People, who leave their home-country and migrate to England, go through the stages of rejection, acceptance, mimicing, adaptation, integration and finally assimilation. But for the first-generation of immigrants assimilation does not come easily since it is quite difficult to grow out of their cultural baggage. In her novel, Emecheta reveals her characters' adaptation problems.

Second Class Citizen is about the main character Adah, who is an ambitious and an intelligent girl. During her childhood and adolescent years, she fought to have a good education. She had never been like other girls in Nigeria. She gave great importance to her education because she had aims in life. The things in Nigeria did not suit her. The traditions, people's nonsensical attitudes did not appeal to her. Her education had a positive effect, enabling her to get a good job with a good salary. So, her education made her move from lower class to middle class. Since Adah grew up in a colonised country, she had always dreamt of going to England to have a better life. Because as Abioseh Michael Porter says, Adah "grows up believing that the United Kingdom is synonymous with heaven"(269). But Adah cannot know the

realities of England, that is the racial prejudice of the English people. Finally she gets married and goes to England. But there are a number of problems awaiting her. She became a person living in between. She began to compare her homeland with England and could not become a true individual for a long time. An avalanche of problems stemming from the difficulty of finding accommodation, her children's illnesses, her husband's nonsensical pressures and restrictions, her pregnancy, society's discrimination against blacks, her inner conflicts, the differences between the two countries and her comparison of both countries, lack of love, her need for independence, her country's illogical traditions like forcing women to treat their husbands with utmost respect, lead her to experience an acute sense of displacement, homelessness, loneliness and an identity problem. While at home in Nigeria, it had never occurred to her that she would have an identity problem because she had known Britain as a heaven-like place. She was brought up in the knowledge that Britain offered everyone the same opportunities. She did not know that there was discrimination in Britain. Adah thought that everything would be well but she is disappointed right from her first days in Britain, since Adah could not find the things she has dreamt all her life. As McLeod puts it:

Although migrants may pass through the political borders of nations, nations, crossing their frontiers and gaining entrance to new places... "norms and limits" can be used to exclude migrants from being accommodated inside the imaginative border of the nation. The dominant discourses of "race", ethnicity and gender may function to exclude them from being recognised as part of the nation's people. Migrants may well live in new places, but they can be deemed not to belong there and disqualified from thinking of the new land as their home.(212)

Adah faces a cold welcome in England when she first sees the place she will live and meets the neighbours. So her identity problem emerges right from her first day in England. Yet she is determined to live there and she thinks, "If people like Lawyer Nweze and others could survive it, so could she" (SCC 36). Francis, her husband, mentions how the English people make jokes but to this, Adah responds

saying that she thinks they do not know how to joke because of the look in their faces. Behind this response is her ideas about the way Nigerians make jokes. Later on they go to the house they are renting and Adah is shocked when she sees the house and this time she compares the house with the ones in Nigeria. This shows her rejection of England. She says that the “houses are like monasteries”(SCC 37) and adds:

[i]n Lagos houses were usually completely detached with the yards on both sides, the compound at the back and verandas in front. These ones had none of those things. (SCC 37)

To this Francis remarks that in England the coloured people live together and the houses they can get are “horrors like these” (SCC 38). Francis and Adah share similar negative feelings towards Britain because Britain has proved to be not the country they have dreamt of. From the first days onward Adah complains about everything in England and this gives the first clues about Adah’s future problems. She is in a state of shock and constantly compares Britain with her own country of origin.

When Adah learns that she has to share the house with other Nigerians, who call her madam in Nigeria, she is again disappointed. Back in Nigeria she was used to being a first-class citizen among Nigerians but now in Britain she is obliged to live with second-class people and she accuses Francis for not trying to have a better accomodation. She has dreamt of living comfortably like their friends Mr. Eke but Francis wants her to open her eyes wide. Adah still feels herself first-class-citizen and thus Francis reminds Adah her place in England. Adah expresses her disappointment saying “Oh I wish I had not come. I wish I had been warned I wish...” (SCC 39). But Francis in order to show her the reality in Britain says; “Why don’t you stop wishing and face reality” (SCC 39). He continues:

You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officer for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants; you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you

are a second-class citizen. So you can't discriminate against your own people, because we are all second-class. (SCC 39)

Despite her disappointment with the accommodation, Adah is determined to live like the British people, that is she sets for herself a first-class life and refuses to work at a shirt factory, because she has had A levels at school and she has received the British Library Association Professional Certificate. She does not want to be considered as equal with the Yoruba people in England and she starts rejecting the norms in England that classify her as second-class and this destabilises her sense of a secure self-identity.

Adah's feelings keep changing. Sometimes she feels relaxed and sometimes she rejects the situation in England. Her first impressions of England have been negative but it appears that as time passes she is getting used to the life in England. "Now everything was young, clean, moist and full of juice" (SCC 43). These words show Adah's point of view about England and it reminds the readers that Adah's feelings are changing. She starts accepting the things in England. But still she is not comfortable. Even though she starts accepting the conditions, at times she feels inferior among her friends in the library. Nevertheless she still feels herself a first-class citizen because of her work in the library. "It was all right for her, being a first class citizen for the part of the day when she worked in a clean, centrally heated library, but what about her children" (SCC 45). Because of her education she could get a good job like first-class people in her home country but when she first arrived in England, she came face to face with the problems of second-class citizens since she has a dark skin and her English is not as good as that of the native English people's.

Nigerian families in the novel do not bring their children to England and the children are brought up by their grandparents and if a woman happens to be pregnant, she should look for a foster mother who is white. People do not want to know whether the house they bring their children to is clean or not. They think "[t]he concept of whiteness could cover a multitude of sins" (SCC 46). But Adah disagrees with this and she is determined to take her children with her to England and she does not care about what the others think. She is in a way rejecting the norms of her own

society once again. Her rejection is double-sided because she rejects the norms of both her native land and of the English society.

Adah's questioning herself never stops. She constantly questions herself whether she has done the right thing or not by going to England and these questions show that Adah has begun to lose faith in herself. She feels displaced and homeless. In her imagination she goes back to Nigeria where she thinks everything was better (SCC 55). She misses her hometown and constantly compares it with London. Also her comparison furthers her identity problem. As McLeod puts it, too often diasporans like Adah, "[are]ghettoised and excluded from feeling they belong to the 'new country', and suffered their cultural practices to be mocked and discriminated against" (208). This leads to a feeling of homelessness and displacement. So for Adah the period of resistance continues.

With their immigration, Adah's life has been affected much. Earlier in Nigeria, they had never thought about how to survive because Adah had been earning sufficiently but now because of the living conditions in England they start counting every single penny:

Adah's pay at work was just enough to pay the rent, pay for Francis's course, his examination fees, buy his books and pay Trudy. They had little left after this, and so it was impossible for Adah to have lunch at work. (SCC 57)

On her way to work Adah always looks at the windows of restaurants and dreams of going there one day. On second thought, she realises that Francis, who believes that such places were not for blacks, would never take her there:

Adah knew that his blackness, his feeling of blackness, was firmly established in his mind. She knew that there was discrimination all over the place, but Francis's mind was a fertile ground in which such attitudes could grow and thrive. Personally if she had had the money, she would have walked straight into such places and was sure she would have been served. (SCC 58)

Because of feeling inferior among English people, Francis restricts himself and Adah all the time and he makes both himself and Adah unhappy. Adah wants to break the chains and wants to get started in a new life but Francis does not let her free.

The difference between their homeland and England becomes clear in Adah's mind once again with their child Vicky's illness. Vicky becomes ill and the doctors insist on sending him to a hospital but Adah thinks that there is no need to panic. She is trying to understand the society in which she lives but sometimes she cannot make sense of the behaviours of English people because she still continues to act in her Nigerian identity. Adah thinks that Vicky has malaria and she says that if she gives Nivaquine to her child everything would be fine:

Why all the panic then? she wondered. Any mother could cure a child of malaria without phoning the ambulance men or calling the doctor, who simply stood there, ready as if for nothing but to sign a death certificate. (SCC 59)

Her feeling of inferiority overtakes her once again after she learns the name of the hospital. The name of the hospital is Royal Free and she begins to question the word free and thinks that the hospital is for second-class citizens and she feels discriminated against even in the hospital:

Was it a hospital for poor people, for second class people? Why did they put the word 'free' in it? Fear started to shroud her then. Were they sending her Vicky to a second class hospital, a free one, just because they were blacks? (SCC 60)

She grows suspicious and thinks that since they are second class, the doctors may even use her child's organs to save the life of some white people. Adah begins to compare the two countries and this shows that she is still in the rejection period. In Nigeria, people pay for their treatments unlike in England and people go to hospitals either to give birth to a baby or to die. Adah's comparison of hospitals in both countries continues and what attracts her attention is that, in Britain authorities do not allow mothers of young babies to stay with their child, but in Nigeria they can stay with their children. This shows that Adah is still not comfortable in England.

Not knowing what to do, she questions herself and the things around her all the time because she cannot free herself of her cultural baggage.

After the incident of their son's illness the relationship between Francis and Adah gets worse day by day because Adah is suspicious that Francis is having an affair with another woman. Her suspicions are based on the difference between Nigeria and Britain:

In their society, men were allowed to sleep around if they wanted. They gave the nursing mother a break to nurse her baby before the next pregnancy. But in London, with birth control and all that, one could sleep with one's wife all the time. But he was not brought up like that. He was brought up to like variety. (SCC 64)

So, she has problems with her husband who acts as if he is her opponent. Thus her husband becomes an additional burden to the difficulties Adah faces in the English society

The child's illness and her husband's indifference towards her increase. There is nobody to share her feelings and her anger towards her husband increases. She is trying to stand on her feet all alone and her husband, instead of supporting her, makes her feel alone:

In England, she couldn't go to her neighbour and babble out troubles as she would have done in Lagos, she had learnt not to talk about her unhappiness to those with whom she worked, for this was a society where nobody was interested in the problems of others. If you could not bear your problems any more you could always do away with yourself. (SCC 66)

This quotation proves that Adah still does not feel at home in England. She still yearns for home so she is still in the rejection period.

On top of her feelings of loneliness Adah worries over another problem and that is to find a place for her children where they could be cared for while she is out at work. She speaks to Miss Sterling, her boss who suggests that Adah should put her

children to a nursery. But after trying some possible places, Adah is appalled by the price she is asked to pay:

Second-class-citizens could keep their children with them, but just look at the price they had to pay! Vicky was still in danger, her marriage hung in the balance, and now all this row. She did not know whether to feel ashamed or grateful. She felt both, in a way, especially as it now seemed that her threats had been empty ones. There was no need for them. (SCC 67)

The housing continues to be a big problem too in Adah and Francis's life. Adah has never wanted to live with her Yoruba neighbours but when their landlord wants them to leave the house, they get into big trouble because of the accommodation problems for immigrants. But, Adah does not seem to mind it because she thinks they can have better life conditions and would not be discriminated against by her Nigerian neighbours after leaving that place. Ironically, the outside world is much more merciless towards immigrants:

In fact, to most of her Nigerian neighbours, she was having her cake and eating it. She was in a white man's job, despite the fact that everybody had warned her against it, and it looked as if she meant to keep it. She would not send her children away to be fostered like everybody else; instead they were living with them, just as if she and Francis were first-class citizens, in their own country. To cap it all, they were Ibos, the hated people who always believe blindly in their ideologies. Well, if they were going to be different from everybody else, they would have to go away from them. (SCC 69)

Obviously they are not discriminated against only by white people but also by other Nigerian immigrants. According to Joya Uraizee, Adah is experiencing an: alienation resulting from mental and physical abuse, acute loneliness, and misery. It is an exile imposed on her both by her family/community and by Western society. (98)

Also Tuzyline Jita Allan suggests that Adah is :

psychologically suited for battle with London's racist patriarchy. While her fellow transplanted Ibos (included her husband) stoically bear the burden of their second-class status, Adah deploys a strategy that does not lose sight of her eventual goal of equality with England's first-class citizenry: she will not succumb to the view that she is, inferior because she is black. (99)

This indicates that black immigrants experience double discrimination in their adopted home. Discrimination by white natives leads immigrants to feel inferior and they feel forced to live in areas where other immigrants reside which gives them a feeling of security and a feeling of community. But if the immigrants boast of their superiority and mimic white people, that is, if they try to live like white people and take white people's jobs rather than the unqualified jobs set aside for immigrants, they attract hatred and are discriminated against by other second-class citizens of the adopted society. They express their feelings in accordance with their traditions:

Maybe if the blacks could learn to live harmoniously with one another, maybe if a West Indian landlord could learn not to look down on the African, and the African learn to boast less of his country's natural wealth, there would be fewer inferiority feelings among the blacks. (SCC 70)

Adah, in order to find a place to live, wanders around and looks for a house. But soon she gets disappointed because there is no accommodation for blacks to live in a clean and beautiful place. They are alienated from the society and there are barriers in the society for immigrants. Thus, Adah is being stopped by those barriers. She is not allowed to get into the white society:

Nearly all the notices had 'Sorry, no coloureds' on them. Her house-hunting was made more difficult because she was black; black, with two very young children and pregnant with another one. She was beginning to learn that her colour was something she was supposed to be ashamed of. She was never aware of this

at home in Nigeria, even when in the midst of whites. Those whites must have had a few lessons about colour before coming to the tropics, because they never let drop from their cautious mouths the fact that in their countries, black was inferior. But now Adah was beginning to find out, so did not waste her time looking for accommodation in a clean, desirable neighbourhood. (SCC 70)

Even if immigrants have enough money to rent better houses, they are not allowed to rent them:

Even if she had enough money for the best, she would start looking at the sub-standard ones and then work her way up. This was where she differed from Francis and others. They believe that one had to start with the inferior and stay there, because being black meant being inferior. Well Adah did not yet believe that wholly, but what she did know was that being regarded as inferior had a psychological effect on her. The result was that she started to act in the way expected of her because she was still new in England, but after a while, she was not going to accept it from anyone. She was going to regard herself as the equal of any white. But meanwhile she must look for a place to live. (SCC 71)

Even her Nigerian neighbours who have come to terms with their second-class citizenship do not sympathize with Adah. They make fun of Adah and her education by starting:

singing as soon as they saw Adah coming. Most of the songs were about the fact that she and her husband would soon have to make their home in the street. What use would her education be then? the songs would ask. To whom would she show her children off then? It was all so Nigerian. It was all so typical. (SCC 72)

They make fun of her because Adah has had a good education and she looks down on her neighbours and sees the songs as "...so Nigerian" and "...so typical" (SCC 72). She is different from her neighbours and she has an aim in England and that is to be accepted by the white society. But others might not have any such concerns and they feel comfortable in continuing their lives as exiles.

Accommodation continues to be a real problem for Adah. She blames Francis for not looking for a better place to live in. Adah is constantly reminded that because of her skin colour she is not allowed to rent a house even in areas where other immigrants live. Therefore she develops a strategy and makes telephone calls to possible houses where there is a vacancy and on the phone Adah mimics white people's way of speaking to be accepted but this is at the cost of erasing her real identity:

Adah did not tell him that she had held her nose when talking to the woman, neither did she tell him that she chose nine o'clock because it would be dark and the woman might not realise in time that they were blacks. If only they could paint their faces; just until the first rent had been paid. (SCC 75)

This is her first attempt to reject her identity to be like the English or to wish to be treated like the English people. This is the beginning of Adah's entering the stage of mimicry. Adah's joy of mimicking successfully is short lived and she gets rejected once more:

Adah had never faced rejection in this manner. Not like this, directly. Rejection by this shrunken piece of humanity, with a shaky body and mopy hair, loose, dirty and unkempt, who tried to tell them that they were unsuitable for a half derelict and probably condemned house with creaky stairs. (SCC 77-8)

In the face of rejection Adah reverts to the first stage of her immigrant experience, that is the period of rejection. She starts questioning English people and the reasons why the English are in conflict with themselves. She thinks about religion and Jesus and Jesus's pale skin colour and says "...these people worship a coloured man and yet refuse to take a coloured family into their home?" (SCC 78). It

can be said that Adah still cannot understand the way English people think and behave and therefore she rejects them. This is her response to being rejected by the white.

Adah not only questions the English people but also the Bible:

Sometimes Adah used to wonder whether God really said all that. ... If you were lazy and did not wish to work, or if you had failed to make your way in society, you could always say. ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ If you were a jet-set woman who believed in sleeping round, VD or not VD, you could always say Mary Magdalene had no husband, but, didn’t she wash the feet of Our Lord? ... If , in the other hand, you believed in the inferiority of the blacks, you could always say. ‘Slaves, obey your master.’ ... But the one thing Adah could not stand was when a group of people took a portion of the Bible, interpreted it the way that suited them and then asked her to swallow it like that, whole. She became suspicious. (SCC 100)

Actually it is not only Adah who has had these feelings and thoughts. Many a Nigerian men came to Britain,

failed to make a foothold, in England, sought consolation in the pubs, got themselves involved with the type of women who frequented pubs...meant goodbye to their Law studies and a happy welcome to a house full of half-caste children! Nearly all the failures married white women. Maybe it was the only way of boostings their egos, or was it a way of getting even with their colonial masters? Any woman would do, as long as she was white. (SCC 80)

Their original dream of becoming one of the elite in their new country becomes buried in their hearts and their dream becomes “a reality of being black, a nobody, a second-class citizen” (SCC 81):

She was different . Her children were going to be different. They were all going to be black, they were going to be proud of being black, a black of a different breed. (SCC 141)

Adah wants neither to fail nor to feel ashamed of her skin colour and hopes to be able to feel proud of being black. She has faced a lot of problems because of being black but she does not want her children to face the same problems.

Among the Nigerians there is a certain Mr. Noble and he has been a lucky person, but he has also made a lot of sacrifices to come to that point in life. People have turned him into a jester and a clown in order to laugh at him and humiliate him. They wanted him to remove his pants to see whether Africans had tails or not. One day his work mates wanted him to operate a lift without using electricity. Mr. Noble to prove that he was strong, tried to shoulder the lift, but the lift crashed onto him and the railway authorities paid him a large sum of money for compensation, and thus he became a rich person and bought himself a house. Mr. Noble was taken for a fool and was never accepted by white people at work. At the end he acquired money but it was at the expense of becoming an invalid and he still remained a second-class citizen. Adah and Francis finally get a better house and that is Mr. Noble's house and Adah is now more confident and things begin to change for them with the house.

Adah begins to show the first signs of hope at the hospital when she is hospitalised for miscarriage:

They were kind, those women in the ward. For the first few days, when Adah was deciding whether it was worth struggling to hold onto this life, those women kept showing her many things. They seemed to be telling her to look around her, that there were still many beautiful things to be seen, which she had not seen, that there were still several joys to be experienced which she had not yet experienced, that she was still young, that her whole life was still ahead of her. (SCC 111)

It is at the hospital that Adah begins to question herself and her relationship with Francis. She looks round her and examines the other women and the attitudes of their husbands. She begins to adore the other couples. She wants to be like them. But

when she examines her relationship with Francis she understands that with Francis she cannot go any further in England:

Why was it she could never be loved as an individual, the way the sleek woman was being loved, or what she was and not just because she could work and hand over money like a docile child? Why was it that she was not blessed with a husband like that woman who had had to wait for seventeen years for the arrival of her baby son? (SCC 115)

She feels lonely in the hospital and after seeing women receiving flowers from their husbands, hopes that her husband would bring flowers to her. But soon she realises that this hope is never to be realised. This shows her eagerness to adapt herself to the society but she knows that her husband cannot adapt himself. She wonders, “Why was it that men took such a long time to change, to adapt, to reconcile themselves to new situations?” (SCC 116) Men do not want to change because they think that if they change they may lose their superiority.

While she is in the hospital Adah begins to feel inferior to the other women and experiences an acute sense of self-pity:

She was now sure people were talking about her. Look at that nigger woman with no flowers, no cards, no visitors, except her husband who usually comes five minutes before the closing time, looking as if he hates it all. Look at her she doesn't have a nightdress of her own. (SCC 119)

In the middle of her misery a flicker of hope, a piece of good news arrives in the form of a letter from her boss telling her to make the best of her stay in the hospital and that they will give her money to take a holiday and get herself some clothes. This letter is very important for Adah because it shows that she is accepted by her work mates, in other words by the society, and things will change for Adah but her hopes are crushed by Francis when he wants the money. Husband and wife begin to argue. Adah begins to talk about the reasons for coming to England:

I brought my children here to save them from the clutches of your family, and, God help me, they are going back as different

people; never, never, are they going to be the type of person you are. My sons will learn to treat their wives as people, individuals, not like goats that have been taught to talk. (SCC 121-2)

Here Adah shows her hopes for her children and for the first time expresses her thoughts about Nigeria. Yet Adah still wants to be proud of Nigeria, therefore wants Francis to bring her lappa with “Nigerian Independence, 1960!” written all over it. She wants to teach people that Nigeria is an independent country and that she comes from Nigeria. Obviously at this stage in her experience Adah still rejects England and wishes to keep her Nigerian identity.

Poverty is Adah’s big problem. It is Christmas time but she cannot afford to buy presents for her children. But her boss sends her children some presents and this solves her problem. What is important is that once again her boss’s presents convince Adah that now she has a place in this white society. Despite this assurance Adah still cannot understand her host country. Adah learns from Mr. Noble that she can buy many things without paying a penny to the salesman who comes to their door in England. This shocks her because she has never heard of such a bargain before. Things were different in Nigeria:

If a salesman could be stupid enough to allow people to buy on their footsteps goods worth almost a hundred pounds, just like that, the salesman would soon have to close up his business. In Lagos people would not pay, and if the salesman’s demands became too irritating, people would just disappear. (SCC 132)

The questioning and comparison continues in Adah’s mind. She still finds herself attached to Nigeria because it is her country and it is her life experience. They are her only references to her identity. Therefore she cannot fit herself into the English society.

On Christmas day Adah realises Vicky has a problem with his right ear. They think that they should bring the child to see a doctor and Francis goes to look for one. But Adah’s feeling of inferiority overtakes her once again, “If anything should happen to Vicky now, society would forgive the doctor, because he was a black child and had been taken ill on Christmas day” (SCC 136). After Francis finds

the doctor Adah feels relieved because of the doctor's race. The doctor is Chinese and she thinks that he cannot treat them as inferior because he is also a second-class citizen:

The man, doctor or no doctor, was a second-class citizen too and could not come to show them any superior airs. This did not help Adah much, but it was nice to hear it. (SCC 137)

First signs of adaptation for Adah start with her decision to use birth control and to do it behind her husband. This is very important because for the first time she decides to make her own decisions. She goes to Family Planning Clinic and learns about the ways of birth control but formalities require her husband to sign a form to allow birth control and at this point she immediately thinks of home and imagines how her mother-in-law would react:

It was the picture of her mother-in-law when she heard that Adah went behind her husband's back to equip herself with something that would allow her to sleep around and not have any more children. She was sure they would interpret it that way, knowing the psychology of her people. (SCC 145)

When Adah tells Francis about her decision for birth control, he gets angry because for him birth control means she may have sexual relationship with other men behind his back. Christine W. Sizemore thinks that:

Adah must cope not only with the difficulties in English life, but also with the sexism of her husband. Francis does not believe in birth control, but he also expects his well-educated wife to work to support him. (370)

In the middle of her difficulties Adah's ideas of religion have gone through a change. She compares the churches in England and in Nigeria. She says that in Nigeria, churches are like festival places whereas in England churches are "cheerless"(SCC 150). She also adds that her concept of God has changed:

London, having thus killed Adah's congregational God,[she] created instead a personal God who loomed large and really alive. She did not have to go to church to this One. He was always

there, when she was shelving books in the library when she was tucking her babies up to sleep, when she was doing anything. She grew nearer to Him, to the people with whom she worked, but away from Francis. (SCC 151)

- Adah starts working in the Chalk Farm Library where she meets new people and “grows nearer to the people with whom she works”(SCC151). They talk about books and being black. Adah especially likes Bill, who is a Canadian. They talk about black writers and the beauty of blacks:

She came to believe , through reading Baldwin, that black was beautiful. She asked Bill about it and he said, did she not know that black was beautiful.(SCC 152)

Slowly, Adah begins to come to terms with her feelings of inferiority to adjust to the society. She reads women’s magazines to learn about the lives of other women. She also decides to write a book *The Bride Price* and wants to tell Francis about it but his response causes much disappointment. Francis said:

you keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby. (SCC 167)

One day Adah comes home and smells the odour of burning paper. She runs inside and asks what Francis has been burning. Francis laughs at her. He feels satisfied at that moment because he has burnt the book Adah has written. In desperation Adah confronts Francis:

‘Bill called that story my brainchild. Do you hate me so much, that you could kill my child? Because that is what you have done.’

‘I don’t care if it is your child or not. I have read it, and my family would never be happy if a wife of mine was permitted to write a book like that.’

‘And so you burnt it?’

‘Can’t you see that I have?’(SCC 170)

Francis becomes happy for not letting her stand on her own feet. He is:

self-centered, cruel, narrow-minded, and in fact downright venal. Instead of helping Adah to develop the creative potential she obviously has (and part of which she uses to support him), Francis only proves himself to be an obstacle on her route toward self-improvement . (Porter 273)

After this event “life with Francis became purgatorial” and she decides to live apart from Francis (SCC 170). So Adah:

walked to freedom, with nothing but four babies, her new job and a box of rags. ...Adah was happy about this; she did not want to see him again, never on this earth.(SCC 171)

This is the climactic point in Adah’s life. By writing, Adah discovers her “self”. She understands her strength and with Francis’s burning her manuscript, she finds the power to go on with her life alone and this leads her to her adaptation period. At this particular stage she finds her real identity. Earlier she could not reject her husband and the norms in Nigeria but now she can make her own decisions and she starts a new life in England. According to Abioseh Michael Porter, Adah:

obviously understands now that she was totally wrong in looking up to Francis as a source of support; she also realizes that if she wants to succeed both in her creative endeavors and in the rearing of her children she has to take full control of her life. (271)

Emecheta not only focuses on Adah’s but also Francis’s identity problem. When compared with Adah, Francis does not show any change. He continues his life as he used to in Nigeria. He never leaves his own traditions. Instead, he always rejects the norms in England. The only change in him is that he mimics the English by using their language. When he was in Nigeria, he had always consulted his parents and never made a decision by himself. But in England it is different. He has nobody but his neighbours to consult. Francis consults his neighbours but the littleminded neighbours instead of supporting him for bringing the children to England, for example, they laugh at him. On the other hand, this is not a big problem

for Adah because she has plans for her children. She hopes for a better life for her children and she hopes that they would have better life standards in England. But their neighbours insist that they are second-class citizens and they should send their children back to Nigeria. Neighbours say that “Only first-class citizens lived with their children, not the blacks” (SCC 47).

Francis’s feelings of inferiority continue even after he finds a job. At Christmas he starts working as a postman but still cannot cope with the racist attitudes of the English:

Those people , the English they did worship their dogs!...They love dogs, the English do. Yes they love their dogs, Francis continued, so much so that they would rather the dogs butcher a black men, than let the black man kill the dog. After all a black man was only a postman, delivering Christmas cards and parcels. (SCC 128)

He accepts these attitudes without protest and attempts nothing to challenge them. He continues behaving as he did in Nigeria and treats Adah as his property:

he could hardly ask her how she was feeling, because to him Adah was always his and no illness, no god could take Adah from him, so why bother to ask how she was feeling, when he was sure she would get better anyway? (SCC 118)

They grow more and more estranged from each other. Because of Francis’s negative attitudes Adah loses her feelings of respect for her husband. She begins to hit him and even bite him. She thinks “if that was the language he wanted, well, she would use it” (SCC 154). Before she had never treated him badly, because she knows that according to the Nigerian traditions she has to treat her husband with respect. But now she has changed and she has learnt to stand on her own feet. One day after one of their quarrels Adah meets Mr Okpara, who has understood that Francis and Adah have quarreled:

My name is Okpara, and I know you are Ibo because of the marks on your face. I don’t want to hear anything. Let’s go and beg for his forgiveness. He would let you in. ‘Typical Ibo

psychology; men never do wrong, only the women; they have to beg for forgiveness, because they are brought, paid for and must remain like that, silent obedient slaves. (SCC 156)

It is the Nigerian way of thinking in general. Nigerians think that it is the women who are always at fault and Adah, as a part of that society, has been raised in the same belief. But now she has realised the truth and she does not want to obey the illogical norms of that society. Adah also knows that she has to be strong in England since she knows that England is a dangerous place to be unhappy in because she has nobody to share her troubles with. She is all alone and this is the fate of all immigrants. Because as Adah suggests, "...most lonely African students usually had emotional breakdowns because they had no one to share their troubles with" (SCC 158).

Adah's child, Titi also has an identity problem. Titi is described as a "noisy toddler" (SCC 53) in Nigeria, but after their arrival in England, Titi stops talking. This event attracts the attention of Adah and one day Titi expresses the reason for not talking. She says, "Don't talk to me. My Dad will cane me with belt if I speak in Yoruba. And I don't know much English. Don't talk to me" (SCC 53). This event shows that Titi is really affected by living in England. But Titi is not the only person who is affected. It can be said that Francis is also affected by the conditions in England. He does not even want his daughter to speak in Yoruba. This may be taken as an indication of his feeling ashamed of his roots and he does not want to be considered as a second-class citizen because he has a strong connection with his traditions. By speaking English he wants to be treated as a first-class citizen yet he does not know that he cannot gain it by rejecting his roots. His mimicing and his expecting his children to do the same is an expression of his inferiority and his desire to be like the English. He thinks that by mimicry he and his children can be accepted as a part of the society. But Francis does not show any change at all. Yet when it is to his advantage:

Francis was like the Vicar of Bray. He changed his religion to suit his whims. When he realised that equipping Adah with birth control gear would release her from the bondage of child-

bearing, Francis went Catholic. When he started failing his examinations, and was feeling very inferior to his fellow Nigerians, he became Jehova's Witness. (SCC 112)

According to Porter, Francis is an irresponsible spouse who,

deliberately tries to inject a feeling of inferiority into her and, when all that fails, he tries to deprive her of what she values most—her children and her potential to become a writer. (273)

Although Adah has contributed to her self education a lot in England, Francis has done nothing for himself. Adah's self education makes her understand the difference between her and Francis easily:

In her happiness she forgot that Francis came from another culture, that he was not one of those men who would adapt to new demands with ease, that his ideas about women were still the same. To him, a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and, if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her; to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time. There was no need to have an intelligent conversation with his wife because, you see she might start getting ideas. (SCC 165)

On the day when Francis burnt Adah's book, Adah gets angry and understands that she has to go on her life without her husband because Francis has always been a barrier between herself and her freedom. But Francis, strictly tied to his traditions, is not of the same opinion:

In our country, and among our people, there is nothing like divorce or separation. Once a man's wife, always a man's wife until you die. You cannot escape. You are bound to him. (SCC 171-2)

Believing Adah to be his property, Francis tries to harm her because she refuses to return to him and what is more she considers herself a citizen of the English society and uses her rights as a citizen which proves that, finally she has adjusted to her new

society. Adah decides to go to court for protection. After the court session, Adah challenges her husband by saying “Don’t worry, sir. The children are mine and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive”(SCC 174). According to Porter:

by the end of the novel Adah demonstrates that in order to become both the good writer and independent human being that she hopes to become, she has to free herself from the exploitative relationship between herself and Francis, create her own identity and, in general, try to understand human relationships better. Thus in the end, Adah asserts her independence in a way which shows that she is now ready to be in complete control of her own and her children’s lives. (271)

Adah is always respectful towards her husband. But Francis does not understand this respect and all the time tries to humiliate her. He does not want his wife to be a true individual. He thinks that she does not have any right to be free, he wants to oppress her with his words or with his attitudes. But when Francis burns the manuscript, Adah cannot bear this and she decides to start a new life. She reaches self-realisation and understands that Francis has always prevented her from reaching her aims in life.

Second Class Citizen is a novel of personal development and it is:

quite successful in the depiction of Adah’s growth from the initial stage of naivete and ignorance to her final stage of self realization and independence. (Porter 271-2)

To sum up, from this long-going-on war Adah gets out as the winner. She has fought with Francis during her stay in England and with the inferiority that has been injected into her. She has tried to be a good mother for her children and a good wife for her husband. At first she has rejected the norms in England. All the time she has made a comparison between England and Nigeria. Things in England sometimes shock her and sometimes she gets used to the things in England. She has sometimes rejected and sometimes accepted the things going on in England. But she

has never given up her fight. There has never been a person to support her. She has been all alone and alienated ever since her arrival in England, she has failed to learn how to behave and what to do in a foreign land. She, at first, could not decide whether things in her mind are true or not. Back in Nigeria she grew up knowing that the English people welcomed immigrants. But starting from her first day in England, she learnt the reality, that is, English people have racist attitudes. Thus she has had problems in accepting and adapting herself to the society. So this has led her to have an identity problem. But at last she has learnt to cope with every single problem. She gets used to the norms in England. Finally she adjusts to the society and is accepted by some white people at work. She has gone through different stages. At first she cannot adapt herself and she rejects almost everything in the society. Then she begins to accept the things in England. But finally she can create a new identity and overcome her adaptation problems all by herself. She becomes a true individual at last. She is now a victor and she can stand on her own feet. She learns to accept the society as it is and also learns to live like the English people and soon she gets used to the things in England and adapts herself to the English way of life. Whereas when Francis is examined, it can be said that Francis does not change. In the novel he works as an opponent to Adah. All the time he rejects the things in England and makes no attempt to adapt himself to the society. He has chosen to accept that he is inferior or is an exile in England. He has not gone beyond the stage of mimicry. As a result, it can be said that he cannot get over his problem of identity. He chooses to live as a mimic man but Adah becomes successful in her fight with the outside world and makes England her home and thus gains her identity. So in the immigrant experience it is the woman who succeeds finding a place of belonging, a real home and building a secure sense of self-identity.

CHAPTER II

THE MIMIC MEN BY V.S.NAIPAUL

V.S.Naipaul in his novels tries to draw the attention of his readers to the integration problem of immigrants. He focuses on the people who try to make a place for themselves in a foreign land. Naipaul's characters are in search of a real world beyond Trinidad but instead they find themselves in exile in a strange land, which means a division, an alienation, fragmentation, isolation, a sense of futility, and an absence of belonging to a community or to a society (Weiss 88). The main character of the book Ranjit Kripalsingh or as he calls himself, Ralph Singh, is a middle-aged, Indian businessman and a politician at the same time. The book *The Mimic Men* opens in England at a hotel room where Ralph Singh, the narrator goes through his memories of his life both in Isabella and in England. He recounts events from his personal life and his successful entrepreneurship in Isabella and talks about his childhood years, his family, his friendships, his political career, his involvement with the island's independence movement and his going to England after the Second World War to have a better education and his final return to England. He also talks about the colonisers in his own country and reevaluates his life to find a hope for establishing an order as the place in which he is born is associated with chaos. Because he has lived among the colonisers he has had an identity problem. He has spent his childhood and adolescent years observing the colonisers' attitudes because for him there is no pure example of a real Carribean identity to mimic. Singh focuses on the notions of colonisation, decolonisation, history, culture, race, and politics, in order to give meaning to his existence. Also the novel points out Singh's desire to learn "what it means to be a colonial subject in a postcolonial society" ("V.S.Naipaul" <http://members.tripod.com>). In the novel Singh tries to build up his identity in between the two cultures. *The Mimic Men* is Singh's account of his life. He does not follow any chronological order in his writing.

Singh's childhood years are affected by his environment in Isabella. Colonisers' missionary acts lead Singh like the other islanders to reject his Isabellian identity. He belongs to a poor family and as a child he never accepts his father's

family as his family. Because all his life he has had the belief that poverty makes people second class and he has never wished to belong to a second class. He always wants to be on the side of power, therefore he says “I preferred to lay claim to my mother’s family. They were among the richest in the island and belonged to that small group known as ‘Isabella millionaires’” (TMM 83). Therefore he cannot explain his father’s attitudes towards the powerful people in the island who are supporters of the English government. For example, the producers of Coca Cola in Isabella are an object of hatred for Singh’s father and at a moment of irritation he begins to smash Coca Cola bottles in a local shop:

It was a simple breaking-up at first, but soon my father began to concentrate on Coca-Cola. He broke bottle after bottle...He broke ninety- six bottles in all, four full cases, breaking one bottle after another, methodically, as though he had been paid to do it; he didn’t just lift a Coca-Cola case and smash it on the floor. (TMM 103-4)

Singh’s father lived in the colonised period thus he had anger towards the superiors on the island. This image of Singh’s father is not in anyway compatible with the young man he was when he was together with the missionaries. This Singh learns from a photograph and “the diary of the missionary’s lady” (TMM 8):

It was she who had discovered my father. It was she who had discovered that, young as he was, he had the marks of grace. I read, incredulously, of the young boy, my father...urging “jeering crowds” to “receive the Gospel of grace” (TMM 87)

The missionary activity turns the island into a land of Christianity. “Isabella became an almost Biblical land, full of symbols and portents and marks of God’s glory. ...it was not an island I recognized” (TMM 87).

The missionary activity of the colonisers helps the English government to get Isabella and the people in it under their control and their oppression causes some people in Isabella to be cut off from their own cultures and traditions. This fact leads Singh to say:

I used to get the feeling that my father was a man who had been cut off from his real country, which in my imagination was as glorious as the Isabella described in the diary of the missionary's lady: nowhere else would people see magic in a white turban, a hibiscus hedge, a bicycle and the Sunday-morning sun. I used to get the feeling that my father had in some storybook way been shipwrecked on the island and that over the years the hope of rescue had altogether faded. (TMM 88)

The colonisers alter Isabella's customs and traditions and thus change the life styles of the islanders. So much so that even their breakfasting habits are affected:

We usually breakfasted simply, just cocoa or tea with buttered bread and sometimes avocados or plantains. Now I was given orange juice, corn flakes, eggs, toast and jam. (TMM 115)

Mimicing English people, they replace their customs with those of the English.

As colonial subjects, in his childhood years Singh and his friends experience a feeling of inferiority. His school friend Hok denies his mother because of his mother's skin colour. Hok's mother is black and when he sees her while he is with other children he avoids her. Blackness is seen as a sign of inferiority because Singh grows up experiencing racial prejudices that England imposes on them.

Weakness of the colonised people in Isabella also has an effect on Singh's life. In order not to be like them he even wants to break away from his own people, culture, and identity. Because he does not like weak people he always wants to appear on the side of the powerful. He does not want to remain silent and be suppressed by the colonisers. Even though Singh has negative feelings about weak people, he admits that he also feels himself weak and he likes to see people like him who feel lonely and weak:

I concentrated on school and relationships within that private hemisphere. ...Seeing myself as weak and variable and clinging, I had looked for similar weakness in others. This was the cynicism I now arrested. (TMM 113)

Singh often dreams about being a baby, suggesting a denial of his own identity and culture:

It was a double dream, the dream within the dream, when the dreamer, fearful for the reality of his joy, questions himself whether he is dreaming and decides he is not. I had dreamt that I was a baby again and at my mother's breast. What joy! (TMM 116)

This implies his eagerness to escape from the realities in the world and from himself. He has a conflict in himself and he feels himself worthless. Thus this leads him to escape from himself. He sees himself as a man apart from the people and he thinks his courage has gone and it is replaced by a type of weariness.

Mimicing the colonisers and rejecting their own culture, the colonised people lose their individuality and they have problems with their own identities. So they choose to mimic white men in order to find an identity for themselves. In this connection Singh says:

We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new. (TMM 146)

So their mimicing and rejecting their own cultures is their attempt "to be real".

Singh does not feel comfortable in Isabella. He feels displaced and isolated. So he always envies the people who live comfortably in Isabella. Singh envies older clerks because he thinks they are comfortable in their lives unlike Singh. He says, "I envied them their calm, their deep pay-day pleasures, their withdrawal from struggle" (TMM 157).

His feeling of displacement leads Singh to loneliness. Sometimes to get rid of his loneliness he becomes friends with women. Women's contribution to Singh's life has always been great. Women make him stand on his own feet and they help him to forget his loneliness. Sally, whom she meets at the British Council, becomes Singh's partner:

Here for me was security, understanding, the relationship based on perfect knowledge, in which body of one flesh joined to body of the same flesh, and all external threat was diminished. (TMM 155)

But soon Sally decides to leave Isabella and Singh becomes lonely once again. But what is important is that Sally's leaving Isabella leads Singh to have the courage to realise his desire to leave the island:

So she went out into the contamination of the wider world and was absorbed in it. And I was free to do the same. I was as blank as I had been at the moment we were discovered. I went to my office and wrote out my certificates and what grief I felt sank into the emptiness that had been with me for some time. That did not lift. (TMM 165)

What is more, he does not like the idea of living on a tropical island:

No garden, no yard, no fence: just sand and the unnatural plants and vines, glittering green, that grew in hot salt sand. Not my element. I preferred land; I preferred mountains and snow. (TMM 106)

This yearning is the expression of his secret dream:

I lived a secret life in a world of endless plains, tall bare mountains, white with snow at the peaks, among nomads on horseback, daily pitching my tent beside cold green mountain torrents that raged over grey rock, walking in the mornings to mist and rain and dangerous weather. I was a Singh. And I would dream that all over the Central Asian plains the horsemen looked for their leader. Then a wise man came to them and said, "You are looking in the wrong place. The true leader of you lies far away, shipwrecked on an island the like of which you cannot visualize". (TMM 98)

This feeling of emptiness, and his desire for “land and mountain” (TMM 106) make him wish:

to make a fresh clean start. And it was now that I resolved to abandon the shipwrecked island and all on it, and to seek my chieftainship in that real world from which, like my father, I had been cut off. (TMM 118)

Like his father, Singh has a desire to leave the island and live in another place. Singh is not comfortable living in Isabella. “To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure New World transplantation, second hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder” (TMM 118). It is not only order or comfort that he seeks but also he wants to be happy. His idea of happiness was shaped by “a saying of an ancient Greek that the first requisite for happiness was to be born in a famous city” (TMM 118). He has dreams of his own and he thinks that the emptiness he feels would go away if he goes to England.

Singh’s desire to leave the island grows day by day .He says, “Now I felt the need only to get away, to a place unknown, among people whose lives and even language I need never enter. Singh wishes to do what the ex-slaves in a colony did:

after the abolition of slavery, the ex-slaves had abandoned the foreign city and withdrawn to the forests to rediscover the glory and a way of looking at the world. They were not afraid-fear lay not in the forests but in the regulated city and plantations- and these men had survived. Couldn’t the same be done again? (TMM 126)

Finally he decides to go to England.

Like other people on the island Singh wants to have a good education to be like the English:

It was an honour not to me but to Isabella Imperial, the famous school, where a poor boy who behaved well and was attentive to his books could win a scholarship: this meant studies abroad, a profession, independence, the past wiped out. (TMM 148)

Singh's wish to go to England is twofold. First, it would be an opportunity to leave Isabella and secondly he would be able to fulfill his desire

Before leaving the island Singh has a very important conversation with Mrs Deschampsneufs the mother of one of his friends. She tells Singh about the life in England and gives him advice. She also warns him against the negative aspects of England. She says, "But I don't think anyone from Isabella can get on with those people. We are different. This place is a paradise, boy. You'll find that out for yourself" (TMM 170). She asks him questions and as Singh recalls, "She wanted to know how I thought I would spend a Sunday, for instance. I didn't know what she expected" (TMM 171). Mrs Deschampsneufs warns him also about the loneliness he will face in England and says:

All my friends they go abroad and come back and say what a wonderful time they had. But I note they all come back. I tell you, boy, this place is a paradise...I suppose you going to do like all others and come back with a whitey-pokey. (TMM 179)

His friend Champ's father also gives him advice and draws his attention to the problems and conflicts he will face in England:

Oh yes, we all want to get away and so on. But where you are born is a funny thing. My great grandfather and even my grandfather, they always talked about going back for good. They went. But they came back. You know, you are born in a place and you grow up there. You get to know the trees and the plants. You will never know any other trees and plants like that. You grow up watching a guava tree, say. You know that brownish-green bark peeling like old paint. You try to climb that tree. You know that after you climb it a few times the bark gets smooth-smooth and so slippery you can't get a grip on it. (TMM 171)

He warns him against leaving the island. He is sure that Singh would become unhappy and he says Singh will discover that the island is paradise because the place where one is born is a home, a familiar place, where one can build one's identity. If

one leaves home, one is bound to be displaced and lose one's identity. Thus Singh begins to question the things Champ's father has said. At the same time he begins to think about his friends. He questions the people around him. He wants to know the reason for people returning to the island. As a result of all the warnings he begins to question the world and the things going on in it. He fears the world he wants to enter:

I began to think of the world, which I had longed to enter, as the violation that awaited us both, inevitable but not the less painful; it was like growing old or dying. I felt I was losing the courage to enter that world. My longing to escape had turned sour; the island had become my past. My world had narrowed. (TMM 155-6)

The more he thinks about England, the more he overcomes his fear and becomes sure that he will have a good life in England. He gets on board a ship and sails for England. On his voyage to England he thinks of Isabella and feels already cut off from his homeland:

I thought of that world which, as I was steadily separated from it, became less and less discovered, less and less real. No more foolish fears: I was never to return. (TMM 180)

He decides that Isabella already belongs to the past and that his life in England will be in order like he has always dreamt of .

Until he leaves Isabella Singh suffers from an identity problem and suffers from a feeling of homelessness and displacement because of his colonial and family experiences. After his arrival in England he goes on mimicing English people hoping that everything would be in order and the chaotic life of Isabella would remain in the past. But much to his disappointment he faces a lot of problems also in England. So his identity problem and the feeling of displacement do not leave Singh in England either. After his arrival in England, Ralph Singh talks about his experience in England and tells how his imagined England turns out to be different from what he expected:

We seek the physical city and find only a conglomeration of private cells. In the city as nowhere else we are reminded that we

are individuals, units. Yet the idea of the city that we pursue, in vain. So quickly had London gone sour on me. The great city, centre of the world, in which, fleeing disorder, I had hoped to find the beginning of order. So much had been promised by the physical aspect. (TMM 18)

Singh goes to England to find order but soon he begins to feel himself as if he is in a cell. He feels as if he is trapped. He wants to go against the disorderliness of the world but he does not know what to do and the only feeling he has is loneliness. He wishes to have a feeling of belonging somewhere but only he feels displaced. He is not comfortable in England. For him England is “as colourless as rotting wooden fences and corrugated iron roofs-in this solid city life was two dimensional” (TMM 19). He is in his rejection period. In his disappointment he admits that many of the immigrants are poor and “condemned” to lower-middle class surroundings and in these surroundings:

I no longer dream of ideal landscapes or seek to attach myself to them. All landscapes eventually turn to land, the gold of imagination to the lead of the reality. 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 prefer the freedom of my farout suburban hotel, the absence of responsibility; I like the feeling of impermanence. (TMM 10-1)

According to Timothy Weiss:

England becomes for Singh the ‘greater shipwreck’; there without hope of going home, he lives in exile, cut off from others, his thoughts turning between the poles of fantasy and nihilism. ... Alternately, Singh looks with disgust at London and longs for a blank, cold, unpeopled world... (93)

For Ralph Singh there is no future. He is in search of home but neither Isabella nor the English metropolis can be a home for him. “London and England are the greater disorder, the final emptiness in Singh’s fragmented life” (Weiss 93). The other

characters in the book also live this final emptiness and “their personalities divided bewilderingly into compartments” like Singh (Weiss 94). An identity problem and an integration problem of these immigrants are inevitable in *The Mimic Men*:

Coming to London, the great city, seeking order, seeking the flowering, the extension of myself that ought to have come in a city of such miraculous light, I had tried to hasten a process which had seem elusive. I had tried to give myself a personality. It was something I had tried more than once before, and waited for the response in the eyes of others. But now I no longer knew what I was: ambition became confused, then faded; and I found myself longing for the certainties which I had once dismissed as shipwreck. (TMM 26-7)

Singh’s identity problem emerges with these words “But now I no longer knew, what I was” He begins to question his identity. He does not feel himself close to Londoners. He tries to give himself a personality but nothing changes because he is the “Other” for the English people. He is an exile because of coming from another country and of being black.

The English look down upon the immigrants with “prejudice that turned every [one of them] into a white slaver” (TMM 13-4). Thus like Singh, almost all immigrants feel displaced because of the racial prejudice which stems from their different skin colour. Another reason why there is such a prejudice is that immigrants usually have a language problem and thus they fail to communicate with the English. For example, when Lienì’s, the Maltese housekeeper’s brother Rudolfo first arrives in London, he is sent out to buy a sheet of writing paper but he returns with a roll of toilet paper because of not knowing English (TMM 14-5). Similar unpleasant experiences among immigrants lead them to feel displaced and they find themselves dissociated. As a reaction they begin to reject everything that is connected with their host society.

Singh verbalises his feeling of displacement in England, saying:

In the great city, so three dimensional, so rooted in its soil, drawing colour from such depths, only the city was real. Those

of us who came to it lost some of our solidity; we were trapped into fixed, flat postures. And, in this growing dissociation between ourselves and the city in which we walked, scores of separate meetings, not linked even by ourselves, who became nothing more than perceivers: everyone reduced, reciprocally, to a succession of such meetings; so that first experience and then the personality divided bewilderingly into compartments. Each person concealed his own darkness. (TMM 27)

He feels lost like other immigrants whose personalities are all divided. They do not know how to behave and what to do. They feel there is no place for immigrants in England because they are exiles and for English people England is not the place for immigrants to live. Ralph Singh wants order. He wants no negative occurrences. He wants the things around him to be his. He wants to consider England as his home but he cannot feel that he belongs to England. He expresses his feelings in these words:

Not the panic of being lost or lonely; the panic of ceasing to feel myself as a whole person. The threat of other people's lives, the remembered private landscapes, the relationships, the order which was not mine. I had longed for largeness. How, in the city, could largeness come to me? How could I fashion order out of all these unrelated adventures and encounters, myself never the same, never even the thread on which these things were hung? They came endlessly out of the darkness, and they couldn't be placed or fixed. And always at the end of the evening the book-shaped room, the tall window, myself sitting towards the light or towards the mirror. (TMM 27-8)

As Timothy Weiss puts it, in London Singh "lives like a man in a cage. In contrast with the spacious plantation of his reverie, his hotel room is prisonlike and characterless"(97) with its furniture. He also feels that every event presses him deeper down into emptiness. The feeling of loneliness enwraps him all the time. He cannot escape from this feeling. He feels displaced. He wants to attach himself to England but when he understands that there is no place for him in England, he begins

to reject everything. He feels restless and this makes him feel like a stranger. He longs for a place which he can call home. But his longing remains unfulfilled and he considers leaving England:

I abolished landscapes from my mind. ...I abolished all landscapes to which I could not attach myself and longed only for those I had known. I thought of escape and it was escape to what I had so recently sought to escape from. But I couldn't leave right away. (TMM 30-1)

He begins questioning himself, whether he did the right thing by coming to England. Singh without any purpose decides to travel:

It was during this time of breakdown and mental distress when, as I have said, I travelled about England and the Continent with no purpose, not even pleasure. After each of these journeys I came back more exhausted than before, more oppressed by a feeling of waste and helplessness. (TMM 41)

In actual fact, what lies behind his decision to travel is his feeling of loneliness and his search for "home".

In his moment of stillness, Singh decides to write history. He thinks that nothing is in its place. He becomes sick because of the stillness in himself:

I felt, if I could pin down, might bring me calm. It is the vision that is with me now. This man, this room, this city; this story, this language, this form. It is a moment that dies, but a moment my ideal narrative would extend. It is a moment that comes to me fleetingly when I go out to the centre of this city, this dying mechanized city, and in the window of a print shop I see a picture of the city of other times: sheep, say, in Soho Square. (TMM 81)

Despite his attempt to write his history, Singh cannot rescue himself from the feeling of loneliness and one day, while still in England he meets his old friend Browne in the streets of London and he is happy to see him. He reflects on Browne's attitudes:

We crossed; he was on his busy way; and that was all. It was as if he had seen me a few hours before and was going to see me again soon. ...But I thought, even from that slight encounter, that London had had an effect on him, as it had had on me. He was lighter and freer than he had been in the sixth form. (TMM 185)

Singh points out the changes in Browne and his attempt to show people that he is real and living with them:

Browne, more noticeably now than at school, preferred the company of other races. It might be that he required alien witness to prove his own reality and make valid the distress he anatomized. Or perhaps it was that he feared to be alone with his distress, and could exercise his wit only with others. (TMM 186)

For Singh and Browne the way to express themselves and to show that they live pass through writing. To do this Browne makes a plan and he offers to write articles in *The Socialist*. This is important because for these people, it is a way of raising their voice and explaining themselves. But what is critical is that Browne, as Singh says, “needed alien witness to prove his reality” (TMM 188). For Browne to be witnessed by his own people is not important. He wants to be considered a true individual by the people in England. For them this is an important attempt to prove themselves to the white society.

Browne and Singh’s political movement starts with the publication of *The Socialist* and they finally learn to support one another (TMM 189). In this political movement Singh’s only aim is his psychological need for identity and fulfillment. (“V.S.Naipaul” <http://members.tripod.com>) It is in a way a proof of their own characters to people and with this movement they want to put an end to the old order and give meaning to life:

The nature of the political life of our island must be understood. We were a colony, a benevolently administrated dependency. So long as our dependance remained unquestioned our politics were a joke. ...We had the resources in intellect and offers of support, to question the system itself. We denied competition; and indeed

there was none. Simply by coming forward- Browne and myself and *The Socialist*, all together- we put an end to the old order. It was like that. (TMM 190)

Singh has a desire to prove himself. He wants to be known as the most important person and he always dreams about it because he has the feeling of inferiority as a result of the pressure he feels the English people put on him. He sees himself inferior and with the help of the politics he wants to gain power and be on the side of the powerful.

Singh's writing articles in a magazine shows his mimicry. He mimics people in England and tries to reach freedom this way:

In London I had no guide. There was no one to link my present with my past, no one to note my consistencies or inconsistencies. It was up to me to choose my character, and I chose the character that was easiest and most attractive. (TMM 20)

Singh is free to make his own decisions. There is nobody to whom he feels obliged to explain the reason of his actions. So it may be said that Singh begins to assume an identity for himself and adjusts himself to the conditions in England. But he is still not comfortable in England, he still feels loneliness.

In Singh's life women have a great importance because his life goes through radical changes with women. At first Singh decides to leave the island with his girl friend but later with the help of Sandra he begins to get used to the life in England. Singh describes Sandra, saying that in a "ritualistic, almost Pharaonic, attitude" (TMM 43-4) she caressed her breasts. According to Viney Kirpal, the portrayals of Sandra is:

... not meant to evoke affection in the reader but disgust and contempt for the English way of life, culture that for the Trinidadian exile, Ralph Singh, has come to represent decadence, moral degeneration and a preoccupation with the materialistic and the carnal. Together these portraits subvert the native's, colonial's obsession (with England's perfection); it had once deceived him into abandoning his own 'pure' beloved mother

country and coming to serve the inferior, self-seeking, libertine English woman/England. In the portraits, England is Sandra consumed by self-love and egotism. (86-7)

Kirpal equates Sandra with England. Indeed, Singh believes in Sandra he has the home he has been searching. Sandra is the heaven for the “shipwrecked” Caribbean in exile. It is the first time that he feels this way and he says, “I was strengthened by the thought of Sandra” (TMM 45). He also feels comfortable when he is with her:

I had such confidence in her rapaciousness, such confidence in her as someone who could come to no harm- a superstitious reliance on her, which was part of the strength I drew from her- that in that moment it seemed to me that to attach myself to her was to acquire that protection which she offered, to share some of her quality of being marked, a quality which once was mine but which I had lost. (TMM 47)

Singh relies on Sandra. He feels himself like an individual when he is with Sandra. With Sandra he can tackle his problem of identity because it is the first time that he is being accepted by a white person. He tries to find a way out for himself and he thinks that he has finally found his “home”. Also Singh sees Sandra as a means of being promoted from second-class to first-class citizenship.

Even though Singh feels comfortable when he is with Sandra his feelings of displacement and alienation in England still haunt him. So he becomes conscious of the fact that he is not at home in England and decides to return home. However, the moment he arrives at Isabella he regrets it:

This return so soon to a landscape which I thought I had put out of my life was a failure and a humiliation. On that first morning I should have said. “This tainted island is not for me. I decided years ago that this landscape was not mine. Let us move on. Let us stay on the ship and be taken somewhere else”. (TMM 51)

Yet on the island together with Sandra he finds himself introduced to the society of the rich which consisted of members of mixed marriages. This enables him to think

back on his life in England and recall it with certain negative feelings proving that England is never “home” for Singh and that he cannot belong there:

And after the anguish of London, after the mean rooms, the shut door, the tight window, the tarnished ceiling, the over-used curtains, after the rigged shilling-in-the-slot gas and electric meters, the dreary journeys through terraces of brick, the life reduced to insipidity, I felt revived. (TMM 56)

Apparently London reminds Singh not of the good things but the feeling of loneliness and he becomes happy that he has returned home. He feels free and he celebrates it:

Within me , with that very placidity, with that departure from London and that total acceptance of a new, ready-made way of life, I felt that I had changed. I recognized that the change was involuntarily, so that at last my “character” became not what others took it to be but something personal and ordained. This placidity I felt to be my strength...I felt I would never allow myself to be damaged again. (TMM 57)

This time Sandra begins to have some problems in Isabella. Singh’s and Sandra’s roles are reversed. Like Singh in England, now it is Sandra who begins to question the foreign land she is in. Because things are different, the life styles, the people, everything are different for her, she looks down upon everything as inferior in Isabella:

“I suppose this must be the most inferior place in the world”she said. “Inferior natives, inferior expats. Frightfully inferior and frightfully happy. The two must go together”. (TMM 69)

Their relationship gets worse. This is the negative effect of contact and conflict of cultures. Sandra has been brought up differently and Singh has been brought up differently. They have had different life styles and cultures. Singh begins to question his marriage which he calls “[t]he dark romance of a mixed marriage” (TMM 50).He asks:

What makes a marriage? What makes a house with two people

empty?...The very things I had once admired in her—confidence, ambition, rightness- were what I now pitied her for; I felt we had come together for self defence. (TMM 68-9)

Sexual desires and their loneliness have brought them together. But these do not help to rescue their relationship. Singh considers the house no longer as home and according to Singh their relationship does not hold any promise of growth. They can no longer feel love towards each other:

...we do not obliterate the feeling of failure, the feeling of the house's emptiness, the feeling that whatever solution we achieved would be only temporary, would not destroy the night or the morning to come. (TMM 71)

Sandra has been his saviour, his “luck” but everything has finished between them and for Singh things in life would be more complex and harsh. Once again Singh is overtaken by the fears he felt in London:

I was filled, I was overwhelmed, with pity for her; at no time since we had met did I feel such responsibility for her. For myself I felt only a slight, sickening twinge of fear. It was fear of unreality around me...It was my London fear; and now, in addition, I feared for the luck I attributed to Sandra, this luck to which I thought mine was linked. It was then that I began to will everything away: the gift, ambition, everything; and consoled myself consciously with thoughts of extinction, as a vague and general fate, as once, in London. (TMM 72-3)

Once more Singh feels that he does not belong to Isabella. He feels relieved when he first arrives in Isabella. But he begins to feel lonely also in Isabella. He wants to belong somewhere. His feeling of homelessness comes to the fore. He feels neither English nor Carribean. In McLeod's words, he is “living in between different nations, feeling neither here nor there, unable to indulge in sentiments of belonging to either place” (214). He becomes an exile also in Isabella. Thus he says, “In the centre of all this I felt a stranger, as so often happens during grand occasions of one's own” (TMM 73). He, also for the first time, finds himself in the grip of “a

deep, blind, damaging anger” (TMM 75) and destroys his house and hits people. He wants to cry but not for the damage done to the house, yet he cannot. Instead, he feels a sharp pain. It is the “unreleased, the nameless pain from which one feels there can be no way out, and one knows that despair is absolute” (TMM 75). Finally he bursts into tears:

They were real tears, but they came from a deeper cause. They are the tears of children outside a hut at sunset, the fields growing dark; they are the tears of men in the middle of great achievement, men who are made weary by a sense of futility, who long to be the first men in the world, who long to do penance for the entire race, because they feel the lack of sympathy between man and the earth he walks on and know that, whatever they might do, this gap will remain. They are the tears of men at the end of their line, who foresee their extinction.
(TMM 75-6)

His feeling of emptiness grows and he says, “I had nowhere to go; I wished to experience no new landscapes; I had cut myself off from that avidity which I still attributed to [Sandra]” (TMM 76). Then “the mood passes” (TMM 76).

As it is stated before, women have an important role in Singh’s life because with them he finds strength and he gets rid of his long-going-on loneliness. He once again finds a woman called Wendy but Wendy soon leaves for Canada because of the ordinariness of life on the island. With her leaving Singh once again gets into a depression:

A twinge of jealousy, an alarm of loneliness: this was what I felt when Wendy left. I envied her her freedom and saw her as the freest of us all. I was grateful to her too for the relief she had provided from the intensity made up of confusion, dishonesty, fear, delight, awe. (TMM 197)

Then Singh occupies himself with politics, becoming a radical nationalist in a colonised country:

We began in bluff. We continued in bluff. But there was a difference. We began in innocence, believing in the virtue of the smell of sweat. We continued with knowledge, of poverty and power. The colonial politician is an easy object of satire. I wish to avoid satire; I will leave out the stories of illiteracy and social innocence. ...We had spoken, for instance, of the need to get rid of the English expatriates who virtually monopolized the administrative section of our civil service. (TMM 208-9)

This time he questions his political career. He says that they are not manipulators. Instead, he sees himself manipulated by the superiors. He finds himself in a chaos and he begins to think that they are mimic men in their political acts, too:

What did we talk about? We were, of course, of the left. We socialist. We stood for the dignity of the working man. We stood for the dignity of distress. We stood for the dignity of our island, the dignity of our indignity. Borrowed phrases! Left-wing, right-wing: did it matter? Did we believe in the abolition of private property? Was it relevant to the violation which was our subject? We spoke as honest men. But we used borrowed phrases which were a part of the escape from thought, from that reality we wanted people to see but could ourselves now scarcely face. We enthroned indignity and distress. We went no further. (TMM 198)

But there was no other choice for them to prove themselves. In order not to be destroyed in the chaos, they get into politics but this leads them to think about what they have done:

Detachment alone would have shown us that in the very success of our movement lay the pointlessness and hopelessness of our situation. In our very success lay that disorder which, daily, we feared more. (TMM 199)

He finds his weak part in every act he has done. He learns that they are powerless. He points out the realities in the world and that is they are left alone in their business. He finds out that they are not supported by the trade unions or by the society:

We had no trade unions behind us, no organized capital. We had no force of nationalization even, only the negative frenzy of a deep violation which could lead to further frenzy alone, the vision of the world going up in flames: it was the only expiation. ...We were trapped in our situation. Each attempt at the establishing of a personal security prepared the way for further disorder. (TMM 205)

Singh feels that he is sinking down and they cannot go further (TMM 206). He thinks that their society is fragmented into pieces and they have lost their unity:

We wasted our energies, until the bigger truth came: that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not held together by common interests, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from the outside. Such was the controlled chaos we had, with such enthusiasm, brought upon ourselves. (TMM 206)

He begins to discover his real feelings and identity. He has a secret and that is he is eager to become free:

Here was a longing for different landscapes, a different world, where a child's first memory of school was of taking an apple to the teacher and where, in essays at least, days were spent on temperate farms. Here was a longing, like my own, for freedom and what we considered the truth of our personalities. In fantasy, perhaps, this truth was one of the things success ought to have brought: the disappointments of fantasy are not the less real. (TMM 212)

He finds himself gambling with their island's future in order to fulfill his needs:

By making too much trouble we were gambling with our future; even as it was, there was little to stop all the companies leaving Isabella, and then the natives could play as long as they pleased with the red dust, as they had done before 1935. (TMM 217)

He tries to find a way out for his own country and he thinks nationalization is a way. He thinks that in order to become free, the country should not forget about nationalization:

The estates had to be nationalized for the sake of unity, for the sake of that freedom from exploitation about which so much had been said. The estates had to be nationalized to balance the good fortune of the new bauxite contract. The estates had to be nationalized to prevent such threats to order in the future. I was at the centre; the task was mine. (TMM 219)

For nationalization, he knows, he has to go to London. The thought of leaving the island makes him feel better because his feelings of homelessness and displacement do not come to an end in Isabella either (TMM 221). But when he goes to England, he is humiliated by the Minister. He hopes to bring positive messages to his homeland but he is once again humiliated and rejected by the people whom he knew or thinks would support them:

It was a brief, humiliating meeting. ...I felt the hopelessness of the wish for revenge for all that this city had inflicted on me. ...I walked about the terrible city. Wider roads than I had remembered, more cars, a sharper smell. (TMM 224)

Singh once again finds himself in conflict since he fails to shape the future of his island. He knows he should return to the island but he cannot find the courage to do it. He does not know what to do. All he knows that he wants to avoid what is awaiting him in Isabella:

Even then I did not ask myself whether a return to Isabella was necessary. I wished only to delay it, to make a detour, to have a

momentary escape. To recover my calm and that limpid vision of the world: this was now all my concern. Everything else dwindled: Stella, Isabella and what awaited me there. (TMM 233)

Then on an impulse he decides to have a stop over in northern Spain:

I felt I had been guided to this place: the light, the low tables and low chairs, the slender half-filled glasses, the solitary intense young men in double-breasted suits, the carefully made-up women, in twos and threes, so cool, concealing such skills, such energy. (TMM 234)

He walks in the streets, visits bars and takes a Spanish woman to his hotel but at night he feels ill and images from England and from Isabella rush to his mind:

Beyond the trains I could see Sally, Sandra, my father, Lord Stockwell, anxious to come to me, who could not move towards them. As I slept and awakened, waiting for the light to come to the fantasy city, known and unknown, memory and the dream flowed together. When the light came I was weak and ill. The stopover was at the end. It was necessary to rise and prepare for another departure. (TMM 237-8)

His departure is for Isabella but his “arrival was quiet. I was not expected” (TMM 238). He understands that his return to Isabella “was not only unnecessary, it was even more irresponsible than my departure had been” (TMM 239).

He finds out upon his return that during his absence he has become the scapegoat for everything that has gone wrong on the island. Then a lot of racist violence takes place in Isabella and Singh withdraws himself from the people and he assumes an escapist attitude and desires to know no details of the race riots. He comforts himself by transmitting his “own vision of the world” (TMM 241) to the horseman riding to the end of the world so as to purify his mind and spirit. “The call to action and self-fulfilment was the necessary complement to the vision offered” (TMM 242). He is aware that his survival and his discovery of his self is dependent on his self-fulfillment. This, he realises, he can achieve by going back to England.

He decides to give shape to the “formlessness of his experiences” and to the inappropriateness of his present situation by recounting his life:

It was during this time, as I have said, that I thought of writing. It was my hope to give expression to the restlessness, the deep disorder, which the great explorations, the overthrow in three continents of established social organizations, the unnatural bringing together of peoples who could achieve fulfilment only within the security of their own societies and the landscapes hymned by their ancestors, it was my hope to give partial expression to the restlessness which this great upheaval has brought about. (TMM 32)

Ralph Singh, like Adah in the *Second Class Citizen*, tries to give meaning to his life by beginning to write about it in England and by writing his life he attempts to understand his identity. For him this will be a self realization. He is in need of explaining himself and he wants to show English people that he is there, also living among them. Singh’s writing brings him salvation. He feels relieved while writing his own life because in this way he can understand what he has done during his life time:

After eighteen months of the anaesthetizing order of life in this hotel, despair and emptiness had burnt themselves out. And it was with a delicious sense of anxiety and of being employed again that I got the hotel to give me a writing table, set it beside the window, and composed myself to work. (TMM 242)

Facing his own past, through writing about it becomes and objective for him:

And this became my aim: from the central fact of this setting, my presence in this city which I have known as student, politician and now as refugee-immigrant, to impose order on my own history, to abolish that disturbance which is what a narrative in sequence might have led me to. (TMM 243)

As Shashi Kamra puts, the narration of Singh, is described, “as a means of the final emptying out of the past self in order to start a new life afresh-to take up the challenge of the West” (74).

Singh’s adaptation is clearly understood from his days at the hotel and his Sundays:

I have fitted into the hotel; the fact has been remarked upon. Suspicion has disappeared; it had nothing to feed on since I learned to fill my day. I have breakfast. I work in my room. I walk to the public house for lunch. ...I go to a restaurant where frying oil hangs in the still air like a mist; beyond the streaming glass the lorries, buses and motorcars pass ceaselessly in their own blue haze. I have tea and read an evening paper. On Sundays we all have tea in the lounge; it is the custom then for the ladies to serve the men. (TMM 245)

These words reveal that Singh is adapted to the society and is living in a similar fashion as the natives of England. He also realises that he is one of the many members of the diaspora who have integrated with the new country. This knowledge of belonging to a group of people, sharing a similar fate comforts him:

We are people who for one reason or another have withdrawn, from our respective countries, from the city where we find ourselves, from our families. We have withdrawn from unnecessary responsibility and attachment. We have simplified our lives. I cannot believe that our establishment is unique. It comforts me to think that in this city alone there must be hundreds and thousands like ourselves. (TMM 247)

Singh does not feel himself an exile anymore. It is as if he is a part of that society. He says, “So this present residence in London, which I suppose can be called exile, has turned out to be the most fruitful”(TMM 248).

Now he begins to call England a well organized country. But his desire to find his place which he would call his home, has not ended yet. He has “imminent homelessness”(TMM 249):

I was fighting the afternoon alarm of homelessness, an inseparable part of the gipsy life that had inexplicably befallen me. But this was the limit of desolation. The moment linked to nothing. I felt I had no past. Nothing had happened that morning, or yesterday or the last eleven days. To attempt to explain my presence in this station to myself, or to look forward to the increasingly improbable search that awaited me in a London to which I was drawing no nearer, to attempt to do either was to be truly lost, to see myself at the end of the world. (TMM 250)

The afternoon panic of homelessness leads to a destructive feeling of nothingness and he finds himself in a state of depression. He feels himself in the grip of “total helplessness” (TMM 250). But this moment of “total helplessness” turns out to be a moment of recovery:

It does not worry me now, as it worried me when I began this book, that at the age of forty I should find myself at the end of my active life. I do not now think this is even true. I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes and no longer wish to know the god of the city. This does not strike me as loss. I feel, instead, I have lived through attachment and freed myself, from one cycle of events. It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have also fulfilled the fourfold division of life prescribed by our Aryan ancestors. I have been student, householder and man of affairs, recluse. (TMM 250-1)

It can be said that he has filled the emptiness in himself and he has learnt to cope with his fears. He has learnt to live among English people in peace. He does not want to search for the ideal landscapes and he at last understands that he has freed himself from one cycle of events. So he finally understands that he has been holding his freedom in his hands unknowingly. With his adaptation to the society, he can reach his salvation. In other words, he, can get over his identity problem by getting over

the feelings of loneliness, homelessness, displacement and he can build a new identity for himself.

The ending of the novel proves Singh's final adaptation to England. He feels himself at home and finds himself a natural part of the new cycle of events in England. Singh's search for home and an identity takes a long time. Neither Isabella nor England are prepared to accept him as he is. He becomes an outcast both in England and in Isabella. Singh becomes a "Liminal personae" because of living in between. Nowhere seems to be his home. When he returns to his homeland he cannot become happy because his society also moves on so displacement and loneliness becomes continuing problem. He cannot accept the situation. Living in a colonised country, in his attempts to adapt himself to the society, he cannot go any further than mimicing the colonisers and fails to be accepted by the white people. He also cannot bring himself to be one with the native society which he finds disorderly and fragmented. In order to prove himself he gets involved with politics but they also can bring him neither the peace of mind he needs nor the shape the society lacks. Finally he understands that his attempt of looking for a home will not lead him anywhere. So he gives up this search. At last, he decides to continue his life in England and write a book to find the way for self-expression. As he writes, he reaches self-realization and this leads him to the discovery of his identity.

CHAPTER III

SOUR SWEET BY TIMOTHY MO

Timothy Mo, in his book *Sour Sweet* focuses on a Chinese family's attempts to make a home in England and on their identity problems. Identity, as Stuart Hall puts it:

is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall,1996:210)

As Hall suggests identity is always in process and Timothy Mo in his book wants to show how his characters go through this process. The Chen family cannot adapt themselves to English society because they want to make their traditions live with them. In the novel *Sour Sweet* even though the Chen family live in England, they want to create their unique Chinese life in the Chinese community with which they associate. They call the English people as "Others". Sometimes they forget that they live in England and it is the English people who are powerful and can object to their beliefs and traditions. Ho suggests *Sour Sweet* raises the question of "how much an ancestral and natal culture is transmitted and transformed in the passage of diaspora"(56). That is to say, it is possible for immigrants, one way or other to, lose their own cultures. The new order does not let the immigrants live in accordance with their own traditions even though they may have a common place to get together and share their experiences. They are forced to become "Liminal personae". That is to say because of not knowing what to do they choose to go on their lives in between.

In this connection *Sour Sweet* is "about a family where change, though inevitable, is stubbornly denied" (Ho 53):

The Chens had been living in the UK for four years, which was long enough to have lost their place in the society from which

they had emigrated but not long enough to feel comfortable in the new (SS 1)

In the novel the characters are Chen the father, Lily the mother, Lily's sister Mui and Lily's child Man Kee, the grandfather and the members of the Triad group.

Chen as the father of the family does not feel himself comfortable in the English society. "Chen felt more rather than less of a foreigner" (SS 1). He suffers from a feeling of inferiority among the English people. He thinks that the English people stare at him when they see him and this disturbs him:

Chen supposed the English wives stared at him because he was Chinese and he squinted obligingly at them while he shuffled his feet and waited for the bus. (SS 9)

The Chen family prefer to live among the Chinese community in England. Chen works at a Chinese restaurant which,

was in Soho, just off Gerrard Street and its complex of travel agencies, supermarkets, fortune tellers, quack acupuncturists and Chinese cinema clubs, in a quiet lane whose only establishments were restaurants...Chen's, the Ho Ho, was the largest with three floors, each with room for twenty tables. Sandwiched between the Chinese restaurants was the Curry Mahal, run by a thin, dark-skinned Madrasi (the first to arrive in the lane in the early 1950s) who was now slowly being driven out of business by his Chinese rivals: He was considering selling out to a Greek who wanted to open a sauna and massage parlour. (SS 26-27)

It can be said that people who migrate from their own countries to other countries, form a ghetto together and continue to live in the same group. Like Chen they do not want to enter the foreign world because of the fear they feel of the new society. This way, they think, nobody can harm them but sometimes the threat comes from within the group.

Although Chen is Chinese and is working in a Chinese restaurant he is still seen as an outsider:

Amongst the other employees there were two distinct groups: clansmen and outsiders. Chen was an outsider. Originally the boss had only employed men from his own village, preferably relatives. He had secured work permits for them, arranged flights, found housing. (SS 28)

He is not welcomed by his own community just because he is not from the same village as the owner of the restaurant. He faces double discrimination in the for-him-alien culture. Despite this double discrimination, while working at the restaurant Chen prefers to see Chinese customers since they are from the same race. Chinese customers, “gave them a good chance for chat about shortcomings in particular items on the special Chinese-language menu or the latest gossip from Hong Kong” (SS 29). This preference shows Chen’s rejection of the English people with whom he does not want to communicate. His refusal to have contact with the English is reflected also in his choice of entertainment. He prefers going to modern Cantonese dramas and not English.

Chen’s father and mother are typically Chinese in following the traditions according to which Chinese people are expected to show respect and look after their elders. Chen’s parents want their son to support them all the time not only emotionally but mostly financially “...like other families in the village, Mother and Father Chen were now heavily dependent on their son’s money from overseas” (SS 5). Chen’s father becomes ill and the family in China needs two thousand dollars. With the help of Roman, his friend, Chen tries to get money from gambling and loses a large sum of money and Roman advises him to borrow money from the Triads:

These are good Chinese people who stick together to observe the old ways and are ready to help folk for the sake of it. Chen looked puzzled. “Do you want the money for your father or not?” “Thank you, Roman, *dojeh*.” An uncomfortable thought struck Chen: “This isn’t from the Communists, is it?” There was a slub connected with the mainland further up the street and also a Communist news agency. Roman laughed. “No, from the other

side, you could say. Now stop asking questions. I'll speak to you in a few days". (SS 65)

Then Chen goes to meet these people:

"Our Friendship association,"the man rasped from somewhere deep in his abused larynx, "is always pleased to help those who know how to respect. You do well to think of your father, Mr Chen. The younger generation are often forgetful of the old ways and need reminding of them. We like to think we play our part maintaining them overseas." ..."Venerate your parents, be filial, be loyal to your friends and brothers. If your father does not recover, you must not stint money on the funeral you give him. We will be pleased to give money for that purpose" . (SS 67)

The Triad is a Chinese illegal group that tries to exert power in England. They say "we have no responsibility to outsiders. Our only concern is with building our own power" (SS 181):

Triad is a term that describes many branches of Chinese underground society and/or organizations based in Hong Kong and Macau and also operating in Taiwan, mainland China, and countries and cities worldwide with significant Chinese populations such as San Francisco and Singapore. Their activities include drug trafficking, contract murder, money laundering, gambling, prostitution, car theft, extortion, and other forms of racketeering.

("The Triad Society" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triad_society)

The Triad is a big traditional family who protect and support their members and keep to themselves and do not allow any outsider to join them. Although they live in England they prefer to have no contact with the English. They exert their power only over the Chinese people:

Chinese people here will not betray us. We are part of their heritage. It was well said: the officials have the law, the people

the secret societies. And it is well the people should fear us because respect is always founded on fear. (SS 261)

After his conversation with the Triad, Chen gets the money and he becomes a servant of the illegal group. As Robert Lee suggests:

[L]ike other isolated and lonely Chinese immigrants, Chen is vulnerable to the triads who distort the symbols of ‘tradition’ and ‘family’ in order to exploit and control their members.(96)

Chen is used as an agent in drug trafficking and The Triad is misinformed that Chen is cheating. Therefore he gets into trouble with the Triad. As a result, his psychology is disturbed. At the beginning he had preferred to serve Chinese customers, but now he does not want to serve them since he has trouble with The Triad. He has lost his faith in his own people:

Now he was decidedly less at ease with his fellow countrymen. Even family parties put a strain on him and groups of all-male diners could be a genuine ordeal. Worst of all, were the single diners, the young, fashionably dressed ones in particular. Chen’s hands would tremble as he jotted their orders down on his pad. Depending on how depressed he was feeling, his manner veered between obsequiousness and defiance, the latter expressed in the form of dumb insolence...(SS 75)

Then one day strangers come to the restaurant to look for Roman. They threaten Roman for the money he has taken and they leave the restaurant. Chen begins to think about his own situation and what may happen to him in future. As a solution he considers starting his own business. Lily has always wanted to have their own business so they decide to search for a place to open a restaurant. They wander around and at last they find a place. “This was more like it, Chen thought with satisfaction; they would start here” (SS 84). Like English people Chen decides to start his own business. In this respect he mimics white people. He does not want to go on with his life under the commands of bosses like other immigrants. So, it can be said that with the opening of a restaurant, Chen has proved his difference from some

of the other immigrants in the society. He has changed and unconsciously has moved from a state of rejection to a state of mimicing.

As a sign of loyalty to their own way of life and to their traditions Chen and Lily serve Chinese food in their restaurant. Despite the state of mimicing Chen is in, he still is critical of the English:

They served from a stereotyped menu, similar to those outside countless other establishments in the UK. The food was, if nothing else, thought Lily, provenly successful: English tastebuds must be as degraded as their care of their parents: it could, of course, be part of a scheme of cosmic repercussion.

‘Sweet and sour pork’ was their staple, naturally... (SS 105)

Another change that Chen experiences in England is in his attitude toward his wife. He no longer appears to be an oriental man expressing his possessiveness and jealousy of his wife:

Chen had not shown further interest in Lily’s acquaintanceship with another man, even if it was only an older colleague of his own. That someone could be sexually interested in Lily, could find her even remotely appealing, would have been an enormity beyond his imagination. (SS 49)

In a way he starts mimicking English men who do not interfere with the actions of their wives.

Despite his slow change in way of adaptation to his new circumstances, Chen still dreams of going back home. One day, showing the passing by ships to his son through a telescope, he says:

It is a special little ship for people like us, Son. It is very little and very old but that is only what strangers see. We know better, don’t we, Son, because it is the ship that will take us all back home when we are finished here. It will take you to your homeland, Son, which you have never seen. (SS 155)

Being a typical immigrant Chen voices his dream of leaving the host country and returning home. This shows the immigrants' feeling of homelessness and displacement. They do not feel as if they are living in their own homelands. They always feel eager to return to their country of origin.

Chen begins to shock Lily with his changing attitudes. When Chen learns that Mui has given birth to an illegitimate child he shows no reaction. Instead he wants Lily to call Mui back to their house with her baby. His attitude shows that he is no longer the classical Chinese man he was once. However, his change is not a long-term change. He fails to free himself from the thought of Chineseness so there is no hope for him to become an integrated individual and assume an English identity. Therefore there will be no place for him in the English society. So Timothy Mo removes Chen from the novel. He disappears one day, never to come back because “[t]he dead cannot be brought back to life” (SS 263).

As for Lily, in England she faces many problems since she is a traditional woman and cannot easily free herself of the influence of her cultural background:

Sweet after salty was dangerous for the system, so she had been taught; it could upset the whole balance of the dualistic or female and male principles, *yin* and *yang*. Lily was full of annoying but incontrovertible pieces of lore like this which she had picked up from her father who had been a part-time bone-setter and Chinese boxer. (SS 2)

Lily, like all Chinese people wants to balance things. They generally let “*yang* balance *yin*” (SS 110), like the title of the book *Sour Sweet*. Lily lets this way of thinking run her life and she wants their Buddhist way of life to survive. She does not want to become degenerate. Lily is so strongly tied to her Chineseness that she cannot even think of going to other markets than Chinese ones. Therefore, as McLeod puts it, rather than border crossing which makes cultural exchange of having interactive experiences with the English people possible, Lily keeps to her “separate cell” (228) and she continues to keep her Chinese identity. As Elaine Yee Lin Ho suggests Lily:

knows she is “Chinese” because she does things in the “Chinese” way, and being “Chinese” means being what she is and doing what she does. Through Lily, cultural identity is posited as the completed process of early life in the family; once formed, this identity is manifested through life, and the narrator shows the unfolding, rather than transformation or complication, of Lily as a “Chinese” subject. Migration only serves to intensify this given identity, to reduce it, in Lily’s consciousness, to its formative elements which then mass and coagulate to become a bulwark against change. (54)

Lily is used to the traditional way of curing illnesses. Unless it is absolutely necessary to see a doctor, she does not go to an English doctor but prefers “a Cantonese speaking Indian doctor”, another second-class citizen like herself who, she believes, would treat her and her family better because she is also a second-class-citizen. Otherwise when somebody becomes ill, she prepares herbal cures but has hard times in finding the ingredients:

The formulas were improvised. Her father had given her the recipes. The trouble was the ingredients were not available in the UK, cornucopia of good things though the island was in respect of homelier merchandise. In a great improvising tradition, worthy of the host country, Lily stuck to the originals where she could and where this was not possible she included something she considered similar. (SS 8)

Lily’s practice of improvising proves that Lily is beginning to adjust herself to the host country because she is improvising to make a concoction containing both Chinese and English ingredients. This is a proof of Lily’s attempt to adjust to the society but her aim is only to continue her Chinese way of life and is not to have full integration. Therefore as a mother, she tries to bring up her child respectful towards their traditions and norms and rejects the English way of life. She sees English traditions worthless and she does not want her son to grow up learning English traditions.

Lily always compares England with China because she does not feel England as her home. She feels displaced:

Their new home, Lily thought inconsolably. Life in the UK had made her soft. Compared to the factory roof, to (in Mui's case) the cramped servant's back room, the grimy pebble-dash stucco building was more than adequate. Being merely human, though, Lily was unable to establish instant equilibrium. (SS 88)

At this point Lily still rejects England and even though the conditions in her homeland are not good, she misses her country. Even in their restaurant she reveals it: "As a distraction, Lily hung calendars on the walls, with pictures of the floating restaurants in Hong Kong and the grotesque statues of the Tiger Balm Gardens"(SS 95). She likes to live with her memories of the past. She wants to continue her Chinese identity. As McLeod puts it:

In migrating from one country to another, migrants inevitably become involved in the process of setting up home in a new land. This can also add to the ways in which the concept of home is disturbed. Migrants tend to arrive in new places with baggage; both in the physical sense of possessions or belongings, but also the less tangible matter of beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values. (211)

Lily does not like the English people. That is why, she all the time criticizes and rejects them:

it is against outsiders that the 'aggressive side' in her character is best demonstrated. The strict boundaries she draws between family and the world, inside and outside, differentiate absolutely what is 'Chinese' from what is not. Lily cannot observe or comment on British people and their behaviour without disapproval, as if they are potential or actual threats to her and her family which must be kept at bay, or are imagined opponents in a fight wherein she must win or lose all. (SS 55)

One day she sees a fire in the street and she begins to observe the English people:

How strange the English were, how indifferent, how careless of the consequences of their own deeds! And as for their attitude to their old people it was nothing less than shameful neglect, a national disgrace. With the image of the fire and the plight of the English aged now inextricably merged in her mind-both to do somehow with loneliness and a shirking of responsibilities as well as inevitable physical extinction-Lily wandered abstractedly down the road, barely listening to Chen. (SS 86)

Besides, because of her negative feelings for the English she does not want to treat them well when they come to the restaurant as customers.

She does not consider herself as an alien. Instead, she calls the English people as alien. She acts as if she is in her homeland and it is the English people who have come to visit her country. She says, “there was no question how superior Chinese people were to the foreign devils” (SS 137). Furthermore, she fails to distinguish the white people from one another. They all look alike to her:

Lily found it difficult, except in certain obvious cases, to distinguish between those bland, roseate occidental faces. They all looked the same to her. And how quickly their pink skins aged. How few types of face there were compared to the almost infinite variety of interesting Cantonese physiognomies: rascally, venerable, pretty, raffish, bumpkin, scholarly. (SS 137)

Lily begins to get bored with her life and sometimes she wants to do something interesting. “Husband, don’t you feel a little isolated here sometimes? Don’t you feel hidden away from the rest of the world?” (SS 146). After Chen borrows money from The Triad, he isolates himself from the whole world but Lily does not want to isolate herself. Before, she used to wish to go to Chinatown but this time “...she wasn’t trying to suggest a Sunday excursion for ‘drinking tea’ in Chinese Street, and particularly not at the Ho Ho” (SS 145). Now she is talking about going to the seaside with the car they have bought. This shows that she is changing.

Lily does not remember how she has filled her day before Man Kee and

Mui, because at present “those two sisters were obviously rather good friends... life of a gay, irresponsible female kind. Little jokes, allusions, silent communication all attested a shared experience” (SS 108) Lily does not recall having loneliness in the past either:

She retained no oppressive memories of a boredom that might have been supposed intolerable; no sense of past loneliness to haunt her present or to make it seem much brighter by comparison. It was a blank, that past. (SS 39)

In other words, without realising consciously she is adjusting herself to her new life in the new country. As a result, her present is not “haunted” by her memories of her first arrival in England. She is free from the oppressive effects of her first immigrant experience:

Apart from her family Lily has no outside contacts:

Now, almost five years into their marriage, never having formed strong external friendships which might have acted as a diversion, Chen and Lily were still able to make fascinating, sometimes shaking discoveries about each other. (SS 106)

Lily and Chen are good friends therefore, after Chen disappears Lily feels lonely and with “an unbearable excitement” (SS 40) waits for her husband. She has never met the wives of Chen’s colleagues. Because of the loneliness she feels, she wants to meet her neighbours. But “there were the English neighbours, the Polish doctor, but these were hardly more than nodding acquaintances” (SS 42).

When Lily meets two Chinese women at the supermarket, she becomes happy because this is the first time that she can free herself from her loneliness. They exchange addresses and decide to see each other. Like other immigrants, Lily’s new friend Mrs. Law had decided to go to England to start a new life. But this new beginning has led her to loneliness and Mrs. Law is glad to spend time with Lily and Mui. “Mrs. Law found she had something in common with the girls’ background, and she warmed to them” (SS 44).

While rejecting the English society, Lily unknowingly begins to act like them. Lily thinks that Man Kee would be suitable for the counter work while he is on holiday and for this she thinks that she would put a sign in front of the counter

saying “Help Boy. Give exact changes only, like the sign on the buses requesting the passengers to aid the conductor...” (SS 194). This shows her slight adaptation.

Tax becomes a big problem for the Chen family. A tax man comes and asks them about the things they have done for the tax issue. Then the tax man teaches them about rolls and receipts for purchases. But after the tax man leaves Lily says, “Husband! We can cheat almost all the tax!” (SS 165). This shows that Lily has learnt how to cheat the English people. In this she has begun to act like some English people.

Yet, Lily is still the conservative Chinese woman and is scandalised by her sister’s pregnancy. Therefore, she sends her sister to Mrs. Law’s house. “It was something she associated with young English girls, not her own sister. She couldn’t imagine Mui performing the act” (SS 184). Lily thinks that Mui cannot be like English girls. Lily rejects the immoral behaviours of English girls and tries to protect her family from such negative influences from the outside. But with Mui she fails to succeed. For Lily, Mui is a fallen woman like the English girls. She still rejects the things and the life styles in England. In response to Mui’s letter announcing the baby’s birth, Lily writes a letter:

Elder sister, you have no shame. Not only do you bring disgrace on our family but you show a proud and ungrateful spirit to those who have helped you... Let Mui put her head under a pillow for very shame when she got that, Lily thought with satisfaction as she read the letter through again. (SS 200)

But still, Mui is her sister and she does not want to hurt her anymore. “Lily’s pragmatic side strongly reasserted itself without feeling the least inconsistency” (SS 186). So she decides not to send the letter to Mui. Even though Lily cannot accept Mui’s giving birth to an illegitimate baby and cannot accept the English way of life, she herself is forced into accepting a thoroughly unconventional position for a Chinese mother:

Chen’s disappearance means that Lily is effectively a single mother- a very “un-Chinese” family formation- although she would never dream of considering herself as such, and holds on

tenaciously to the prospect of “Husband’s” return. But with father long gone, and now her husband as well, Lily emerges from being daughter and wife to becoming herself, “sprung to what her height should have been”. (Ho 59)

Chen’s mother dies and the family members make a decision to send the father of the family to England. This does not irritate Lily because she thinks she will have a chance “of putting her ideals into practice, the more so in this alien country where such respect was notably lacking” (208). She wants to teach respect to her son and the best way to do this is with her father-in-law. While Mui and Lily are talking about how to bring the father to England, Mui points out an important problem, that is the laws which do not allow immigrants to immigrate to England:

English people do not want many foreign persons here. Laws are strict about who can come and cannot come. Don’t forget he is an old man, a mouth to feed. I am a young woman. Authorities are much stricter than when I came. (SS 208)

But Mui cannot dissuade Lily and Lily prepares for the grandfather’s arrival. On the day of his arrival Lily goes to the airport:

What a lot of people! What big, smart cases! She and Son stood in the middle of the loft building, drinking up the exciting sounds and sights and stimulated by the strange electrical stinging in their nostrils. ...Gradually under the influence of music and ozone, Lily became more confident. No one was taking any notice of them. (SS 214)

When Lily understands that nobody takes notice of them, she feels comfortable and she begins to enjoy the place. Then she begins to teach Man Kee how to greet his grandfather. By doing this Lily wants to teach their own traditions. Since he was born in England, he does not know the Chinese traditions well. The lesson is “Don’t forget Son. Hold hand in front of chest and bow head. Then say: “Grandfather, unworthy grandson presents respects. “Understand?” (SS 215).

Lily’s son, Man Kee is different from the other family members because he was born in England and he has no cultural inheritance to carry:

Man Kee, happy child, was getting a fresh start. He had no history, no heritage to live up to, no goal to fulfill, no ancient burden to carry. Not one his father imposed, anyway. (SS 111)

But he is a real problem for Lily because she tries to raise him respectful to their traditions. Thus she uses “complicated diciplines” (SS 111) to control Man Kee. She wants her son to learn their own beliefs and she instructs him in that direction.

Much to Lily’s great shock Man Kee begins to speak English:

-Son spoke to me this morning, Mui.

- Yes he’s getting quite talkative really.,

-Yes, but Mui, he spoke in English!

-Eiyah! In English! But where would he learn that?

-It’s a mysterious to me as it is to you. (SS 113)

Man Kee gets older and Lily wants him to get a good education but the idea of Man Kee’s receiving an English style education is a source of irritation for Lily. She feels she has to “train his character, foster diligence” (SS 229) and he also has to learn discipline and obedience. Knowledge is of secondary importance for her. But in English schools it is not the same as in Chinese ones:

There was little or no dicipline, minimal organisation in the classroom. They interrupted Teacher, walked around the room, chatted in little groups, went to do big business and little business whenever they felt like it. They even, if you could really believe Man Kee, decided what they were going to learn. It was perfectly disgraceful. (SS 229)

From the comparison of the two countries, it may be understood that Lily still rejects the life in England. For Lily good education means Chinese way of education and she does not want to bring up her child like an English child:

But what sort of schooling should he have? This was vital. Should he be sent back to Hong Kong? This would ensure he was imbued with correct Chinese qualities, veneration for parents, for instance. His grandfather and grandmother would certainly be pleased to have him. Many young grandchildren

lived in the village while their parents worked overseas.... She was, though, unable to persuade Husband to send Son to one of the Chinese schools near the street. (SS 167)

Finally he goes to an English school but he begins to have problems. The first sign of the problem begins with his difficulty in language. Man Kee rejects speaking. "Man Kee was merely shy or spoke no English" (SS 171). He does not want to communicate with anyone, even with his family. When asked if he is hungry or not or what he has eaten at school, he just says "Mince, jam tart, and custard" (SS 171). It may be due to his not knowing which language to speak. In addition he refuses writing in English. "[H]is pencils and crayons never seemed to need sharpening or even to dwindle in length" (SS 172). This refusal to speak and to write may be a sign of Man Kee's doubt about his identity. It is the conflict between the cultural background imposed on him by his mother and the cultural practices he witnesses around him that leads him to have psychological problems. Thus, without any apparent reason he begins to cry. It is a way of showing his frustration. Before he started school his life was different and he was forced to do only what his mother told him to do. But now he does not know what to do. Because in addition to the urges of his own will to form his identity he finds himself under the double pressure of his mother and of the school. As Ho puts it:

In Man Kee, Mo gives a history- and an identity formation- to another diasporal "Chinese" subject emerging from the ancestral womb of the family. The story of Man Kee has just begun, but already it is the site of an inter-generational dialectic: between maternal will and the son's autonomy, between an ancestral past, imagined and made known, and an unknown present and future, between ethnic retrenchment within the family and a multicultural dynamic that is becoming institutionalised in society at large. (63)

Lily teaches Man Kee how to ride on a bus and pressurises him to see to it that he gets on a bus with a coloured bus conductor:

“You must be very careful when you get on. Hold pole.” The bus showed no sign of slowing. It swept right past them. Lily’s head swivelled indignantly to follow it as the big double-decker disappeared round the downhill bend in a gust of dried old leaves and two newspaper pages. “Ah Mar –Mar, you must put hand out to stop bus.” “Not necessary. No good bus-conductor.” Lily was rather put out. “Son, make sure bus conductor is black person. Indian person even better. Understand or not?” (SS 195)

Lily prefers blacks and Indians because she thinks that the others, that is to say, the English bus conductors have racial prejudices against immigrants. Lily also advises her son not to talk to strangers on buses. She in a way tries to shape her son’s life and this leads Man Kee to live in conflict (SS 196). Lily is trying to protect her son from the outside threats but sometimes she cannot cope with these people. One day she sees her son, surrounded by a group of English girls at their restaurant:

A group of young English girls had lifted Man Kee off his stool, on to the counter, and were petting him. There was a lot of giggling and exclaiming over the velvet skin of his cheeks which the English girls were stroking with the backs of their pink hands. Lily was chagrined to see Man Kee was rather enjoying himself. She snatched him off the counter. “Not playing boy. Boy working,” she snapped. ...After they left, cheerful and completely unabashed to her annoyance, she chided Man Kee. (SS 197)

Lily is embarrassed to see their behaviours towards her son and she feels Man Kee has done the worst possible thing. That is, he has spoken to “the shameless English girls” and let them pet him (SS 197). But Man Kee thinks he has not done anything wrong. Therefore he feels upset and pressurised.

Man Kee is in trouble with the “bad boys” at school who take his money and hurt him. Lily gets angry when she learns it and she decides to teach him boxing. Yet teaching boxing brings about a new problem. Man Kee kicks his friends at school and is reprimanded. Furthermore, Lily is called to the school and is told that his

behaviour is wrong and it cannot be allowed. As a result, Lily decides to send Man Kee to special courses at the weekend which teach Chinese language and culture:

She took Son into the rooms, in which there must have been seventy or eighty little Chinese children, many smaller than Son. ...The size of the class reassured her: they meant business. None of your frivolous English-style groups of twenty or thirty. This was organised on the same traditional principles as boxing class, with the children learning by example and repetition. (SS 237)

However, Man Kee's English style schooling of education continues. What is important is that Man Kee begins to make friends for himself and they are Indian boys. This shows that rather than identifying himself with English children Man Kee feels himself one with other migrant children:

He was friendly with Indian boys now, he told Lily. They ate the same special lunch and went round in a group. "Nice for you, Son" she said, pleased, it wasn't those monkey looking black boys. They looked so primitive. Might have got him into trouble and pricked with the Terror-Pin. (SS 247)

Lily does not want his son to be neither like English children nor like black boys so she never gives up controlling her son's life and her attitude causes to have an identity problem. As McLeod puts it:

Children born to migrant peoples in Britain may automatically qualify for a British passport, but their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community will be influenced by the "past migration history" of their parents or grandparents. (207)

Thus, migrants children have diaspora identities even though they are born in England. But Man Kee eventually free himself from the pressure of her mother and establishes his own identity. He will be able to adapt himself to the society and finally integrate. Although it might take a while there is a possibility for Man Kee's assimilation. His growing a mango tree from a seed may be taken as a symbol of this possibility. Mango tree is a tropical tree and normally it would not grow in England

but Man Kee succeeds growing a mango tree in their garden from a seed. Likewise, in future Man Kee, a Chinese boy, will have roots in the alien soil of England.

Lily's sister Mui, comes to England to live with them. When Lily gives birth to Man Kee, she realises that she cannot cope with the housework. So together with Chen they decide to call Mui from China to England. Before coming to England, Mui had been working "as a servant for a Cantonese-speaking English bachelor in government service"(SS 6). After her arrival at Lily's house Mui begins spending her time watching TV without talking to anybody. What is important is that she watches films and soap operas even though she can catch only a few words. She says that the subject of the films are:

universal enough, though, and not so far removed from the stock contexts of Cantonese drama as to be totally unintelligible; although the conventions could be very different. (SS 10)

She is curious about every single detail about the English people and like a child she learns English and English culture from television programmes and tries to be like English people. In other words, she wishes to mimic the natives of the host society. She does not miss her home. She does not feel displaced or homeless.

When Mui becomes pregnant she does not think the act as an immoral act and this shows her adaptation. In her mimicing the English girls she does not hesitate to do the same "shameful" act. She does not consider the act from her sister's point of view. She only wants to become like English girls and act freely and do what she wants to do.

After giving birth to her baby, even though Lily and Chen call Mui back to their house Mui does not bring the baby with her:

She is a girl. There is no place for a girl in this family. Do you understand what I am telling you? No place for a girl. I want the best life for her. ...Mrs Law is rich. She has plenty of money and she is kind. (SS 203)

She is aware that Lily is a very conservative and traditional woman and so would pressurise the baby as she does Man Kee and she would force her to conform to Chinese traditions. Besides, she fears Lily may assume the traditional Chinese

attitude towards female children and treat her as worthless and unwanted. This shows that Mui is different from Lily and that she has assumed the mentality of English people. Mui does not think of taking the child with her.

Mui's adaptation is proved by her thoughts of getting married, opening a restaurant and taking English citizenship (SS 275). Mui's change is important because it may be said that with this decision she is to leave her Chinese identity behind and integrate with English society and accept it as her home. She says:

No. Younger sister, we don't open a business like here. It's a restaurant. We open a fish and chip restaurant' ...' I'm taking out citizenship. Naturalisation. This is my home now. (SS 276)

Mo interprets the new development Mui introduces to the family:

This was the end of the old life, the life of the loving, closely knit family Mui and Lily knew they had been. ...distance, physical distance anyway, had nothing to do with the change in the amorphous but tough-skinned organism their family had been. There had been parturition, the single cell had contracted, swelled and through the wall had escaped matter from its nucleus. Now there were two cells sharing the same territory, happily co-existing but quite autonomous. (SS 277)

Ho explains Mui's change in these terms:

contrary to Lily's wish, she moves out to start a family of her own. The story of the two sisters speaks of the organic evolution of the single-cell family in the alien diasporal environment, its division into separate but related units within an apparently uniform immigrant mass. (61)

This means full integration and it appeals even to Lily because this way Uncle Lo would make a good father figure for Man Kee:

He would be a good influence on Son, give him the man's example he needed, because she didn't want him growing up in

an unbalanced home. *Yin* must have its excessive tendencies corrected by *yang*, and vice versa too for that matter. (SS 277)

It means that despite her strong Chineseness Lily is prepared to accept the advantages offered by their host society.

Willingly or unwillingly Lily is forced into an acceptance of the ways and manners in the host society and learns to exist in that society:

We Chinese know how to look after our own, she thought- and it was with warmth and pride which nearly obliterated the ugly fact that Husband had left them. ...She had loved, still loved Husband. She looked forward to the day he would return to her, as she knew with a certainty that passed beyond faith he would one day return to her. ...But it was as if a stone had been taken off her and she had sprung to what her height should have been. She thought she had found a balance of things for the first time, yin cancelling yang; discovered it not by going to the centre at once- which was prude's way and untypical of her- but by veering to the extremes and then finding the still point of equilibrium. Man Kee was too young to understand this yet, even with his mind, let alone his feelings. But she could wait patiently for the day she could pass this knowledge, and the other things, on to him. She might have lost the Husband for a while but she still had Son. Who could take him away from her? (SS 278)

This suggests a change in her. She decides not to use yin and yang balance in her life anymore. She also gives up every disciplinary act in her life because she understands that it does not add anything positive to her. "The new self continues to define itself within the old terms: wife/husband, mother/son, *yin* and *yang*, but they no longer mean the same relationally" (Ho 60). Lily finally understands that she cannot continue living with her Chinese identity and so creates a new identity for herself.

Grandfather is another member of the Chen family who cannot adapt himself to the life in England. First of all he sleeps under the take-away counter. He

makes that place his home since for him “this was to take up minimum physical living space” (SS 222). They give him their son’s room but he “had found it draughty, alien and unpropitious” (SS 222). Windows also become a big problem for the grandfather:

In any case a window had no right to be at the back or front of a house, where devils and spirits might enter. In any sensibly planned home they were at the side. He left the top floor and established himself under the counter between four crates of Coca-Cola which wedged him in snugly. He was deaf to all attempts to lure him upstairs again. (SS 222)

It is hard for him to live in an alien country and adapt himself to the new society. He cannot even think of dying in this country. He says, “How terrible to have one’s lonely bones lie (as good as strewn) in alien soil and roam for ever as a Hungry Ghost far, far from the peaceful green hillside over the village” (SS 224). The grandfather rejects living in England completely. He even wears two watches in order to get the right time in Hong Kong and in order not to forget his life in China:

Look, top watch tells Hong Kong time, bottom watch tells England time. Understand or not?”... “Anytime I want to know what my friends are doing, I just look at top watch. Ten o’clock they eat fried doughsticks and pink rice congee with boiled soft bone fragments. One o’clock they eat steamed pork buns and fried beef noodle . (SS 225)

Man Kee and the grandfather have a good relationship. They can communicate easily as the days go by. The grandfather gets up early and starts listening to Cantonese opera at maximum volume:

Man Kee loved this. Up as early as the old man, he padded downstairs as soon as the sounds floated up the tunnel of the stairs to his room. He crawled under the counter, grinning all over his big face, to sit with grandpa. (SS 226)

This makes Lily happy because in a way Man Kee is exposed to Chinese culture.

One day the grandfather wants to organise a party and invites the friends he met at the hospital he was taken to when he had a house accident. He also plans a surprise for his guests. When the party begins he shows no interest in his friends, so much so that Lily even says “Do you know, these people, Grandpa?” (SS 252). At last he shows his surprise to his guests and that is the coffin he has made for himself (SS 254). All the guests are shocked to see the coffin and a chaos occurs at the restaurant. The grandfather’s nonsensical attitude of surprising his guests with a coffin represents his belonging to a different culture. Because of his cultural background, he has a different sense of humour from the English. He believes that by showing the symbol of his acceptance of death as a nearing reality he would be appreciated by his guests because they would feel empathy and remember their own approaching death. But on the contrary, the guests are horrified, indicating their difference of culture from the Grandfather. This is a perfect example of what Ho calls “contact and conflict between Chinese and British cultures” (51).

As a result, it may be said that the Grandfather continues his life with his Chinese identity and rejects English people whom he, like Lily, calls “foreign devils”. He does not show any sign of adaptation during his days in England.

Timothy Mo in the novel *Sour Sweet*, focuses on the adaptation problems of immigrants and how they manage to survive in an alien culture. The characters one way or other face difficulties in England. They do not feel comfortable in England when they first migrate to England. But as the days go by some of the characters in the book get used to the life in England and create a new life and new identities for themselves.

The Triad is a group of immigrants who go to England to live and to make profit through various illegal dealings. Their attitudes can be regarded as taking revenge from English people. They try to get rid of their feeling of inferiority by putting pressure over the Chinese and by delivering heroine to English people. They continue their Chinese identity and they have no concern for adaptation to English society.

Lily all the time tries to get the family members together in the light of Chinese traditions. But she cannot become successful. Instead, she herself is led to have an identity problem. She rejects the norms in England because she wants to continue her Chinese identity. She does not want to be like English people. She does not want to suffer from losing her own culture. She does not know what to do in England. She continues her life living in between for a very long time, but her rejection turns to adaptation and integration by the end of the book and as the ending suggests, she decides to give up her disciplinary attitudes and accept everything as it is. Finally, she becomes ready to create a new identity for herself .

Mui is a curious girl who wants to be like English people. She is open to changes. She does not experience the rejection period that most immigrants go through and she directly passes to the adaptation period. By watching soap operas, she mimics the English people's attitudes and she becomes one of them. She examines men and women relationship. She wants to live like them and does not mind becoming pregnant and she is prepared to be a single mother. She is strong enough to take the responsibility of bringing up her child all by herself. This means that she is fully adapted to the society. She leaves her Chinese identity behind and she wants to have an English identity. But after giving birth to her baby she understands that it is better to get married and she decides to marry a Chinese man not an Englishman because despite all the tolerance in the English society, a married woman is better accepted and respected than a single mother. Mui is aware of this reality and she also knows that as an adult she would better match with a Chinese man than an English man because she has already had an experience with an Englishman who was ready to have a fling only and leave her. She knows that she can have a stable relationship with a Chinese man.

Chen has been always in the middle. That is to say, he continued his life in between like Lily. He also faces problems in England. His behaviours and his point of view change a great deal. But he cannot adapt himself to the society and so he disappears. Like him, the grandfather does not and cannot adapt himself and he continually rejects the life in England and as an old man he has no future.

Man Kee, although a second generation immigrant, goes through many problems because of his mother's insistence on bringing him up as a traditional Chinese child. This leads him to liminality. He cannot decide how to behave for a very long time. Eventually he gets adapted to the society under the influence of his education in the English school and his contact with the outside world. Therefore, Man Kee's integration with English society is a certainty and his assimilation is a strong possibility.

Finally, it can be said that only Mui's child can be assimilated in the years to come because of her mother's attitudes.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion the writers of the postcolonial period, Buchi Emecheta, V.S. Naipaul, and Timothy Mo, show the problems experienced by minorities in twentieth-century England. These problems appear in the form of homelessness, displacement, loneliness and search for home. They want to be a part of the English society, but they cannot regard England as their homes. Society's strict rules cause the immigrants have serious identity problems. They are made the "Other" in the English society. But at last they understand to accept everything as it is. They accept the negative behaviours of the English people and by preferring to stay in England, they choose a kind of adaptation. The characters become successful in finding a home and developing an identity.

All of the writers want to give the conditions of immigrants in England. They want to point out the problems of immigrants and especially focus on identity problems of immigrants after leaving their countries.

In the three novels all the characters, apart from Lily and the grandfather, dream of going to England. Their aim in going to England varies but it is mainly to get better education or to live a better life. After arrival in England, however, the characters in the novels are disappointed. England for them turns out to be a place of unhappiness because they had never thought of England in those terms. They face discrimination and cannot express themselves in England. In their homelands they were first-class citizens when compared to the other inhabitants because of the education they have but in England they become second-class citizens.

Characters like Adah, Mui, Chen, Singh want to prove themselves to the society but the English society does not let them be a part of it. They are silenced and kept apart. They try hard to exist in the society and keep their own culture and identity. They either fight with or passively resist the norms and the people in England.

The characters Singh and Adah choose to write books. They choose it in order to express their thoughts and emotions clearly. Writing becomes a self-discovery for Adah and Singh. Singh writes all the details of his life, starting from

his childhood years. On the other hand, Adah after her librarian friend's encouragement decides to write. In Adah's case writing means freedom and it also stands for her adaptation. At the beginning she is silenced both by her husband and by the English society. But finally she gains her self-confidence thus decides to write a book. Yet her husband burns the manuscript. In Timothy Mo's novel the characters do not have the experience of writing.

Writers' point of views and the type of novel they write are different. Buchi Emecheta writes from a woman's point of view. V.S.Naipaul writes from a man's point of view. Timothy Mo shows both men's and women's points of view. Emecheta and Naipaul write autobiographical novels by telling their own lives and showing their own problems. But Timothy Mo is of mixed parentage and goes to England in his childhood years. So he does not have a first-hand experience of displacement. He just observes the immigrants' situation in England. Naipaul and Emecheta have parents of the same cultural background and go to England in their adult years taking their life-long cultural baggage with them. Therefore, it takes them a long time to be integrated with their host society. However, Naipaul, when compared to Emecheta needs a longer time to adapt himself to the English society. Because when the postcolonial novels are examined, it is seen that women are able to reach the adaptation period more easily. Men have many problems and adaptation comes to them many years later. For men adaptation may occur among the second or third-generation immigrants. Because if they change more easily, they think that they may lose their superiority. So they resist to changing.

In the three novels, the characters have hard times in adjusting themselves to their new countries. Adah, the main character in *Second Class Citizen*, goes to England thinking that she would not have any problems there. But life in England is not similar to the one she has heard of. Therefore she faces many difficulties. Before she arrives in England she thinks that England would be her home but she finds herself unable to call it home and begins to reject everything that is English. The feeling of displacement also leads her to have an identity problem. She begins to question who she is and what she is doing there. But later on she stops rejecting and begins to accept everything as it is. In her adaptation, her friends at the library play

an important role. They are the first people to accept her as she is. When Adah is compared to Singh, she adapts herself much earlier than Singh. So it can be said that she could overcome her identity problem earlier than Singh. Unlike Adah, Francis, Adah's husband, cannot adapt himself to the English society because of the feeling of male superiority which actually stems from a feeling of inferiority.

Singh all through his life cannot adapt himself to the alien society. He lived in between. Coming from a colonial country, he can feel himself comfortable neither in England nor in Trinidad. He survived his life by mimicing white people's attitudes and cultures because he does not have any example of a pure Caribbean identity. So cannot call England and Isabella as his home. He all through his life goes from England to Isabella to find peace. This leads him to feel displaced and homeless and hence have an identity problem. He tries to relieve himself with women but they do not help him either. His adaptation comes many years later with his writing. He wrote his life to understand what was going on in his life and finally he can become a true individual with his own identity.

In Timothy Mo's novel Lily's adaptation like that of Singh's comes very late. She was raised up like a boy. Her father's teachings make her act like men. So her adaptation comes very late like men. She always sees English people as immoral and she does not want to be like them. Lily is the most strict character when compared to the other characters in the three novels. She always tries to teach her son the Chinese customs. She is the one who always keeps the family members together. Her identity problem increases with her son's education. On the other hand, the identity problem Man Kee has as a result of the way Lily follows to bring him up causes him to adopt aggressive attitudes. Again, under Lily's influence he cannot have full adaptation at first, but later he finds some friends at school and from this, it can be said that he is beginning to adjust to the society. As opposed to Lily's strict thoughts about English people, Mui becomes ready to get integrated with English society. She is totally adapted to the society. Mui, in her first days in England, does not want to talk to anyone and goes through a process of absorption, watching soap operas on television. Then she mimics the English and directly passes to an adaptation period by leaving her Chinese identity behind. She assumes a new identity

and even though she gets married to a Chinese man she lives as the English do. When Chen is examined, he also comes across with a lot of difficulties. Opening a Chinese restaurant, going to Cantonese operas show his rejection of English society. He does not act like Lily or he does not talk about English people's immoral attitudes, but deep down he rejects the society. To sum up, Chen never shows his feelings of rejection like Lily but he rejects English society. The grandfather, like Lily, is always strict and he rejects the norms and life styles in England.

To sum up, immigrants face a lot of problems. But the worst of all is their identity problem. Some of them try to build a valid self identity in an alien country in order to survive there which means that they try to adjust to the new country, while some others build an altogether a new identity integrating with the society completely. Yet, some other immigrants cannot fit in and either disappear from the host society or continue living as misfits. Full assimilation is possible only among the second or third-generation immigrants.

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