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Stéphanie Françoise Decouvelaere

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The University of Kent
at Canterbury

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle
Paris III

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Docteur de l'Université Paris III
Cotutelle

Postcolonial Studies
Littérature générale et comparée

Stéphanie Françoise DECOUVELAERE

The Elusive 'Better Break'
The immigrant worker in Maghribi fiction in French and Caribbean fiction in English, 1948-1979
L'Illusoire 'meilleure chance'
Le travailleur immigré dans la fiction maghrébine en langue française et la fiction caribbéenne en langue anglaise, 1948-1979

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Introduction

In "Le cuir usé d'une valise", the French rappers of La Rumeur evoke the experiences of their fathers, who immigrated to France after World War II to work. This moving rap uses the metonymic device of surmising from the clues found on old leather suitcases the men's respective journeys from Algeria, West Africa and the Caribbean to a cold and indifferent France. In the elliptical mode appropriate to rap pieces, the rappers contrast the various, light-filled settings from which the men set off with the land where they arrive, characterised as "dull" (Rumeur, 2003).[1] It is also cold, as is the welcome they receive from the natives. The first "laughing face" encountered, that of a foreman ready to stamp the appropriate certificates, folds together the institutional racism of the police and border patrols with that of the industries employing non-native workers for their docility and acceptance of low wages (MacMaster, 1997). The men also encounter popular racism in "the faces [that] become ice-cold when faced with the overseas specimen". The rap suggests the disappointment resulting from years of xenophobia, isolation and exploitation. The immigrants' project to "earn", in the "land of desires", "the right not to wander, famished" at home, are crushed by heavy work in factories where "the sirens have no melodious voices; their strident calls mockingly lash the slaves' hopes".[2] The suitcases that symbolise the men in this rap end up "piled on top of the immigrant hostel's wardrobe", gathering

[1] In this dissertation all translations from the French are mine except where otherwise stated.

[2] The rapper uses the French word "forçat, which corresponds to the historical status of "galley slave" or "convict". Used in the modern sense of evoking hard labour, the translation "slave" seems most appropriate, although the original text does not contain an allusion to transatlantic slavery at this point.

dust and testifying to the difficulty of sending money to the families the men left behind. These lines highlight both the hardship suffered by immigrants in France in the post-war period and the immigrants' orientation towards home signified by the constant concern to provide for their families in Africa and the Caribbean. The rap acknowledges in the mention of a "newspaper cutting" about "agitators" in a "flaming factory" the resistance that some immigrant workers put up in the face of their difficult situation, referring to the involvement of immigrant workers in trade unions and other advocacy groups to improve working and living conditions.

International migration was a major phenomenon of the twentieth century. It appeared in various guises, whether it was linked to nationalisms (for example, the Zionist project in Palestine in the first half of the century), to wars, or to economic factors (for example, immigration to the United States of America from Europe, Asia or South America). It was also intimately linked to the European colonialist project. The Empires necessitated and encouraged migration from Europe to America, Asia and Africa in important numbers, and resulted in increasing levels of migration from those regions back towards Europe for the purposes of education and training, as well as allowing European industries to import labour.

In the period of reconstruction after World War II, both France and Britain recruited large numbers of immigrant workers to help in the reconstruction effort. The majority of these came from Eastern and Southern Europe, but significant numbers also came from the French and British empires (Castles et al., 1984). This was not the first time that non-European American, African or Asian populations had come to reside in the metropolitan territories of either empire (Fryer, 1989; Simon, 2000). In the 1950s, however, the numbers of non-European, colonised immigrants to France and Britain increased dramatically, in particular West Indians in Britain and Algerians in France. This meant that a large-scale encounter between colonisers and colonised took place for the first time outside

the context of the colony.

Immigrants and immigration had been present in French public discourse to various degrees since the nineteenth century but were more often than not presented as a problem, and colonial immigrants were no different Noiriel (2007). Nevertheless, a characteristic of the public discourse on immigration, in the media and among politicians, was the erasure of its history. Each new wave of immigration was talked about as a danger to the nation, without apparent awareness that the previous wave had provoked similar comments (Noiriel, 1988). This erasure of history was particularly strong in France after decolonisation. The bitter wars fought in Indochina and Algeria and the failure to retain the empire were followed by a collective amnesia at the level of public discourse, in particular on television (Mills-Affif, 2004). A survey of history textbooks throughout the second half of the twentieth century shows that the period following decolonisation in the 1960s was characterised by silence in school curricula, a silence only imperfectly broken from the 1980s onwards by a decoupling of national and colonial history that concealed the bonds and cross influences between France and its former colonies (Lemaire, 2005). The common history linking the French and the non-European immigrants was foreclosed. While British textbooks may not have occulted the colonial relationship to the same extent in the period, both countries saw an ethnicisation of the discourse on immigration which presented it as a racial problem and a threat to national character (Lapeyronnie, 1993; Noiriel, 2007; Wadia, 1999; Gilroy, 2002). This resulted in a symbolic and ideological void regarding the de facto place in French and British society of the offspring of the colonial and postcolonial immigrants that had arrived between the 1950s and the 1970s, who are on the contrary constantly suspected of disloyalty to their country of residence (Bertrand et al., 2007; Gilroy, 2002; Lapeyronnie, 1993).

The rap "Le cuir usé d'une valise", retracing the experience of colonial immigrants in France in the later twentieth century, is envisaged as a response to

this state of affairs and a form of resistance to the erasure of history. The suitcases in the song "howl at destiny that [they] did not come in vain". The song links contemporary hostility to immigrants with colonial history. Its purpose is to posit intergenerational communication as an indispensable complement to 'conventional' education because French history, the coloniser's history, silences the history of immigrants and their links with France. In an interview for the website *A contresens*, the rapper Ekoué explains the importance of discovering parental history: "We consider that, with what we didn't learn at the the school of the Republic [i.e. French state schools], it is our duty to ask [our parents about this]" (ACS-1 et al., 2003). Accordingly, while many of the experiences the rap evokes may also apply to any of the groups of Southern and Eastern European immigrants arriving in France since the nineteenth century, the rappers of La Rumeur assert the continuing role of the colonial relationship in their fathers' lives as immigrants. The last stanza of the rap refers to the influence of slavery in the metropolis through the prosperity it brought to French ports such as Le Havre and suggests that its history is alive in contemporary France despite decolonisation: "the rats and the cockroaches", linked with the slave-ship holds mentioned in the previous line, "live together in peace with the vulgar symbols of post-war France". The rappers suggest that attitudes shaped by colonialist ideology survive in contemporary French culture and underpin the hostility the immigrants encounter: in a France whose culture has been influenced by the colonial experience, whether this is acknowledged or not, the "overseas specimen" is necessarily framed by the demeaning stereotypes that have justified colonisation.[3] This silence about the colonial relation has been broken since 2005, and a debate about the aftermath of colonialism has opened up on many fronts in French society and intellectual life. Several historians have started looking at the culture of colonialism (see for example Blanchard et al., 2008); raging debate has

[3]The word "overseas" has an obvious colonial connotation in French, as the term for previously colonised territories still under French sovereignty is "overseas départements" or "overseas territories" (Départements d'Outre-Mer and Territoires d'Outre-Mer).

arisen over attempts to include comments about the colonial period into law (van Eeckhout, 2005); and an association called Les indigènes de la République, the "natives" of the Republic, denounces the continuing discriminations suffered by descendants of immigrants originating from once-colonised territories by drawing explicit parallels with the colonial period (MIR, 2005).[4]

In tracing the after-effects of colonialism in contemporary social processes, including processes of domination, the rappers of La Rumeur take an approach akin to that of postcolonial criticism. The practices and theories founding the field of postcolonial studies are varied and sometimes conflicting. Different scholars draw on diverse post-structuralist, Marxist or other critical traditions to analyse cultural, economic and political relationships established under European colonialism and the still visible effects of such relationships in the contemporary world despite the achievement of formal independence for the majority of colonised territories. Because of the criticism it has attracted from people outside it, and because of the varieties of intellectual heritages informing it, leading to debate, disputes and internal criticism, the field of postcolonial studies is a highly self-conscious one, in which scholars are compelled to interrogate their practices, taking care in particular to avoid reproducing the reductive and marginalising practices denounced in colonial discourses.[5]

One of these concerns is the reproduction of artificial boundaries through the use of the colonisers' languages. As Bery and Murray (2000) have argued, the literatures of formerly colonised countries are often studied separately, according to the language of the European coloniser, which not only obscures the literary links and cross-influences not governed by the colonial relationship, but also silently maintains the literature of the former colonial power as a central model. The idea

[4]Colonial policies have given a particular shade of meaning to the word "native", giving it racist overtones. In French colonial law, this term ("indigènes") was used to distinguish between colonisers and colonised, between Europeans and non-Europeans. In this dissertation, inverted commas will be used to denote this meaning wherever it occurs, but where I use the word in its neutral sense of "a person born in a particular region", no inverted commas will be used.

[5]Moore-Gilbert (1997) provides a useful account of these various critiques.

for this dissertation is based on twin interests in the representation of immigrants from colonised or formerly colonised territories and in the comparative study of postcolonial literatures across language spheres. A related but indirect and subterranean interest is the notion that France and Britain should themselves be included in the remit of postcolonial studies. Colonialism was an integral part of the development of their modern states, societies and cultures, and still affects social and cultural formations and debates in the post-colonial period. In the face of a discourse on immigration from mainstream voices in Britain and France governed by race but erasing history, I became interested in alternative representations of the so-called invaders that might give responses to alarmist discourses, challenging them and pointing to their blind spots and exclusions.

The French rappers' conceit is not the first attempt to counter official representations of immigrants from colonies or former colonies. The period of strong immigration after World War II corresponded to a period of flourishing literary creation in many of the territories colonised by European powers. The writers of the dynamic post-war literary renaissances in both the West Indies and North Africa in the majority sought in the 1950s to give literary representation to their societies from within. Partly, this was a response to representations from outside (by the colonising Europeans) which, by definition, were not produced on the terms of Maghribi or Caribbean cultures. It also proceeded simply from the writers' vocations to write and, sometimes, as in the case of the Moroccan Chraïbi or the Trinidadian Selvon, the desire to give a place to their peoples in the realm of world literature (see their interviews: Boubia, 1995; Fabre, 1988). Emigration was a major economic and social phenomenon in the societies that produced these literatures and therefore had a logical place in such literary representations. Moreover, many writers themselves numbered among the migrants, sometimes spending several years in Britain or France before returning home (George Lamming, Rachid Boudjedra) or in other cases remaining in Europe or

other Western countries (Sam Selvon, Driss Chraïbi). Yet emigration was a somewhat problematic subject since the magnitude of the phenomenon in Maghribi and Caribbean societies threatened to undermine a sense of national polity and self-sufficiency in the context of the push for independence. Bonn points out that in the Maghrib, only writers whose previous work had already established them as strong presences on the literary scenes of their respective countries attempted to write about emigration. This was a sensitive subject, particularly in Algeria, where the destination of emigrants was the colonial power from which the country was in the process of violently wresting its political independence (Bonn, 1994, 50, 58). The subject was probably less fraught in the British West Indies, which had a long-standing tradition of migration between islands and to the American mainland. The pattern nonetheless obtains: Lamming, Selvon, Naipaul, Salkey all initially wrote about Caribbean societies before giving literary representation to the immigrant experience, even though they had all been living in Britain for several years when they began publishing novels. It is with such novels about migration to the colonial metropolis, which find their place within productive careers demonstrating far-ranging interests, that this dissertation is principally concerned.

I focused on the period between 1948 and 1979, a period beginning with the acceleration of migration to Britain and France from the Caribbean and North Africa, and ending just before the overdue emergence into public consciousness, through violent events and 'riots' in the early 1980s, of populations of Afro-Caribbean and Maghribi descent who had been born and/or had grown up in Britain and France. I chose to study and compare prose works written by Caribbean and Maghribi writers in this period, and primarily concerned with the experience of immigrant workers. The major such works are *The Emigrants* (1954) by George Lamming and *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *The Housing Lark* (1965) and *Moses Ascending* (1975) by Samuel Selvon in the Caribbean, and *Les*

Boucs (1955) by Driss Chraïbi, *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (1975) by Rachid Boudjedra, *La réclusion solitaire* (1976) by Tahar Ben Jelloun and *L'homme qui enjamba la mer* (1978) by Mengouchi and Ramdane.

This set of criteria entailed some necessary exclusions and inclusions. The novels of Mouloud Feraoun and Mouloud Mammeri mentioned the phenomenon of migration but focused on the North African setting. Similarly, Mourad Bourboune's *Le Muezzin*, while it is set primarily in Paris, focuses on the aftermath of the Algerian war of independence and the betrayal of the ideals of the cause of liberation by Algerian leaders. V.S. Naipaul, Andrew Salkey, Malek Haddad and Nabile Farès, in treating the experience of migration to the metropolis, chose to focus on middle-class characters, writers and students. Finally, Mohammed Dib's *Habel*, also set in Paris, in its obsession with gender ambiguity and love as passion and madness, is a general reflection on exile rather than a reflection on the post/colonial immigrant. For these reasons, and in order to maintain balance between the number of Caribbean and Maghribi works studied, these writers and novels were not included in the corpus.

Kateb's *Le polygone étoilé* is for the most part set in Algeria, with a long sequence on immigrant workers in France. Unlike Feraoun in *La Terre et le sang*, who consigns the sojourn in France as a dreamlike reality, divorced from life in Algeria, that can be bracketed off, Kateb does not separate the experience of immigrants from his consideration of Algeria. Moreover, like Lamming, Kateb envisages his literary production as a single work made up of his various published books. It was therefore interesting to consider the other works of these two writers because their preoccupations are restated and refined in their various engagements with the theme of immigration. Lamming's *Water With Berries* is concerned with Caribbean artists in Britain rather than working-class characters, but it provides a complementary view of Lamming's vision of immigration fifteen years after *The Emigrants*. Kateb's short stories published before *Le polygone étoilé*

and his play staged a decade later, *Mohammed, prends ta valise*, show how he reworked his autobiographical material on the immigrant experience throughout his career. Similarly, I refer to Selvon's treatment of migration in *An Island is a World*, *Ways of Sunlight* and other works, and to Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* and *Succession ouverte* where relevant.

The novels studied here also present a predominantly male experience. This is in part determined by my selection criteria: focusing on immigrant workers, the majority of which were men, logically slanted my corpus to representations of male characters. But it is also a consequence of the dearth of representations of female migrants in the period. Very few of the novels cited above contain any examples of Caribbean or Maghribi women migrating to Britain or France. Moreover, few Caribbean or Maghribi women published at all in the period; those who did, did not focus on migration. The first novels of Assia Djebar, for instance, focused on young women's desire for increased agency and freedom in Algerian society and their roles in the war of independence. Taos Amrouche figures as an exception here, having published two semi-autobiographical novels dealing with the experience of a Maghribi woman in France, *Jacinthe noire* (1947) and *L'amant imaginaire* (1975). The first recounts the experience of a young Kabyle woman studying in France; the second narrates the life of a Westernised Maghribi woman married to a French artist. In this, Amrouche's novels also fell outside the selection criteria applied here, since they do not deal with the experience of the immigrant worker. In the Caribbean, as in the Maghrib, literary works by women appeared from the outset of the literary renaissance, but they were few and the novels did not focus on migration. After Beryl Gilroy's autobiography, the first novel about the experience of migration to Britain by a woman, Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging*, belongs to the 'next generation' in concentrating on the dilemmas of a girl who is going to school and growing up in Britain. So books by women addressing the theme of immigration in the period I examined, either

in terms of genre or of main focus, fell outside my selection criteria. My analysis of the novels of Lamming, Chraïbi, Selvon, Kateb, Boudjedra, Ben Jelloun and Mengouchi and Ramdane is not, however, blind to the issue of gender and I will discuss these novelists' representation of female characters where relevant.

The distinction made here between novels focusing on workers and novels focusing on middle-class and student characters is necessarily an artificial one. Lamming and Chraïbi present both workers and middle-class characters or intellectuals; Lamming, in particular, suggests that the predicament of all Caribbean immigrants is similar, regardless of class, because of the colonial relation. Indeed, the novels by Naipaul, Farès, Bourboune, and Salkey all consider the post/colonial immigrant's presence in Britain or France in the light of the colonial relationship and, in the case of the Algerian novelists, through the prism of the liberation struggle. My choice to limit the study to the works noted above was driven by the need to maintain a corpus of a manageable size in what is the first study comparing the two bodies of work.

In the choice of this corpus and project, I made important assumptions about the elements of comparison. I chose novels dealing with identifiable sociological phenomena I deemed were comparable for a number of reasons. Migration from the Caribbean to Britain and from North Africa to France existed in the early twentieth century but accelerated dramatically in the period following World War II, especially in the 1960s. The historic ties of colonialism determined the destinations of the migrants to a certain extent (migration to the United States of America was also relatively common in the Caribbean; migration to Belgium and Germany less so among North African emigrants), but the main factor was the demand for labour in France and Great-Britain for their reconstruction (Peach, 1968; Castles et al., 1984). In the immediate post-war years, most of the migrants were workers (predominantly low-skilled workers in the Maghribi case; in the Caribbean case, Peach shows that many immigrants were skilled, but did

not find employment at their skill level), with a small number of higher education students also travelling to the imperial centres. The 1960s and 1970s saw a shift to a family-based migration, with higher proportions of women and children travelling to Britain and France, and the beginnings of a sense of settlement. This shift occurred earlier in Great-Britain than in France (Castles et al., 1984). The governments of both countries took differing approaches to the influx of migrants but, as Lapeyronnie (1993) argues in his comparative sociology of late twentieth-century immigration to France and Britain, the two European countries soon faced similar difficulties regarding the integration of immigrant populations. Besides government attitudes, migrants also faced various forms of racism, including racist violence. To this day, populations of Caribbean descent in Great Britain and of North African descent in France encounter difficulties in entering skilled employment—unfortunately, they are not the only groups in this position (National Statistics Online, 2005; Cashmore, 1989; Noiriel, 2007).

The comparative work undertaken in this dissertation is not based on assumptions of literary cross-influences, but attempts to discover whether similar causes might have similar effects in different circumstances.[6] In this case, relatively large numbers of people from a colonised territory migrated to the coloniser's home territory. I expected that the particular power relations and consequent social and cultural constructions and stereotypes involved in the colonial relationship influenced the experience of the immigrants, in particular in terms of the racism targeting such populations. I also expected that these particular power relations would influence the representation given by novelists. But there were also important differences between the two phenomena. Modes of colonisation varied within and between empires, as did modes of decolonisation. The Caribbean islands had

[6]To find evidence of cross-influence would require a study of the patterns of translation of the novels (although, for instance, Lamming knew French and would not have needed translations), and a study of the reception of English-language Caribbean literature in France and French-language Maghribi literature in Britain. It would also require looking at the writers' journals and personal papers for evidence that they were aware of the other body of work. I have found no evidence of cross-influence among the writers I studied in the interviews I have read and the correspondence to which I have had access.

been under European domination since at least the seventeenth century and had experienced various phases in this domination, passing under the influence of various powers (with the exception of Barbados), and from the system of plantation slavery and Mercantilism to free trade, Emancipation and the importation of indentured workers. The populations present at the time of European conquest had been decimated, so that the constituents of Caribbean population had all come from elsewhere. The three countries of the Maghrib, though they shared with the Caribbean a history of successive conquests and domination that had resulted in a mixed population, had only relatively recently experienced European colonial power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Maghribi population had a sense of cultural identity rooted in history, religion and traditions that tied it to the land. Belonging to the sphere of Islam, this local culture provided an alternative view of the world and social system that could be juxtaposed to the French, whereas Caribbean societies had been shaped by the colonial influence, though their cultures were mixed. In the post-war period there was a strong contrast in the relations between these colonised territories and their respective metropolises. A peaceful, parliamentary process in the Caribbean contrasted strongly with the violence characterising the decolonisation of the Maghrib, in particular the protracted and bitter struggle for Algerian independence.

Having established similarities and differences in the phenomena the novels depicted, I wished to make allowances for any similarities and differences among the novels themselves. While my approach has been influenced by Fanon's insistence on oppositionality and the psychological effects of the colonial relation and Spivak's cautions regarding the ethics and practice of representation, my project is based on close readings of the novels, informed by the background information set out above. I have used the existing corpus of criticism on these novels and relevant concepts from postcolonial and migration theory, but these do not drive my readings of the novels. In particular, recent approaches to migration in

literature and literatures by migrant writers were useful, but not always appropriate to the study of the novels in my corpus. These theories, which focus on cultural hybridisation and its potential for empowerment, and on diaspora theory and transnational practices in their capacity to deterritorialise belonging and challenge nation-based definitions of identity, refer to a time in which immigrants have settled, rather than the period of arrival, in which I was interested. These approaches helped me to interrogate the novels' premises in chapter 4, but I have not used them as an overall framework to guide my approach.

These novels of immigration do not, of course, represent a direct expression by post/colonial immigrants. The immigrants themselves spoke out through magazines such as the *West Indian Gazette*, *Race Today*, or *Sans Frontières* and the associations and non-governmental organisations associated with them.[7] They also expressed themselves through political actions such as the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, or participation in important industrial actions in French factories and protests against deportation orders. The writers studied here acknowledge that they were not a part of the social group of migrant workers. Chraïbi and Boudjedra note that they are educated and therefore did not suffer the same hardship as the people they wrote about (Prasteau, 1955; Boudjedra, 1975a). Selvon and Lamming both explain that their attitude in moving to Britain in 1950 was the same as that of other migrants: they were seeking professional opportunities (Lamming et al., 1992; Nazareth, 1988). They nevertheless note that they socialised both with 'ordinary immigrants' and in intellectual circles, both West Indian and English (Phillips, 1997).

The literary representations I have elected to study are exactly this, "representations", as Spivak usefully reminds us (Spivak, 1988, 276), rather than expressions of the immigrants' voices. Given the writers' acknowledgement of their separateness from the immigrant group, these novels in theory are not bound

[7]Walmsley's presentation of the background context to the creation of the Caribbean Artists Movement gives some sense of this in Britain, while Abdallah provides an overview of such initiatives in France (Walmsley, 1992; Abdallah, 2000; see also Hinds, 2001.

demands of objectivity or accuracy. As such, they are subject to the aesthetic and political agendas of the authors, who are free to inflect their depiction of the phenomenon as they wish. Selvon and Chraïbi were both impatient with the paradigm of committed literature and rejected the notion that political concerns should influence or constrain the writer, although both admitted to the significance of social criticism in the subject of immigrants (Prasteau, 1955; Al Achgar, 1966; Fabre, 1988; Durix, 1988). The inflections the writers gave to their representation of the phenomenon are significant. I therefore considered the novels in the context of available historical and sociological research into the migration of West Indians to Britain and North Africans to France. The historical background of the Caribbean and the Maghrib, their differing relationships with the imperial power, the sociological reality of the two migration processes, were possible explanations for similarities and differences of approach among the writers. More importantly, knowledge of the historical background for the phenomena the writers depicted in their novels also allowed me to pay careful attention to the choices they operated in representing post/colonial migrants to the metropolis. In using this historical and sociological background information, the question was therefore not "is this novel an accurate depiction of the sociological phenomenon?" but rather "what is the significance, the function or the meaning of any inflections operated in the novels?" In other words, Divergence between the literary representation and the available historical and sociological data could highlight the writers' interests and their blind spots in representing immigration, giving insight into the meaning of the literary works.

The politicised context in which the novels appeared, with the issues of decolonisation and race relations increasingly prominent in the 1950s and concerns about convincing the immigrants to return home rising in the 1970s, as well as the social issues of hardship and discrimination, nevertheless mean that the other aspect of representation Spivak (following Marx) identifies, that of "speaking

for" rather than "speaking about", inevitably intersected with the novels as representations. Firstly, because the novelists were seen as belonging to the same colonised groups as the immigrants – they were "native" Maghribi or coloured West Indians – there was a general sense that these literary representations were more accurate than accounts given by French or British sociologists, journalists or novelists. The writers, consciously or not, encouraged this by emphasising their close knowledge of the immigrant milieux through socialisation: Chraïbi stressed the large number of interviews he had conducted (Prasteau, 1955); Boudjedra remarked that he had been involved in a literacy programme for several years and that the men he encountered invited him into their homes (Boudjedra, 1975a); Ben Jelloun, likewise, mentions working with immigrants (without specifying how) and took much of the material for his novel from his counselling work with Maghribi immigrant workers (El Kortobi and Abdallah, 1979).

Secondly, most of the writers studied here responded to migration as a political issue and saw their novels as intervening in the discourse about it, as part of a broader conception of literature as a political discourse. Lamming, for instance, considered that the writer had a responsibility to his society to examine "the social forces" at work in his society in order to bring about a "critical evaluation" of these forces (Riwa, 1975, 101). Ben Jelloun makes a distinction between the prevalent conception of the writer in Europe and America and the writer in the "Third World", rejecting a vision of the writer or intellectual as isolated from society and focusing on a personal realm; he advocated, rather, an active engagement with the people (El Kortobi and Abdallah, 1979). Where Lamming works from a conception of an organic link between a writer and his people that is expressed whether consciously or unconsciously in writing (Munro and Sander, 1972, 12), Ben Jelloun considers that the writer should "listen to what his people says and [...] transmit the fragments of its imagination" and asserts that his personal objective is "to testify" and give a voice to the exploited (Jay,

1983, 58). After publishing his first novel, he denied acting as a spokesperson but perhaps this attitude had changed by the time he came to write about immigrants (Ben Jelloun and Nissaboury, 1973, 27). This brings up the questions posed by Spivak of the appropriation of the subaltern's voice by other groups who render themselves transparent in their "concern for the politics of the oppressed" (Spivak, 1988, 292). Some critics of Chraïbi certainly considered that, in introducing the character of an intellectual in his novel, he had overshadowed the issue of the living conditions of immigrant workers (Coiplet, 1955).

All of these novelists carefully distinguish between their literary practice and political action, perhaps more so than Foucault and Deleuze, whom Spivak criticises. Lamming and Kateb, while they believe in the role and the responsibility of the artist in participating in the increase of freedom in society, consider that the writer's literary activities are distinct from the politician's (Munro and Sander, 1972, 13), and even from his own duties as citizen (Amina and Duflot, 1967). Boudjedra is particularly clear on this point, explaining that, while his novel may be more effective than a sociological study in undermining the myth of emigration for Algerians and the myths about immigrants for the French, the only solutions to the problems faced by the immigrants are political and economic (Boudjedra, 1975a), and adding that "literature is the opposite of action" (Ezine, 1975). For the most part, the novelists nonetheless have clear intentions at the level of discourse. The Maghribi writers very explicitly aim, at least in part, to be heard by the French public and to correct its views on post/colonial Maghribi immigrants (Prasteau, 1955; El Kortobi and Abdallah, 1979; Jay, 1983). Boudjedra is less explicit but very clear on the fact that the immigrants, who are illiterate are not his audience (Ezine, 1975). This sort of intentionality is far from obvious in the Caribbean novelists I study. But Lamming's novels explore the "colonial experience", which does not end with the formal end of colonisation and concerns both the colonised and the colonisers (Kent, 1992). His conception of literature

as having agency within society through the revelation of "the nature of people's relation to the social structures in which they operate", which results in a "sharpen[ing of] our awareness of the necessity for change", can apply equally to the English audience of his novels on immigration as to the Caribbean audience of his works on Caribbean societies around independence (Riwa, 1975, 102). Finally, while Selvon resisted political interpretations of his work, his attitude to "dialect", asserting the radical equality of creole and standard English, indicates a response and a challenge to English received ideas about the colonised (Selvon, 1963; Fabre, 1988). I hope to show in this dissertation that the novels by Maghribi and Caribbean writers about immigration to the imperial centre, although they cannot be considered to speak for the immigrants themselves, nevertheless bring valuable insights into this phenomenon through their thematic concerns, literary form and inflections.

Chapter 1 examines the writers' general presentation of the phenomenon of migration in dialogue with concepts from the social sciences. The notions of "pull" and "push" factors are used to categorise the reasons pushing the characters to leave home. The writers present the impulse of migration as governed by the colonial relation, both through the logic of uneven development and economic dependency that endures even after formal independence and through the fascination for the land of the coloniser, sometimes extending to a desire for assimilation, created by the colonialist ideology of the civilising mission. It then examines how Lamming and Kateb use the moment of the boat crossing in *The Emigrants* and *Le polygone étoilé* to articulate or suggest their visions of the nation, showing how these passages reflect on the damage created by the colonial ideology and on appropriate modes of cultural nationalism in response to this. The immigrants' arrival is first and foremost a discovery of the industrial city. Focusing on Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale...* and with reference to *La réclusion solitaire* and *Le polygone étoilé* as well as to *The Lonely Londoners*, *The Emigrants*, I analyse

how, in the context of the promise of economic prosperity and personal betterment, the metropolis city is contrasted, for the most part unfavourably, with the migrants' regions of origin. Some disillusion begins to emerge in the characters' encounters with the workplace, the anonymous lifestyle. The Maghribi novelists, in particular, emphasise the crushing character of the urban and factory environments and carry this into a critique of industrial modernity in general. Here, the example of *Les Boucs* is important as it shows the extreme of this position and some of its problems. This distinguishes the Maghribi from the Caribbean novelists, who, unlike them, do not position themselves as outside the domain of industrial modernity in order to critique it.

In chapter 2, the experience of living in the metropolis is further analysed, in particular the uses to which the novelists put the evocation of that experience. The depiction and criticism of the marginal position to which post/colonial immigrants are confined in France and Britain, through inadequate housing and racial violence, is the occasion for a response to the colonial discourse which has attracted them to Paris and London in the first place. In particular, the use of narrative point of view in Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* and Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale* constitutes a returned gaze on the coloniser's world, uncovering its infractions to the inflated image of the coloniser provided in imperial ideology. Along with Lamming's *Emigrants*, Ben Jelloun's *Réclusion solitaire* and especially Selvon's *Housing Lark*, these novels are also the occasion for the characters' voices to be heard and to denounce the racism and violence targeting Caribbean immigrants in Britain and Maghribi immigrants in France. But the consideration of gender complicates these postures. The novels' modes of response are gendered: with the exception of the later novels of Sam Selvon, women do not participate in this revisionary project. Furthermore, the representation of relationships between the immigrants and white women, undoubtedly intended to respond to the construction of the figure of the 'white woman' as inaccessible

under colonialism, are not as efficient as the devices of the reversed gaze and the interpellating narrative voice in challenging the colonial relation.

The pervasiveness of mental breakdown as a consequence of migration is the subject of chapter 3. Reflecting the statistical reality that, for a variety of reasons, migrants are more vulnerable to mental illness than the populations of the sending or receiving countries who do not migrate, the writers, in particular Lamming, Chraïbi and Ben Jelloun, nevertheless use this feature of mental breakdown for their own ends, to comment on the condition of the post/colonial immigrant. For Lamming and Chraïbi, it is a privileged means of expressing the conflicts aroused within the colonised by the confrontation between the internalised colonial propaganda and the reality faced in the metropolis. Their educated, assimilated characters in *The Emigrants* and *Les Boucs* crack under the pressure of discovering the ultimate untruth of the promise of colonial discourse. Using the work of Sass in *Madness and Modernism* (1992) , I make connections between the mental states depicted by Lamming and Chraïbi and the schizophrenic experience of dissociation. This is caused by the discrepancy between the characters' expectations, shaped by the seemingly inclusive promise of the civilising mission, and the reality of pervasive rejection. Ben Jelloun, on the other hands, sees mental breakdown as the last refuge of the immigrant workers who are trapped by the networks of power and economics in the neocolonial world and cannot, therefore, evade the inhuman treatment of meted out to them within the system of industrial capitalism. The unauthorised discourse of madness also enables the writers to put forward critiques of their home societies, a difficult endeavour when confrontation with the coloniser encourages anti-colonial unity.

Returning to the perspective of the social sciences, chapter 4 examines the treatment of community and settlement and of its opposite, return, in the novels. In a time when migration was conceived of as temporary, yet when populations were in fact in the process of settling in France and Britain, diaspora theory helps

to illuminate the writers' ambivalent attitudes to these issues. Contrary to the focus on immigrant communities in British multiculturalism and in the alarmist warnings of anti-immigration French politicians, the novels (in particular *The Emigrants*, *Les Boucs*, *The Lonely Londoners* and *La réclusion solitaire*) present fragile groups of immigrants that almost do not merit the name of community. Lamming, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun adhere to the privileging of return that is a logical part of anti-colonial nationalism. This privileging is implied through structural contrasts or through minor characters, but does not materialise in the actions of the characters: representations of return are rare and ambivalent in all the novels studied. Lamming, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun do not articulate this impossibility of return, which seems to emerge almost despite them. The reality of settlement is present in the novels in this difficulty of representing return and in various minor hints, but goes unacknowledged. The little-known novel, *L'homme qui enjamba la mer*, is revealing in this respect, as it raises the possibility of positive settlement and community formation only to close it off immediately. Selvon is the only writer who consciously and explicitly engages with the twin issues of return and settlement, acknowledging the ambivalence surrounding return and actively exploring the process of settlement and adaptation of Caribbean populations in Britain throughout his work on immigration.

Taking note of the novels' positioning as not only a representation of the immigrant experience but also as a denunciation of the treatment of post/colonial immigrants in the metropolis and a response to the coloniser's discourse about immigration, the fifth and final chapter examines the reception of these novels in France and Britain. A survey of reviews of English-language Caribbean writing and French-language North African writing, published in mainstream national British and French newspapers respectively, establishes the framework in which the writers under study here were received, then reviews of the novels of the corpus are analysed. This reception was varied, reflecting the range of critics'

attitudes to literature and politics. I examine claims of reductiveness made by previous scholars and consider French and British newspaper critics' attitudes to Maghribi and Caribbean literature in the context of empire and decolonisation. Although some critics took a reductive approach based on information-gathering or stereotyping, in the majority, French and British literary critics attended to Maghribi and Caribbean novels as literary texts. The novels were approached within the framework of European and American literature, including hierarchical distinctions between serious and popular literature. This led to a different kind of reductive approach, which ignored or downplayed Maghribi or Caribbean writers' literary experimentation and/or use of non-European aesthetic traditions, or treated them with condescension. It also partly influenced the closing off of the political import of the novels in the context of the end of empire. Exceptions were rare. In the case of the novels of immigration, Euro-American literary norms also prevailed in the critics' literary judgements, but preconceptions about immigration as an issue tended to overshadow the literary aspects of the novels.

Are the situations of Maghribi and West Indian workers travelling to their respective coloniser's metropolitan centre after World War II, as represented by their novelists, comparable? What similarities exist between the literary representations of this phenomenon in French-language Maghribi fiction and English-language Caribbean fiction, in terms of theme, approach, and literary technique? If an important common element between the two migrations is the overdetermination of capitalist economic relations by political, cultural and psychological factors linked to the colonial relation, to what extent does this appear in literary representations and is that an element of comparison between Maghribi and Caribbean novels on the subject?

Chapter 1

Departures, Journeys, Arrivals

1.1 Departures

In evoking their characters' setting off onto their lives as immigrants, Lamming, Chraïbi, Selvon, Kateb, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun set out the various reasons for their departures. The study of migration in geography and the social sciences has shown that migration is driven by a combination of factors which can be divided into "push" factors, or negative factors encouraging departure from the land of origin, and "pull" factors, or positive factors of attraction to the country of destination. They pertain in various degrees to the economic, political, cultural or psychological domains. The novelists studied here all put forward a sense of desperation, arising from the lack of opportunities for economic gain and social advancement in the Caribbean and the Maghrib, which functions as a push factor, and a sense of fascination with the influence and prestige of the chosen destination acting as a pull factor alongside the supposed economic prospects available there. The relations put in place by colonisation, in economic as well as cultural terms, are at the root of the causes of migration presented in the novels.

1.1.1 Desperation

Towards the beginning of the long sequence of passages on the immigrant experience in his experimental, fragmentary novel *Le polygone étoilé*, Kateb narrates a dramatic incident that suggests the reasons compelling so many men to cross the Mediterranean and try their luck in France. A small fragment in the style of a newspaper article explains that an old man working as a docker was killed in a scuffle during the distribution of "jetons de présence" ("attendance tokens") for the daily workers in the port of Algiers (40). There are six thousand dockers at the Algiers port but only a minority are full-time, unionized workers; the majority are casual hands paid by the day, and their uncertain situation is the source of the desperation leading to the scuffle that caused the old man's death. The next fragment presents Lakhdar, the immigrant character Kateb follows in this section of the novel. He has grabbed some of the tokens in the scuffle but cannot face cashing them in. Homeless since his exploitative boss fired him from his job as a barber, Lakhdar decides to travel clandestinely to France on the ship he is loading. A decade previously in 1955, Chraïbi had presented a young man who convinced his father to sell his last billy-goat to finance his emigration, already suggesting the widespread poverty in rural Algeria driving young men away. A decade later in 1975, Boudjedra would return to this theme, presenting an immigrant protagonist whose last cow has died on the arid land of his mountain village. Kateb's novel highlights the hopeless progress from mountain to colonial city to metropolitan capital in search of work: the Algerian immigrants compare notes: "Came via Algiers. Didn't find anything. Here? It's both better and worse" (1997, 57-58).

Sayad (2004) and Simon (2000) show how the economic structure implemented in Algeria under French colonialism since the nineteenth century led to emigration. The absence of an industrialisation programme for Algeria meant that the

labour market could not grow, thus depriving the growing rural "native" population of employment opportunities, even as it was forced off the land by the appropriation of collective lands by colonists. As the population was transformed into a rural proletariat, the increasing monetisation made villages more and more dependent on emigration to secure currency. Kateb had already evoked some tensions between Algerian "natives" and French Algerian farmers in his first novel, *Nedjma*; in 1976 Ben Jelloun would return to this theme when setting out his immigrant protagonists' reasons for coming to France. His narrator suggests that the modernisation and industrialisation of agriculture in Morocco had disempowered Moroccan peasants, as colonists monopolised fertile land and swindled them out of their water rights: "The water, all the water was diverted to the industrial entrepreneur's lands" (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 78). This was done with the support of colonial military institutions, so that the villagers were powerless to resist the process.

Simon et al. also explain that the lack of industrialisation in Algeria was accompanied by economic dependency. The colonist farmers depended on selling their produce on the French market for their livelihood but had to look to the metropolis for manufactured goods. Such a structure of dependency, where the economy of the colonies was predominantly agricultural, not industrialised, so that they exported raw materials to be processed in the metropolis and had to import manufactured goods from the metropolis, was a common feature of colonised societies. Lamming highlights just such a structure in the Caribbean context in the first part of *The Emigrants*. When the train that took them from the boat arrives at the outskirts of London, Lamming's West Indian migrants marvel at seeing the factories that produce many of the commodities they are used to buying in the islands:

> Never
> thought I would have see where
> those suspenders come from. [...]

> Tell Edna you see wid your own
> eyes where they mix up the lipstick
> she use an'she'll say you tellin'
> lies. (120)

Lamming's verse form juxtaposes fragments that render the hubbub of exclamations and the awe of discovering a large industrial city for the first time. A dawning awareness of the material consequences of their relationship with the centre of empire also transpires in the confusion of voices:

> Why they doan' make these
> things themselves back home?
> We ain't got the buildings, man (120)

The contrast between the London landscape and those they have known at home brings about the realisation that the islands are not industrialised. The situation of dependence is made clear, although the further realisations that the dearth of employment and opportunities in the islands arises from this lack, which results precisely from the dominant position of England as an industrial power that manufactures and sells the products consumed in the islands, are not explicated. In his collection of essays *The Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming would establish a parallel between this economic dependency and a cultural dependency, showing how the lack of publishing outlets in the Caribbean, but most importantly a widespread belief in British cultural superiority instilled by colonialism and its educational system, meant that Caribbean literature, like sugar, had to go through London before it would be accepted at home. This relates to the cultural and psychological factors in migration and will be discussed further below.

In the preceding sections taking place during the boat crossing, Lamming elaborates on the feeling of emptiness and desperation driving emigration. Each emigrant, in the banter on the boat, adds his piece of evidence attesting to the fact that any man who can, tries to leave the Caribbean islands. "They were taking flight from something they no longer wanted. It was their last chance to recover what might have been wasted" (37). What Lamming describes as waste

is the pronounced lack of opportunity to progress in life, whether economically or socially. In the Anglophone Caribbean, emigration had been a means for the lower classes to improve their economic situation and gain social status ever since Emancipation, as the end of slavery had not provided avenues of upward social mobility for former slaves (Thomas-Hope, 1999). Lamming's immigrants are no different: "Every man want a better break, says one. 'Tis why every goddam one o' we here on this boat tonight" (37). One of the passengers, resisting the others' confidence in their ability to achieve this "better break", gives another reason for the continuing "waste" prevalent in the Caribbean: men cannot plan their lives and progress as they would like "'cause there's always people an' powers to stop you", a strong hint at the colonial situation and prevalent racially-based hierarchies in West Indian societies inherited from slavery (63). This sceptical "Strange Man" pushes his critique further, arguing that the successful, educated classes in Port-of-Spain suffer the same feeling of emptiness and aimlessness as the uneducated men who go to England in search of work and qualifications. In a colonial society, it is suggested, "you end up where you begin, nowhere" (63-4). These educated classes were trained, through their education, to consider the metropolis as superior in cultural terms and to identify with its position. The resulting feeling that the colony is unimportant increases the sense of unease that makes West Indians wish to leave their home. This sense of emptiness is reflected also in the work of Samuel Selvon. His novels set in London rarely evoke the reasons leading West Indians to emigrate to England, but his second novel, *An Island Is a World* conveys the sense that life in Trinidad lacks coherence. Towards the end of the novel the scene of Indo-Trinidadians preparing to emigrate or "return" to India gives rise to the sense that the lack of cohesion in Trinidadian society leads to stagnation. One of the main characters, Foster, comments on the separateness of the ethnic groups in the country and doubts his friend's vision of a community of Trinidadians transcending ethnic divisions: he knows himself to be

such a person, "brought up [...] as a member of a cosmopolitan community who recognized no creed or race" but this only translates as a feeling of homelessness (1955, 257). The two main characters in the novel seek to escape from this sense of incoherence by emigrating to the U.S.A. and to England.

The Caribbean and Maghribi novelists representing migration to the metropolis in the post-war period thus established a relation between the impulse to leave and the economic and social structures, geared to the advantage of the metropolis, established by colonialism.

1970s works

The later works on immigration, in their consideration of "push" factors, took into account the changes brought about by decolonisation but continued to root the phenomenon in the previous experience of colonisation and set out continuities between the colonial and post-colonial periods, in particular the emergence of economic neocolonialism and the failure of the progressive project under post-independence regimes. In his play *Mohammed prends ta valise*, devised with an Algerian theatre company and toured in France in 1972 and 1975, Kateb was more explicit about the grounding of immigration in the logic of colonial domination than he had been in his novel.[1] This is a consequence of the difference in media: by then Kateb was working in a popular, satirical mode of theatre in which the characters are figures for their economic and social roles. The Algerian elite provides the main articulation between colonialism and continued emigration in the play. At independence, the "native" bourgeoisie and religious leaders who have been exploiting peasants under the colonial system cling to their association with French industrial leaders, who are intent on maintaining their hold on the country's resources. The continuity in the situation of the working class

[1]The company, L'Action culturelle des travailleurs algériens, was attached to the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs rather than the Ministry for Culture. It later became the Théâtre de la Mer, and was based in Algiers.

is expressed visually: the Algerian bourgeoisie merely discard clothes bearing the French colours and put on identical clothing bearing the colours of the Algerian flag. Ben Jelloun also criticised the joint exploitation of immigrant workers by Maghribi and French elites. In the non-fiction book which presents the sociopsychological work on which his novel of the immigrant experience was based, Ben Jelloun argues that "the dominant classes, in France as in the Maghrib, institutionalise immigration. [...] This process does not aim to the improvement of a degraded situation" for the migrants (13), so that

> the worker who emigrates is in a political situation that opposes him both to the dominant class in his own country, and to the Western dominant class that buys his labour power from him. (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 53)

For Ben Jelloun the phenomenon of immigration is based on the exploitation of human labour, with no consideration of economic, social or political progress. In the novel, set twenty years after Moroccan independence, the narrator makes the link with colonialism by presenting immigration as just another phase in a history of exploitation in which his people have been dispossessed first of land, then of their bodies: sent to war, then to work. He addresses the (French) reader to explain this:

> My country, your bosses know it well. They cultivated its soil, the best, the most fertile [...] The sun ploughed our bodies. [...] Dispossessed of our land, they also wanted us dispossessed of our bodies, of our life. There was the war. [...] History returned to the books and we entered a new distress. The journey with a suitcase as our only piece of luggage. (49-50)

The poverty of his native region is a result of the historical situation of colonialism, but the post-colonial period has not brought improvements. For Ben Jelloun, the colonial and post-colonial periods are both characterised by a pattern of exploitation that is a consequence of Western domination. At each stage of twentieth-century history, the rural population of Morocco is crushed and

damaged by technological modernity, whether through intensive agriculture, industrialised war, or factory work.

The Maghribi writers, then, show the enduring influence of the economic structures put in place under colonialism in driving people to emigrate into the 1970s. The 1970s novels of Lamming and Selvon, by contrast, do not deal with new arrivals but present characters who have been living in England for a long time and no longer engage much with their reasons for emigrating. This divergence may reflect the earlier closing of Britain's borders: tough legislation to curb immigration by non-white populations was introduced in 1962 in Britain, whereas France did not close its borders until after the 1973 oil crisis.[2] There is nevertheless a parallel between Lamming's and Ben Jelloun's hints at the oppressive character of post-independence regimes. Lamming criticised the wasted opportunity of implementing a progressive agenda after independence in *Water With Berries*, where his protagonist is in exile in Britain because he is a dissident in his home country, fictional San Cristobal. Likewise, one of Ben Jelloun's characters, a student who tried to foster political change at home, indicates that repression by the post-colonial regime is another motive for emigration: this regime tortures dissidents and oppresses the poor just as colonialism had done.

1.1.2 Attractions of the metropolis

In presenting the situation in the countries of origin which drove immigrants away, the novelists therefore address the economic structures created by colonialism as well as a vaguer sense of emptiness and frustration born of living in a colonial society. Some of the novelists briefly evoke economic pull factors as attracting the immigrants to Paris and London. In the post-war drive to reconstruction, both France and Britain relied on immigration as a source of labour. France organised

[2]Boudjedra's novel, published in 1975, is in fact in some ways a reaction to this event and the spate of incidents of racist violence it triggered, leading to Algeria's moratorium on emigration in September 1973 (Abdallah, 2000).

the recruitment of immigrant and colonial labour through the Office National d'Immigration and French heavy industries organised recruitment drives in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia until the 1970s (Lassalle, 1998; Safir, 1999; Simon, 2000, 2002; Lapeyronnie, 1993; Atouf, 2003). In Britain, some public service providers such as London Transport carried out recruitment campaigns in the Caribbean in the 1950s, but most migrants made the journey independently. Nevertheless, migration figures were correlated with the fluctuations in the British labour market (Peach, 1968; Freeman, 1979; Nanton, 1997). Chraïbi and Boudjedra, along with Selvon in his short story "Working the Transport", briefly refer to such campaigns, which were partly responsible for the rise of a view of France and Britain as lands of plenty where work was easily available and a hard-working person might establish a situation for him- or (less often) herself. (Selvon, 1987c). But the "mirage of the overseas" that attracted immigrants from colonial territories rested on other, older effects of the colonial relation (Boudjedra, 1986, 187). The novelists, in particular Lamming and Chraïbi, gave more importance to psychological and cultural factors consequent on the colonial relation as driving forces in the experience of migration.

The civilising mission

The economic processes of colonisation were accompanied by an ideological project related to a European vision of civilisation that was to be spread to the less advanced peoples coming under European rule. Imperial powers used the ideology of the civilising mission to justify to other powers their territorial conquests and the domination of non-European peoples, but also to convince the colonised of the value of the system of colonialism. As Chafer and Sackur note, "assimilation, the French *mission civilisatrice*, provided a powerful ideology for colonial subjects as well as for French citizens. [...] The implicit message [was] that French civilisation was both superior and attainable" (Chafer and Sackur, 2002,

7-8). Other imperial systems adopted the notion of a civilising mission after the French, with modifications. While the French notion of the civilising mission rested on the universalist aspirations of the Revolutionary and Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, the British developed in India the notion of the white man's burden, that is, a "moral duty" of "paternalistic" guidance (Young, 2001, 38). Whether a system of direct rule (as in the West Indies and Algeria) or indirect rule (as in Morocco and Tunisia) prevailed, the French and the British respectively held their cultures up as the pinnacle of human achievement, and offered them as ideals to be striven for. The colonial relation was therefore partly based on the alienation of the colonised through the systematic devaluation of "native" cultures and practices and the indoctrination of an elite of the colonised into the values of the coloniser, including the centrality of London and Paris and their technological and intellectual achievements. Because of the destruction of Amerindian societies and the deliberate dismantling of African cultures in English plantation colonies, there was no social system in the West Indies equivalent to the "native" culture and social framework of the Maghrib, which could present an alternative to the coloniser's civilisation. Nevertheless, a similar pattern obtained: colonial education established "England's supremacy in taste and judgement" and the popular practices derived from the surviving traditions of the African and Asian populations brought to the West Indies for labour were stigmatised (Lamming, 2005, 27). As Lamming contends in *The Pleasures of Exile*, the West Indian was therefore trained to disregard any cultural production emanating from home. Civilisation remained, however, out of reach for the colonised. As Young (2001) shows, the development in France and Britain in the nineteenth century of racialist theories of hierarchies of ability between human peoples gave the lie to the imperial offer of intellectual and cultural improvement to the colonised (40). The novels of migration studied here critique not only the economic factors linking colonialism and migration but also the ideological

underpinnings of colonialism which provoked a fascination with the metropolis, making it a privileged destination for emigrants. Lamming and Chraïbi, in different ways, portray the internalisation of this ideology by the educated Maghribi and West Indian and expose its workings to provoke an awakening to a lucid condition, freed from the illusion that the colonised could belong to the culture of the coloniser.

Critiques of colonial alienation by Chraïbi and Lamming

The complex temporal structure of Chraïbi's novel, *Les Boucs*, builds up to a devastatingly ironic conclusion indicting the deception at the heart of the colonial civilising project. It opens on a desperate moment, shot through with violence and tension, highlighting the dire poverty of the main character, Waldik: his son is in the hospital with meningitis, and he is burning the few remaining pieces of furniture in the house (even his baby's cot) for heating. This situation is the culmination of eight years of an errant life from unemployment bureaux to building sites and the coal mines of Northern France, punctuated by prison sentences. Towards the centre of the novel, flashbacks show how Waldik's hopes for prosperity were immediately dashed upon arrival: the administration signs him up on unemployment benefit instead of giving him a job. Over the course of the novel, he becomes an alcoholic and his French common-law wife throws him out. He lives for a while on an abandoned plot of urban wasteland with twenty-two other immigrants vegetating outside society and, although he meets a generous woman at the end of the novel, there is no indication that the situation of the other immigrants in the novel 1will change. The final chapter of the novel returns to the moment when it all began. As a young shoe-shine boy in Algeria, Waldik meets a priest who contrasts his limited prospects to the educational opportunities available in France. This places Waldik's bleak situation in the context of the ideology of colonialism. The boy subsequently convinces his already poor father

to sell the family's last goat to fund his emigration. The priest's self-satisfied comment, "I have saved a soul" (182), which closes the novel, shows the tragic short-sightedness and complacency inherent in the assimilatory project of the *mission civilisatrice*, as the values the priest transmits are misapplied to a situation he does not understand. The novel up until that point has shown repeatedly that the very self-confidence and arrogance that allow the French to consider their culture universal and attempt to lift the "natives" to its level, also denies that the colonised can be civilised, thus denying access to the protection that had been offered. The priest's satisfaction as the project of emigration ripens in the child's mind is cancelled out by the violence and hardship we already know will result from this conversation. Waldik's brief return to Algeria is marked only by his guilt in the face of his father's frailty, signalling the failure of the project of emigration on both the economic and the intellectual level. Chraïbi's is one of the starkest statements of the terrible consequences of colonial alienation whereby the ideology of the civilising mission produces in the colonised the desire to travel to the centre of empire based on the mistaken impression that they, as colonial subjects, belong there.

Lamming vividly depicted such misplaced feelings of belonging, instilled in the colonised by a colonial education based on the ideology of the civilising mission, when he used the image of discovering, sleeping on one's sofa, a stranger who maintains that he belongs there. "The sleeper on the sofa was absolutely sure through imperial tutelage that he was at home", Lamming tells us (1998, 4). His two novels of immigration analyse this condition through the characters of Dickson, Miss Bis and Teeton, and condemned the lack of awareness in these three characters. In *The Emigrants*, Dickson, a Barbadian teacher intending to pursue his education in Britain and Miss Bis, a daughter of the Trinidadian coloured middle-class, both court English society and disdain contact with other West Indians. Their attitude does not, however, lead to success. By the end of

the novel, as we will see in more detail in chapter 3, Dickson presents a pathetic figure, disoriented and homeless. Miss Bis fares little better. She changes her name, is degraded by her association with depraved English women, and finally falls victim to her "misplaced affection", as she and the Englishman who had left her at the altar in Trinidad marry without recognising each other (Scott, 2002, 116). This situation symbolises the dead end and repetition that result from not overcoming the illusion of the superiority of the coloniser's culture.

Lamming's presentation of the relationship between the Caribbean painter Teeton and his English landlady in *Water With Berries* (1971) is an eloquent allegory of the alienation he deplores. The landlady is initially presented through Teeton's consciousness. As he prepares to return to San Cristobal to participate in undercover political activities, he recalls the gradual development of a relationship governed by ritual, in which the Old Dowager, as she is called throughout the novel, has made herself indispensable. He contrasts the welcome he has found in her house with the difficulty of finding lodgings in the first year of his sojourn in England, just as the affection that binds them contrasts with the undercurrent of potential hostility in interactions with other English characters. But Teeton's admiring description of the Old Dowager as caring and generous gives unwitting indications that the relationship is somewhat stifling. The ritual that governs their interaction relies on discretion and silence and much of his behaviour is now geared to preserving the delicate balance they have achieved, which prevents him from announcing his projected departure. Further, when he notices the "instinct of authority" and "habit of command" in her countenance, Teeton seems unaware that these apply also to him, through this ritualised interaction (39). His description of his sense of belonging to the house, replete with contradictions, is the site of Lamming's allegory of the alienation produced by the civilising mission:

> He watched her and wondered what miracle of affection had turned this room into a home. [...] It could be like a fortress in the morning: harsh and cold with neglect until the Old Dowager came in and took it

> over. [...] He had almost come to think of the room as a separate and independent province of the house. The house was the Old Dowager's; but the room was his; and house and room were in some way their joint creation; some unspoken partnership of interests they had never spoken about. (14)

He considers his feeling of belonging to the house as "their joint creation", even as he acknowledges that it is only her actions that make his room into a home. In the very act of declaring his autonomy through his mastery of the room, he signals its lack of independence: he is oblivious to the control the Old Dowager exerts over it. His reluctance to announce his approaching departure for his home island, which punctuates the novel and results from his concern not to hurt her feelings, further demonstrates the limitations which their relationship and his subject-position (which locates him in her debt) impose on him.

Lamming described the Old Dowager in a 1973 interview as an older, frailer version of Prospero, where Prospero is a figure for colonialism as violent and exploitative, but justified through scientific knowledge (Kent, 1992, 99). Through the characters of the Old Dowager, her dead husband (Prospero) and her brother-in-law Fernando, Lamming exposes the continuity between the brutality of the coloniser and the ideology of paternalism. Fernando disapproves of his late brother's violent colonial enterprise in San Cristobal, but cannot stand the friendship between the Old Dowager and Teeton; yet the novel shows that this friendship has sinister implications for Teeton. When the novel presents the Old Dowager's point of view, it become apparent that her relationship to Teeton is governed by a sense of responsibility and a wish to protect him reminiscent of the notion of the white man's burden. This is especially discernible in her initial act of deceit in pretending, when Teeton comes to her house by mistake, that they have met before: "it was an act of protection; a generous intervention between him and his embarrassment" (Lamming, 1971, 38). The implication is that Teeton does not know what is best for himself and she must guide him. The sense of duty, ostensibly contrasted with exploitative relations, veils the fact that the relation

works against Teeton. The Old Dowager's sense of responsibility is subject to her own interests and in the major event of the novel her main motivation is the preservation of her good name, not his protection. When they find the corpse of his friend's wife, Nicole, a suicide, in Teeton's room, she whisks her tenant into hiding, interfering with his imminent departure for San Cristobal. In Helen Tiffin's analysis, she drags him away from his future in the Caribbean to confront him with their common past (1979, 49). Rather than a later or weaker figure of Prospero, she can be seen as his contemporary. Her attitude represents the liberal veil concealing "the taking away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves" (Conrad, 1983, 31-32), so that the coloniser will not have to be confronted with his derogation to the principles of humanism he advocates.

The difference between the Old Dowager and her late husband's open violence may also be Lamming's way of characterising the shift operated at decolonisation between overt political and military domination and the covert domination through trade and diplomacy characteristic of the neocolonial period. If this is so, Lamming's insistence on characterising her as a version of Prospero, which suggests an unchanging core enduring in different phases of colonial domination and imperialism, is problematic. The forms and modes of colonialism and imperialism have varied widely according to the colonising nation and the time and place of conquest, and might change over time in a single territory, even when it did not change hands. It also stresses the importance of European rationality and search for knowledge at the expense of the profit motive, which Eric Williams has shown was at the basis of the transition from mercantilism to capitalism in the institution of slavery in the West Indies, and at the expense of competition among Western powers (Williams, 1964). Nair (1996) and Simoes da Silva (2000) have both noted the homogenising tendencies involved in Lamming's use of the Prospero figure. Nevertheless, *Water With Berries* suggests the continuation of a

form of domination characterised by hegemony in the Gramscian sense, in which subordinate groups consent to the dominance of the elite because of the latter's capacity to demonstrate leadership (Gramsci, 1998). San Cristobal is nominally independent, and Prospero has disappeared. Yet Teeton's short-sightedness in his assessment of his place in the Old Dowager's house is a testament to her ability to inspire him. It is an allegorical restatement of the attitude Lamming had already identified in Dickson, suggesting that independence has not brought a resolution to the colonial relation. While Ben Jelloun suggests a history of coercion which is played out first in the Maghrib through colonisation and later in France through immigration, Lamming and Chraïbi present the psychological workings underpinning this coercion and their influence in the phenomenon of migration. We will see in chapters 3 and 4 how Lamming's and Chraïbi's characters react to the brutal awakening to their situation of alienation and the respective paths they follow.

The main Maghribi and West Indian novels depicting migration to the imperial metropolis establish clearly that migration from the Caribbean to Britain and from North Africa to France has its roots in the colonial relation and the continued domination of Europe in the two decades following formal independence. The material and economic aspects of the colonial relation are acknowledged but the ideological constructs supporting the colonial enterprise are shown to be a strong determinant in the decision to emigrate and the choice of destination.

1.2 Journeys: Sea-crossings in Lamming and Kateb

The phenomenon of migration to the metropolis is not only a consequence of the colonial relation but is also implicated in the process of decolonisation. Lamming's *The Emigrants* and Kateb's *Le polygone étoilé* are the only novels in the

corpus to present the sea-crossing.[3] In both novels, these moments further analyse the phenomenon of alienation produced by the colonial propaganda of the civilising mission, as the boat journey across to Europe is the occasion to suggest some divisions among the Maghribi and the West Indians. Symptomatically and symbolically, the fact that these interrogations of division take place on ships alerts us to Lamming's and Kateb's ultimate advocacy of greater union in their respective national visions: Lamming argues for a regional perspective based on Caribbean specificity, while Kateb condemns the exclusionary definitions of the Algerian nation current in the post-independence period. These moments form a part of each writer's vision of the cultural work that must accompany political developments towards decolonisation.

1.2.1 Divisions

When Lakhdar travels to France in *Le polygone étoilé* he is joined by another clandestine emigrant called Brahim. The text cryptically remarks on the languages in which they converse during the crossing: French and standard Arabic. It is suggested that these "vestiges of Qur'anic school and primary-school-leaving exams" ("vestiges d'école coranique et de certificat d'études primaires", 33) mark the stowaways' distance from the rest of the passengers: "the two jargons [...] in which they jabbered [...] emphasized their bemused tête-à-tête [...]//far from the people/crowded on the deck" ("les deux jargons [...] qu'ils baragouinaient [...] rehauss[aient] leur effaré tête à tête [...]//loin du peuple/entassé sur le pont", 33). This distance is explicated in a precursor text where these languages are mocked as "derisory marks of aristocracy" and it is specified that the crowd is illiterate, which entails speaking in dialectal Arabic or Tamazight (Kateb, 1957, 593). The stowaways' educated speech separates them from the mass of the

[3]Boudjedra's novel is wholly concerned with an immigrant's journey, but does not present a sea-crossing and focuses on the last leg of this journey, inside the metropolis. It is therefore appropriate to discuss it as an extended treatment of the moment of arrival in the next section.

ordinary people of Algeria, just as education and class divide the travellers on Lamming's boat in *The Emigrants*.

Divisions among the colonised are treated elliptically by Kateb, whereas Lamming dwells on these processes at length in the first part of his novel. The discussions among the "las' class" passengers who share a cramped dormitory are the occasion to set out various causes for fragmentation in the Caribbean (Lamming, 1980, 46). Rivalries between big and small islands are foregrounded until the Governor, who has been to England before, harshly dismisses the dispute with the exclamation: "the whole blasted lot o' you is small islanders" (41). The group discussions on the boat also crystallise differences in class and education. The group consists of lower-class immigrants while Collis, Dickson and Miss Bis, who are middle-class and educated, do not join it. Collis would like to but feels constrained by the notion of class differences—he is afraid the men will reject him because of it. Miss Bis and Dickson refuse to join the lower-class passengers because, as we have seen, they both aspire to socialise with the English. This evinces their class and cultural prejudice as well as the ostensible motives provided by the narrator: Dickson's aspirations to further his education and Miss Bis's flight from a scandal. They are both victims of the sort of alienation produced by the colonial ideology of the civilising mission, as we have seen.

Kateb does not elaborate on his observations on the various classes of emigrants on the boat in *Le polygone étoilé*, but some of Lakhdar's later encounters with other Algerian immigrants reinforce the feeling of division. The separation between the intellectual and the people is restated when Lakhdar's colleagues on a building site offer to do his work in exchange for his letter-writing services because he is too tired and hungry to work properly and proves clumsy. He feels guilty when they insist on paying him: "I refuse. So they stuff me with coffee", he tells a friend (31). A Saturday night dance in France highlights other rifts. Lakhdar realises that the dance is free of charge and enters in order to sit on the

chairs and sleep, as he is homeless. He supposes that a nearby group of Algerians who are staying away from the dance "take [him] for someone privileged, a traitor" ("[le] prennent pour un privilégié, un traître", 51). This mixing with the mainstream population of course has far starker implications in the Algerian context than in the Caribbean. The other immigrants refuse on principle to mix with the French because of the war of liberation at home. They are not merely rejecting a misguided aspiration of the kind that Lamming criticises in Dickson and Miss Bis: in the context of the bitter struggle in Algeria, appearing to socialise with the French can be seen as treason in a concrete sense. The word "traitor" used here reminds the reader that the other immigrants might suppose that Lakhdar is an *harki*, one who enrolled in the French army and participated in the violent repression of the independence movement.

1.2.2 An implicit vision of the nation

The sea-crossing scenes are therefore matrixes for the articulation of various dividing lines among the colonised. Through this, Lamming and Kateb introduce their conceptions of the nation. Lamming uses the boat journey not only to expose divisions but also to establish the common condition of West Indian emigrants. He has explained the role of emigration as a crucible for the formation of a Caribbean rather than an insular identity: "Most of us were not West Indians until the London experience" (Phillips, 1997, 14). Lamming's view of the nation is pan-Caribbean and regional, which led him in novels after *The Emigrants* to figure the Caribbean through a composite, fictional island, San Cristobal. He repeatedly deplored the excessive interest among Caribbean writers for centres of culture outside the Caribbean at the expense of dialogue between the different islands and linguistic areas within the Caribbean (1992b; 1992a) and, while still living in Trinidad in the late 1940s, had begun advocating recognition of a Caribbean specificity going beyond insular traits, as well as the notion that

Caribbean peoples should organise on a regional level (Scott, 2002). In *The Emigrants*, the rivalries that emerge during discussions on the boat serve to highlight the discovery that, despite originating from different islands and different classes, all of the West Indian emigrants are engaged in a similar project: flight from the blocked situation of a colonised territory, as we have seen. Higgins, who is emigrating in order to train as a cook, shows a reluctant Dickson that their situations are similar because they are both looking to England for qualifications; Collis's reflections spell out for the reader that this similitude extends across class differences: the group of men talking "seemed more like the exposure of a situation which these people constituted, and he felt that in many respects it was his situation too" (37).

Kateb also discretely highlights the representative character of Lakhdar's situation in the very scenes describing divisions. Despite their hostility, seeing the group loitering on the outskirts of the Saturday dance brings about for Lakhdar a realisation of the common situation of Algerians in France, despite divisions. "A quoi pensent-ils ? [...] Au prix du quintal de blé à Tizi-Ouzou ? Misère, c'est vrai qu'on est tous partis !" ("What are they thinking about? [...] The price of a quintal of wheat in Tizi Ouzou? Oh Lord, it's true that we have all left!" 51). Kateb's novel, after suggesting a common condition in Algeria through the plight of the emigrants, also criticises divisions in the nation, in particular those created by the new regime's misguided insistence on cultural purity and religion at the expense of social progress. Several fragments of the novel take place in what seems to be a prison-camp in Algeria that occasionally figures the maquis where Algerians trained for the resistance against the French, or a camp where Algerian rebels are imprisoned by the French. But towards the centre of the novel it takes the form of a building site where the tools are kept under lock and key so the eager workers cannot work; "prayers, the pilgrimage and the Ramadhan" are the "only approved sources of entertainment" ("seules distractions réglementaires");

and the blueprints are controlled by foreigners (97). These passages condemn the post-independence regime's continued links with the former coloniser and the Arabisation policy that excludes and oppresses certain sections of the Algerian people. More dangerous than the "fratricide rage", the "old tyranny regained its footing [...] under the national garb", the narrator warns (140). Not only would "Arab and Muslim Algeria [relay] French Algeria to pacify Berberia" 99), but the former coloniser would retain a dominant position through the collaboration programme whereby most management posts in industry were held by French nationals.[4] The interrupted building works figure the failure of the project of an Algeria that would promote social progress and individual freedoms and embrace its multiple components in the way that the protean Savage Woman, who is comprised of all the various feminine figures of the novel, takes care of her many sons as a she-wolf would "her litter" (149). Kateb and Lamming thus articulate, in opposition to the divisions they describe and deplore, visions of the nation that oppose the insular or exclusionary tendencies they identify in the movement to decolonisation.

1.2.3 The folk

In *Le polygone étoilé*, the passage on the boat must also be related to the final sections of the novel dealing with the author's own education and his relationship to language. These fragments trace his separation from his mother tongue and his mother's culture and his fall "into the jaws of the lion" of French language and culture ("dans la gueule du loup", 181). Before describing the estrangement, Kateb elaborates on the complex play in his childhood home between classical Arabic literature, incarnated by his father, and the witty oral tradition of dialectal Arabic on which his mother drew. This makes his transition to the realm of French schooling correspondingly poignant, since it signifies not only the little

[4]What Kateb refers to as "La Berbérie" is the Tamazight-speaking mountainous regions of Algeria.

boy's departure from the feminine world of his mother, which every man must undergo, but also her silencing. She resigns herself to this "as if the schoolchild's small hand made it her duty, since he was her son, to impose on herself the straitjacket of silence for him" ("comme si la petite main de l'écolier lui faisait un devoir, puisqu'il était son fils, de s'imposer pour lui la camisole du silence", 181). Kateb also candidly admits to his infatuation with his French schoolteacher and his "stupid pride" when his mother surrenders, asks him to teach her French, and sits silently nearby while he studies (181). This passage evokes the seductiveness of colonial education and the same sort of alienation that makes Dickson and Miss Bis avoid West Indians and seek to socialise with the English in Lamming's novel. The main division apparent in the moments of sea crossing in both novels, then, is that between the intellectual and the people. The novelists show how colonial education leads to the neglect of the people's wisdom, speech and culture. For both writers, this neglect of the traditional or folk sensibility is one of the areas the writer must work to redress.

This attitude stems from both their anti-colonial projects and a Marxist approach to art and the role of the artist. The authors' denunciation of the alienation produced by the colonial propaganda of the civilising mission leads them to value those practices and cultures most distant from the coloniser's culture, the very practices disparaged, dismissed, and ignored in the framework of European literate and technological civilisation. Lamming articulated this view in "The Occasion for Speaking," describing the "myth [...] of England's supremacy in taste and judgement", which entails disregard for the very possibility that West Indians could produce art, whereas the West Indies had been formed by the mixing of the "peasant" world of Africa, India and China and their encounter with the New World (Lamming, 2005, 27 and 36). In 1960, Lamming considered it the West Indian writers' greatest achievement that they had given a place to

that peasant world in literature, despite the initial separation from that component of Caribbean society effected by their "middle-class Western culture", a product of colonial education (38). As Rohlehr (1988) has argued, Lamming's claim that Caribbean novelists had "restored" this peasant world to its "original status of personality" (39) was exaggerated: the disadvantaged population of the Caribbean had produced autonomous social movements that had achieved some degree of social progress without the help of novelists. Despite this, West Indian novelists' placing of non-Western elements of popular culture and practices at the centre of a literature that was naming Caribbean societies from within for the first time is a contribution, as Meek puts it, to the "focusing and concentrating [of] the rays of popular struggle" (160). Kateb also felt that popular practices should be central, explaining that the source of his artistic inspiration resided in his encounter with the people. During his stay in prison for participating in the anti-colonial demonstrations at Sétif in 1945, Kateb realised that "the ferment of literature resided" in the ordinary Algerian people he had met in prison, not in the French poetic tradition of Baudelaire and Rimbaud he had been reading until then (Djaider and Nekkouri, 1975, 8). Like Lamming, he felt that the proper approach for Algerian literature was a concern for ordinary people rather than an attempted inscription into the tradition of the coloniser's literature, however admirable.

At the same time, the Marxist or Socialist outlook driven by the aspiration to a society without classes also dictates Kateb's and Lamming's increased valuation of popular cultures and practices. Both writers had Marxist convictions, although they maintained an attitude of independence from organised Socialist parties.[5] For Kateb and Lamming, the writer and the artist have their place

[5]Kateb, while he remained a sincere Communist throughout his life and admired Stalin and Ho Chi Minh, never ceased to advocate free speech and liberty; he criticised the tendency of Communist regimes to "leave the benefit of freedom to capitalism" (Prasteau, 1967; see also Amina and Duflot, 1967). Lamming, for his part, criticised the treatment of intellectuals in the Soviet Union (Meeks, 2007).

in the process of revolution, liberation and social progress alongside other social categories (Godard, 1975; Munro and Sander, 1972). Kateb considered that the work of the poet complements the work of the militant or political activist through his function as "taboo-breaker", which works towards increased freedom by challenging the audience to think (Djaider and Nekkouri, 1975, 9). He argued that if the writer or the intellectual does not speak out, he "does not exist anymore" (Negrez, 1975, 41; see also Djeghloul, 1992). It is possible to counter that in writing novels Kateb and Yacine were still adhering to the strictures of European culture and were still using the resources of their country for marketing in the metropolis (Edmondson, 1999, chapter 3). Edmondson has shown that Lamming, among others, took on the stance of the British nineteenth-century man of culture in his approach to his work (chapter 2). Both writers were aware of these contradictions and gave up writing novels in the 1970s to work in media they felt would be closer to the people. Lamming became involved in the trade union movement in the Caribbean and became a public speaker (selected speeches are collected in Andayie and Drayton, 1992). Kateb became frustrated in the late 1960s with the productions of his plays in Algeria because these were only available in French and in literary Arabic, two languages that did not reach the people according to him (Arnaud, 1986). He considered classical Arabic to be lifeless and inadequate for representing current life, whereas spoken Arabic, with its treasures of proverbs, traditional tales and word play constituted the appropriate medium to address the people (Amina and Duflot, 1967; Mokhtari, 1972; Djaider and Nekkouri, 1975). His work after 1970 focused on plays devised in spoken Arabic with the Théâtre de la Mer, a theatre company based in the outskirts of Algiers. For Kateb and Lamming, then, ordinary people and traditional popular culture must be the basis, the inspiration and the main target for the artist's work. The seeds of the later developments in the two writers' careers were present in the scenes of awakening to the divided state of Algeria and the

Caribbean during the journey to Europe in *The Emigrants* and *Le polygone étoilé*. For Lamming, the emigration of the colonised West Indian to the metropolis is central to the process of overcoming an insular conception of his island home. It is also essential to the shedding of illusions about the superiority of the coloniser and, as such, a vital step in the process of decolonisation at the individual and cultural level.

1.3 Arrivals: Encounter with the industrial city

1.3.1 Home vs. the metropolis

The migrants' arrival in France and Britain marks the moment of confrontation with the idealised image of the metropolis projected through ideology of the civilising mission. The encounter with urban, industrial modernity, a product of the technologically advanced civilisations of Europe, and the site of promised prosperity and betterment, comes as a shock to the characters in all of the novels concerned with it. Lamming, Selvon, Chraïbi, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun all establish an opposition between the country of their home and the metropolitan setting, whether in terms of landscape and setting or in terms of the character of social interactions.

Anonymity vs. community

The writers make full use of the traditional opposition between city and country as moral landscapes in their novels. The sociologist Georg Simmel argued in 1903 that interpersonal relationships in cities are more distant, less based on emotion and personal acquaintance, in short, more "matter-of-fact" than in smaller towns and in the country. He theorized this as a consequence of the conjunction of the money economy and the over-stimulation of senses produced by city living because of noise, pace and promiscuity (Simmel, 1997, 176). Chraïbi and Selvon

both show the confrontation between freshly arrived immigrants and the "blasé" attitude which underpins relations in the urban, metropolitan setting. According to Simmel, this indifference results from the levelling power of money, which transforms qualitative assessments into quantitative ones (Simmel, 1997, 178). The Moroccan and Tridiadian writers give different explanations. When Chraïbi's protagonist Waldik is finally admitted into the employment officer's office upon arrival in France, the latter looks at the number plate rather than at him and seems to see Waldik only as one more North African wretch coming to France. In a very concrete way, Waldik's first encounter with the metropolis results in his being reduced to a number. Similarly, Selvon's Galahad soon learns from his mentor Moses that the first thing the English employment bureau staff see when they meet him is the colour of his skin, not his qualifications. Like Waldik, he will not be seen as an individual.

Caribbean and Maghribi writers alike highlight the anonymity and loneliness of life in the metropolis. Moses warns the overconfident Galahad that "fellars don't see one another for years here" in London (Selvon, 1985, 43). On his first day, Galahad almost gets lost as soon as he sets out, and his fear of being lost is compounded by the realisation that no one around him cares: the narrator leaves us in no doubt that none of the passersby are "bothering with what going on in his mind" (42). Boudjedra's anonymous immigrant faces a similar situation. The subterranean, crowded metro space, "driving [all the passengers] to an aggressive alertness" ("les acculant à un qui-vive hargneux"), causes everyone to become "crazed and lost, sad [...] and recalcitrant" ("hagards et désemparés, tristes [...] et récalcitrants", 120-1). Lost in an uncaring environment he cannot decipher, the newcomer longingly remembers social relations in his native region, in particular the local football matches, "confrontations where one is among neighbours who each know the tics" of the others (41). Selvon notes a similar nostalgia among West Indians, who might go to Waterloo station on days when ships are due in

from the Caribbean to see if anyone they know is coming; his characters also make a point of finding out, on meeting fellow islanders, whether they know people in common. In the anonymous city, the immigrants never lose the reflexes acquired in small-scale communities characterised by personal relationships.

Both Selvon and Lamming elaborate on urban anonymity by focusing on the structure of dwellings, made to separate. Tornado explains to the others on the boat that "The way the houses build was that people doan' have nothing to do with one another" (Lamming, 1980, 76), while Selvon's narrator describes London as being "divide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world you belong to" (74). This echoes Ben Jelloun's protagonist's recurring complaints that his hostel room is like a cage or a box. Ball (2004) rightly notes that Lamming, by ending Tornado's tirade with the warning "That is *if* you can get a room" (76, emphasis added), goes beyond standard pronouncements about the anonymity of the city by evoking the additional burden of racism for West Indians in England. In Chraïbi's novel the indifference is explicitly a function of this burden of racism, as Waldik explains that his neighbours never talk to him, but welcome his French partner into their homes. Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun, writing in the mid-1970s, a period characterised by frequent incidents of violence against Maghribi immigrants, also suggest an added burden of menace contained in the usual urban indifference. In Boudjedra's novel the tired metro passengers have no tolerance for the illiterate protagonist's ignorance of the ways of the underground system: the crowd is hostile when he inadvertently blocks the way out of the train while asking for confirmation he has reached the correct place. The narrator suggests that "some even see in [this question] a provocation, a sort of interrogative irony in an accent that made their ears throb" (50). The passengers' indifference is tinged with contempt and prejudice and both writers imply that this attitude enables racist violence against immigrants. In *La réclusion solitaire*, the narrator's feeling that he has "become a transparence" (69) is not simply a function of the urban setting

but is closely linked to the racist violence targeting Maghribi immigrants: "I do not exist. You cancel me in silence and hit me when you feel like it. It's true you often feel like it" (99). Likewise, Boudjedra's narrator explains that the harassed crowd in the metro "weaves the web of indifference, anonymity and death" (155). This threat of physical violence, hardly broached in the Caribbean novelists' 1950s novels, does appear in their works of the 1970s. Neither writer explicitly mentions events such as the racist riots of 1958 targeting coloured immigrants in London and Nottingham, but Selvon exposes police violence, albeit in a satirical vein, in *Moses Ascending* and Lamming transmutes this heritage of racial violence into what he sees as a necessary violent reaction of his West Indian characters in *Water With Berries*, who engage in acts of violence against the British. The writers' treatment of racism and violence will be discussed at more length in the next chapter.

In addition to the threat of violence, the mere fact of isolation within the urban crowds is frightening. In *The Emigrants*, Tornado warns the others that "in England nobody notice anyone else. [...] You can live an' die in yuh room an' the people next door never say boo to you no matter how long you inhabit that place" (74-75). Similarly, Moses fears, in *The Lonely Londoners*, that he might die and no-one would notice. Nevertheless, as Simmel explained in 1903, the very "reserve" that leads urban residents to avoid knowing their neighbours also opens the way to unprecedented freedom (Simmel, 1997, 179-180). The novels under study play out this tension between revelling in the absence of constraints and condemnation of this freedom as anomie, that is, the loss of social laws and structures.

For the women of Lamming's *The Emigrants*, London is a place of loose morals where West Indian men, having encountered the permissive practices of English and European girls, come to expect West Indian women to lower their standards.

The women gossiping in the hair salon clearly operate according to the formal social hierarchies and moral strictures of their home islands in judging the courtship situation in London. They feel these structures are being lost because the men are encouraged by the English women's lack of discriminating knowledge to pursue West Indian women of a different class: "the English girls [...] don't know who is who", so that the boys "completely forget who they are" (148). This is another occasion for Lamming to condemn the Caribbean fascination with Britain and Europe: the women are left alone because both English and West Indian men prefer to pursue white women. The novel, ending in the scattering of its characters, who all fail in some degree to achieve their goal of a "better break", treats this loss of social norms as part of the crushing effects of migration to the centre of Empire.

Selvon and Boudjedra show a different attitude. Selvon's boys are the men Lamming's women condemn, just as Lamming gives voice to the women Selvon silences. Galahad, after his initial panic, soon learns to navigate the city and becomes one of the "boys" who revel in its freedom. He shares with his friend Big City a sense of awe and excitement at being in a city of worldwide significance; their elation drives a process of domestication through their naming of the city's neighbourhoods and landmarks (Nasta, 1995; Procter, 2003). Boudjedra initially seems to deplore the influence of Christian, metropolitan habits on the immigrants: on describing a man with a bottle of wine, the narrator immediately evokes the wife at home who would condemn such appalling behaviour for a Muslim. But the figures of the "lascars", three immigrants with decades of experience in France, now retired in Algeria, show a different facet of life in the city. They are presented as playboys; like Selvon's boys, they dress expensively (Boudjedra, unlike Selvon, stresses that this is an effort to shed a rural persona) and parade "fillies" (205) just as Galahad rejoices in "meet[ing] a craft" and "tak[ing] she out some place" (85). Convinced that the protagonist's project of emigration

will never materialise, they extoll the technological marvels of the city to him and exhibit a brash assurance that impresses the candidate for departure. In both *The Lonely Londoners* and *Topographie idéale...*, then, some immigrants embrace the freedom afforded by modern living and their knowing circulation in and naming of the city is a counterweight to the terrors of indifference and isolation, although these appropriative strategies do not completely cancel out their vulnerability as post/colonial immigrants in the imperial metropolis, as we will see in the next chapter (Looker, 1996; Nasta, 2002; Ball, 2004). In Boudjedra's novel the contrast between the illiterate, ignorant, disoriented protagonist and the brash lascars extends to this vulnerability. The protagonist's tragic fate, eplicitly linked by Boudjedra to the numerous racially-motivated murders that followed the 1973 oil crisis, is a clear reminder of the dangers facing Maghribi immigrants. But the lascars' stance in extolling the pleasures of the metro is not merely empty arrogance. The photograph showing them standing outside a metro entrance strikes the protagonist as brazen but, later in the novel, it is shown to hide an earnest purpose. The lascars take part in the French branch of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), collecting money from compatriots and organising bombings. Their terrorist activities require an extreme version of the appropriative practice of walking the streets. They scour all areas of the city ahead of the police to collect funds and weapons and organise attacks, and learn "by heart" every aspect of the metro system in order to use it for their own ends, and the photograph is revealed to have been a ploy to avert suspicion by the police. Strikingly, this extreme appropriation for the purpose of subversion is accompanied by a return to the structured ways of home: they abandon their playboy ways, their ostentatious clothes, their vices, and become "taciturn" and "icy" (208).

The natural vs. the urban

In addition to the contrast in moral and social structures, the writers highlight the change in landscape experienced by immigrants arriving in the metropolis. The difference established by the Caribbean writers between the metropolitan and Caribbean landscapes is one of degree, whereas Chraïbi, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun seem to assert a qualitative opposition between the natural world of the Maghrib and the French industrialised cityscape. Lamming's emigrants are awed by the urban setting they encounter on approaching London by train and comment on the number of buildings they can see, but they and Selvon's characters are already familiar with towns and cities, albeit smaller than London: Lamming's Collis has lived in Port-of-Spain and Selvon's Galahad in San Fernando, the two largest cities in Trinidad. By contrast, the protagonists of Chraïbi, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun's novels hail from small mountain villages barely in contact with modern, moneyed economic circuits. The narrator of Ben Jelloun's *La réclusion solitaire* associates himself with the natural world of his home by juxtaposing the features that mark his humanity (eyes, speech) with products of traditional Maghribi agriculture: "J'ai du miel au fond des yeux. J'ai de l'huile d'argan dans mes phrases." ("I have honey in the depths of my eyes. I have argan oil in my sentences." 71-72). The protagonist also identifies himself as a tree, describing his clothes as "spare bark" ("une écorce de rechange," 12). He extends this association with nature to the whole group of Maghribi immigrants in France, seeing them metaphorically as a forest being destroyed: "Nous sommes un pays déboisé de ses hommes. Des arbres arrachés à la terre, comptabililisés et envoyés au froid." ("We are a country deforested of its men. Trees rooted up, counted up and sent to the cold", 56). Boudjedra's novel contrasts the technological environment of the Paris underground system, the metro, with the "Piton", the rugged mountain village that is the protagonist's birthplace. The Piton is associated with wide spaces and skies, blinding sunlight, and freedom of movement;

its space is also ordered for a purpose (to resist invaders). As in Ben Jelloun's Maghrib, the human presence is closely bound to the landscape, almost melding into it: "the ochre, millennial villages [are] fully integrated into the surrounding rocks" (Boudjedra, 1986, 246).

The elements both writers choose to present the imbrication between Maghribi man and the natural world deliberately exclude any modern practices and materials brought to the Maghrib by colonisation or the modernisation process. All such elements are confined to a critique of colonisation, as when Ben Jelloun denounces the harmful effects of modern agricultural practices on the native population. The only modern artifacts mentioned in relation to the Piton in Boudjedra's novel are the napalm and bombs used in pacification campaigns. This negativity is translated to evocations of the metropolis. The urban environment in Ben Jelloun's novel is barren, lifeless and characterised by cracked concrete, by contrast with the vegetation associated with the Maghrib. The cracks on the decrepit walls of the shabby hostel in which the protagonist lives gradually seep onto his body, his back, as he feels the pressure of the hard labour to which immigrants are confined. We sense that this artificial environment has got the better of him when he explains that he is "a heap of stones and concrete" whose skull is crumbling away like sand, a state incompatible with the vegetal associations expressed earlier (88-89). Boudjedra contrasts the closed spaces and artificial light of the metro system that disorient the protagonist with the open spaces of the Piton. The narrator insists on the sense of aggression produced by the urban environment. The artificial neon lights' "violent reflections" on the "garish colours" of the "vehement" plastic seats assail the immigrant's senses (10); the excess of intersecting straight lines and the entanglement of their reflections on the moving escalators make the space unreal and unreadable, "dislocated, like a millipede that would no longer know how to disentangle its head from its tail" (17). The newcomer, fresh from a world where nature dominates, cannot process this experience.

Kateb figures here as an exception. He does not oppose a natural Algeria to an industrial France but he opposes the Ancestors, representing the traditional and Islamic, pre-colonial cultures of the Maghrib to the colonial invaders. Yet his characters' first encounter with France, because it takes place in Marseilles, is characterised by a sensation of uncanny familiarity: on seeing the city's immigrant quarters, Lakhdar and Brahim wonder "yes or no, have we crossed the sea?" (48). Kateb associates this recognition with the cultural alienation of the colonised. Lakhdar thinks: "Arles is still the Orient", then checks himself: this observation is merely "sentences of the colonised, strangled by a false culture." Yet, in acknowledging the colonised man's ambivalent feelings, Kateb again exhibits his reluctance to embrace exclusionary definitions of identity. Lakhdar is aware that the Algerian immigrant, "discovering [the colonial metropolis to be] beautiful and soft", must "vomit to remain worthy of his fathers." His weary concluding sigh, "stupid virility!" shows that he is somewhat uneasy with the demands that nationalist, anticolonial loyalty make on him (51). Nevertheless, as we will see, Kateb joins other Maghribi writers in a critique of French society and its treatment of immigrant workers.

1.3.2 Critique of industrial modernity

The stark opposition of natural and technological worlds in the Maghribi novels of immigration leads to a critique of industrial modernity through the experience of the immigrant worker. The workplace is identified with noise and danger through breathless descriptions of the machines and the dangers they pose for the workers. In Boudjedra's novel, the "lascars", former immigrants who regret having encouraged the protagonist before his journey to France, recall all the dangerous and oppressive aspects of working life in France. The materials, unnatural and threatening, but also the rhythms of factory work, all conspire to maim and kill immigrant workers:

> There's [...] the factory (with its rolling mills pivoting on their cylinders bristling with steel revolving the opposite way and crushing metal [...] in the drying heat [...], with the noise of steel sledgehammers [...]; blast furnaces devouring coke and that one must feed ceaselessly; its complicated machines against which one must lead a frantic race [...]; its foremen [...]; its clocks seized with arithmetic subtleties; its clocking in machines; its bullying; its stains; its strains; its pains; its illnesses; its severely injured casualties; its dead, etc.) where he will get killed, [...] he will end up losing his fingers, his hands, his arms, his legs, his skull, his lungs, his strips of flesh caught on a cylinder or a connecting rod: and if he doesn't like it, he can always try a building site where he will be free to play the funambulist until the day he falls off a crane, his hands, chapped with the frost, in front of him, but not preventing him from shattering his spine on the concrete he poured himself the previous day in his desire to do well [...] (Boudjedra, 1986, 117)

The immigrants are at the mercy of the machines, forced to follow the unnatural rhythms they dictate. Kateb also refers to the power and danger of industrial machines. When Lakhdar works briefly at a site where a tunnel is being dug, the narrator emphasises the struggle between the machines and the mountain. While the latter seems "imperturbable" when the dynamite explodes, as if it could contain the explosion, the "wave of rocks" nevertheless "fall[s] back under the blows of the giant apparatus" used to dig the tunnel before the dynamite is used (Kateb, 1997, 61). In another scene, Kateb unexpectedly explicates his critique of the oppressiveness of industrial work through a wheelbarrow. Lakhdar, pushing an excessively loaded wheelbarrow with a coworker, is relieved when they reach a little slope, thinking that it will make the work easier, but they are dragged down by its weight and fall over. The narrator wryly comments: "Yes, modern times, a simple wheelbarrow that seems to comply, and it is already a machine, the wheel you must push, and that brings you down" (54). Like Boudjedra, Kateb insists on the immigrants' position of powerlessness within the industrial context.

The workers are powerless in large part because they are at the mercy of the factory clock. Once Lakhdar arrives in Paris and finds work in a factory, he becomes disenchanted with the experience. The environment is lifeless, the

air is "artificial", he can no longer taste water and cigarettes, but the worst aspect of factory work is "the Cyclops's eye with its two hallucinatory eyelashes beating the bleak cadence, itself possibly crying its cold rage, its incorrigible mechanism, its disenchanted progression" (Kateb, 1997, 68). In evoking factory work Kateb, like Boudjedra in the long passage quoted above, is compelled to use an extremely long yet choppy sentence mirroring stressful work cadences and showing the distressing psychological effects of factory work:

> He [...] sees only the circular face of the old clock he always suspects of cheating too, simulating its minutes, despite the piles of forks accumulated at polishing in the rage to work, and the clock stares at him, [...] Lakhdar [is] pushed into the gears[6] of an anticipated seclusion, second by second [...]. So that was THEIR WORK? (68)

As we have seen, Boudjedra also includes the pace of factory work, governed by its most visible symbol, the clock, in his catalogue of the torments of the immigrant worker. Through the rural immigrants' experience of the regimented schedule of factory work, both writers move from criticising material working conditions to a more abstract level: indicted here are the structures of thought undergirding Western technological development. The pace imposed in industrial work is a function of the rational division of time that is part of the developments in scientific thought which have accompanied European expansion since the Renaissance. Simmel has shown that the complex interactions characterising the functioning of the city not only require, but are impossible without, "a stable and impersonal time schedule" (177). Yet the influence of Western, rationalised timekeeping has deeper roots. The developments in geographical knowledge that both facilitated and helped drive European exploration depended on and were aided by the search for ever more precise time-measuring devices (Sobel, 1998). Such devices applied a rational conception of time that separated it somewhat from the natural, empirical course of time by using a calculated, "mean" time rather than using the sun as a point of reference (Ridpath, 2007). In the novels

[6] i.e. caught in the trap

of Kateb and Boudjedra, this rationality is implicitly contrasted with a natural, bodily time, through the presentation of the immigrants' reactions to the logical extension of rationality from time to movement in Fordist factory organisation; they experience this rationality as oppressive. The clock here almost functions as a metonymy for the combination of rationality and technological development that led to European colonial successes, in all their brutality.

Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun draw sinister implications from the consideration of the influence of these intellectual foundations to the contemporary situation of post/colonial immigrants. Ben Jelloun also considers that a wider system beyond mere racism emerging from colonial history affects Maghribi immigrant workers in France. Instead of time, he accuses "the Abstract" of being responsible for the deaths of Maghribi immigrant workers in France. His essay *La plus haute des solitudes* sets out the oppressive, economic hyper-rationality that reduces immigrant workers to their labour power. In conjunction with the workings of racist stereotypes, the capitalist system denies Maghribi immigrant workers any status as human beings and any right to an emotional life.

> On transplante des hommes, on les sépare de la vie pour mieux leur extirper leur force de travail, mais on tente aussi d'annuler leur mémoire et d'entraver leur devenir en tant que sujets désirants.
>
> They transplant men, they separate them from life the better to extract their labour power, but they also attempt to cancel out their memory and to hinder their future as desiring subjects. (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 12)

Ben Jelloun distills this analysis in his novel by invoking "the Abstract":

> Did you know [...] that industrial accidents do not exist? Yes, we bear our death within ourselves from the moment we are torn up from the forest. When, on a building site, an expatriate takes a free fall, it is not an industrial accident, it is something like a murder premeditated by the Abstract. (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 54)

Ben Jelloun's notion of the Abstract covers several aspects. First, it refers to the new configuration of racism identified by Memmi in contemporary France, the

lack of accountability for the welfare of immigrant workers in the society that employs them. Memmi draws an analogy between the condition of immigrants and slavery, but contrasts the system of traditional slavery in the Maghrib – a domestic system in which slaves belonged to a family – with the system of exploitation of foreign workers in industrialised Europe. The fundamental difference lies in the contemporary system's impersonality: "Slavery in the past was paternalistic, ours is anonymous and crushes the entire personality of the slaves" (Memmi, 1968, 128). This is slavery in "the industrial age" and Memmi stresses that the danger of this situation is that "our slaves, are not the slaves of anyone in particular. That is to say, no one believes himself responsible for them" (128, 130). Ben Jelloun highlights precisely this in his insistence on the immigrant's emotional isolation and the notion of the Abstract. The Abstract is also the system that requires the dehumanisation of those it uses. Ben Jelloun's novel presents the use of an immigrant workforce as the antithesis or the dark counterpart of the idea of progress sustaining Europe's self-belief since the Enlightenment, and of the dynamic atmosphere of economic and social improvement in post-war France, now referred to as 'Les trente glorieuses' (the thirty glorious years). Boudjedra similarly develops a critique of Western rationality and technophilia throughout his novel. From the outset the Paris underground system assails the protagonist, an illiterate peasant from the Algerian mountains, with sensory overload from the artificial lights and the plastic seats' garish colours. Part of the feeling of aggression this environment awakens in the immigrant is consequent on its very rationality: it is "richly structured", hiding its "humdrum and pathetic symmetry" under a "false disorder" (8-9). This results in a "linear harassment" for the disoriented newcomer whose "nerves [are] cut up [as if] by some torture instrument whose blades would be so many broken lines recalling the general, nightmarish configuration of the labyrinth" (23).

The network map is a recurrent symbol for this environment. The narrator describes it again and again, building a network of comparisons that constructs an overall critique of the modern industrial city and its basis in Enlightenment rationality as oppressive. The map's circuitous shape, defined by concentric circles, is compared in turns to the meandering of memory and the trajectories of a ball in a pinball machine, the latter providing the narrator with an occasion to insist on the technological achievements of the metro system and the city in general: kilometres of rails, cables, pipework for natural gas and drainage, all feeding "the monster" that is Paris (34-35). Negative connotations are introduced when the network map is evoked again and compared with the spatter of the murdered protagonist's blood: the bloodstains resemble "craters thrown here and there in an obscure and abstract disorder recalling once again the topographical jumble of the metro map spurting through lines and meanders and spheres and segments" (165). This image places the racist youths who murder him within the context of the industrial city. They are a part of the city as rational, technological monster which is the immigrant's demise. And the narrator does not let us forget how this city becomes a monster for all immigrant workers, bringing up the map once more in the guise of a clock face. The immigrants buy "wristwatches [...] like a big murderous eye" whose "dial" is fractured by "marks, signs and digits forming a topography similar to that of a map of the Metropolitan all things considered" (des "bracelets-montres [...] comme un gros œil torve [dont] le cadran [est fracturé par des] signes et [des] marques et [des] chiffres formant une topographie somme toute semblable à celle d'un plan du Métropolitain", 205). This last comparison recalls the factory clock as tormentor and integrates industrial capitalism, as represented by the factory work for which the immigrants buy the wristwatches, as one of the evils of the city. Through these multiple associations, Boudjedra builds up an accusation of the lethal effects of the economic and social system that has grown out of European Enlightenment and scientific progress.

Exiting the scene of civilisation: Chraïbi's Butts

The Maghribi writers of immigration of the 1970s, then, produce a critique of the modern city in terms of its technology and rationality, which are set in opposition to the natural world of the colonised Maghrib. The elision or rejection of modern aspects of life in the Maghrib noted above is in fact necessary to the writers' critique of Western modernity. They posit a world uncontaminated by this modernity so that they can step outside it and critique it. The association of the Maghribi man with nature and the concurrent critique of European rationality is taken to questionable extremes in Chraïbi's novel, which seems to posit an incompatibility between the Arab mind and European modernity. The protagonist, Waldik, asserts this gap upon arrival in France. On his first encounter with French bureaucracy, he resists learning to comply with the stated opening hours and giving answers in the format required by the administration and protests that this absurd system ignores the human element—he eats his unemployment card to make the point. Attracted by the employment and educational opportunities he believes he will find in France, he acquires an education, eventually writing a novel denouncing the condition of Maghribi immigrants in France. After eight years he is disillusioned, having experienced the discrimination and stereotyping meted out to Algerians, his disappointment transmuting into a bitter hatred leading him to harass his lover. This comes dangerously close to the racist notion that non-European, colonised peoples would never be able to adapt to the modern European way of life.

This theme is taken up again and developed in relation to the eponymous Butts, a group of around twenty men having lived in France for a number of years. They are unemployed (a contradiction in terms when one is an immigrant: see Sayad, 2006, 50, 173) and live on urban wastelands. They have abandoned the idea of finding work, having (wilfully?) lost their administrative and identity papers, and live a minimal life together outside of human society, moving from

one piece of urban waste land to another. Towards the end of the novel, Chraïbi presents their "rebirth" at the end of the winter. Their celebrations echo the traditional religious festivals of their fatherland but have become secular affairs owing to their long separation from Algerian society. Chraïbi nevertheless also relies on a dichotomy between a natural Maghribi man and the technological West, since the feast is triggered by the Butts' close connection with the rhythm of the seasons. The narrator compares their voices to the sounds of machines to suggest the extent to which they have been influenced by their industrial environment, although they are still "not adapted" ("inadaptés", 177). It appears, however, that this lack of adaptation is not framed as a failure or a weakness, as it would be in colonialist discourse, but is rather the sign of the limits of Eurocentrism.

> Bien des hivers avaient mordu leurs os [...]. Tout ce qu'ils en avaient extrait, c'était la connaissance que de tout temps, en tout lieu, toujours il y avait eu un lot d'hommes [...] inadaptés à une civilisation, quelle qu'elle fût, comme pour prouver qu'aucune création de l'homme n'a jamais été générale ou parfaite.
>
> Many a winter had bitten their bones [...]. All they had extracted from this was the knowledge that at any time, everywhere, there had always been a group of men [...] that was not adapted to a civilisation, whichever it might be, as if to prove that no creation of man has ever been general or perfect. (177)

The Butts represent the culmination of the logic of resistance to assimilation exemplified by Waldik earlier in the novel. In this passage, their dehumanisation takes on a positive meaning. Whereas the tone of previous descriptions both of Arab immigrants in general and of the Butts in particular had been negative, repulsive, with much insistence on unpleasant smells and secretions, this section of the novel presents their loss of consciousness and human status as a good thing. Their retreat into nature is a form of successful resistance to the assimilationist tendencies of the French attitude to its immigrants. In this penultimate section of the novel Chraïbi appears to be making a statement about the human condition: it is not just that Arabs are not adapted to the European lifestyle, will not and

should not adapt, but that hope, which defines the human being, makes him alienated from life itself:

> [Les Boucs] seuls avaient compris la chance qui leur était offerte de se servir de leur misère comme d'un couteau – et ils s'en étaient violemment servis, coupant tout ce qui pouvait les relier encore à l'homme, [...] redevenant de simples créatures de Dieu à l'état de simples créatures, [...] sans aucune évolution si-non celle du vieillissement des cellules, *tuant en eux même l'espoir, pure et chimérique création que l'homme n'a créée que parce qu'il avait voulu dépasser son état de créature et s'était ainsi inadapté à la terre.*
>
> [The Butts] alone had understood the chance given them to use their misery as one would a knife – and they had used it violently, severing anything that could still relate them to man, [...] becoming simple creatures of God in the state of mere creatures once again, [...] without any evolution besides that of the ageing of cells, *killing in themselves even hope, that pure and chimerical creation man created only because he wanted to overcome his status as a creature, and in so doing had put an end to his adaptation to earth.* (177-178, emphasis added)

In this deliberate insulation from the common ground of humanity, the Butts fulfil the function in the novel of holding up a mirror to European civilisation. Their resistance and their opacity defeat the arrogance of the Eurocentric concepts of colonisation and modernisation, and their mere presence in the streets, by exhibiting the misery to which French society reduces some of its members, contradicts its self-perception as involved in constant progress. Chraïbi asserted that his intention in this novel was not primarily to depict or dwell on the material living conditions of the immigrants but, in response to what he perceived as a discourse that blamed the victims for their own poverty, to highlight the wider context of French society (as well as, presumably, the colonial relation and its broken promises) and its responsibility in the situation (Chraïbi, 1956a).

In setting up the opposition between modern and non-modern worlds, none of the Maghribi writers is calling for a return to pre-colonial society or to Islamic traditions. Both Chraïbi and Boudjedra had begun their literary careers

by publishing novels that violently denounced the Moroccan and Algerian bourgeoisie and the nexus of patriarchy and religion in the Maghreb (Chraïbi, 1995; Boudjedra, 1981), and Kateb, a sincere Communist, was sceptical about the use of religion by the Algerian political hierarchy for its own ends. Yet the gesture through which they posit the possibility of stepping outside of modernity, of pretending that the violent entry of the Maghrib into the capitalist world system through European conquest has not taken place, is ultimately self-defeating. The radical critique of the West which these writers mount, because it is expressed through this stark opposition, does not offer much by way of alternatives. The refusal to acknowledge any aspect of modernity as part of the self of the Maghrib leads the writers into an impasse, as we will see below in the case of Chraïbi (138). Further, such a reliance on fundamental opposition is problematic and seems disingenuous in writers who had all been educated, at least for a time (Kateb left school at 15), in the French intellectual tradition through the colonial education system.

Neither Lamming nor Selvon has recourse to a fantasised "stepping out" of Western modernity because they acknowledge that the Caribbean region, from the Discovery onwards, has been part of the modernising world. The Caribbean has been wholly shaped by the erasure of the Amerindian presence and the subjection of landscape and immigrant peoples to the European system of profit, first mercantilist, then capitalist: "Colonial modernity denied the Caribbean an 'other' history—a version of events distinct from the conventional European narrative in which the islands exist solely as a project of the conqueror's expansionism" (Gikandi, 1992, 6-7). Unlike the peoples of Africa and the Central and South American mainland, West Indians cannot draw on a fully-fledged alternative civilisation to oppose colonialism (Lamming, 2005; Brathwaite, 1996). The Caribbean novelists studied here therefore do not engage in attacks on the structure of European time and rationality in the way that the Maghribi novelists

do. We will see in chapter 2 how the denunciation of habits of mind inherited from colonialism is the occasion for Lamming to expose the dark underside of the modernity he encounters in London.

Caribbean and Maghribi novelists' reflections in novels representing departures, journeys and arrivals on the phenomenon of migration to the imperial centre extend far beyond the simple notion of moving to another country. These novels are the occasion of wide-ranging explorations and analyses of the development of European civilisation and the colonial history that created the links between the West Indies and Britain, the Maghrib and France. The writers give us a journey from expectations and illusions, born of uneven economic development and the West's projection of itself as the only source of knowledge and progress, to disillusion when the seductive city reveals itself as an isolating, frightening and dangerous place.

Chapter 2

Encounters

2.1 Introduction

We have seen that the journey to the imperial metropolis is in part determined by the latter's presentation in colonial discourse and the influence of the ideology of the superiority of the coloniser's culture. The voyage leads the immigrant to confront an experience and a reality at odds with the alluring picture of civilisation projected by the coloniser. The material experience of marginality and violence, expressed through the spaces the immigrants can or cannot access, comes to debunk the myth that prosperity and opportunity are available in the metropolis. The novelists also turn their gaze on the coloniser and his achievements, countering the colonial gaze and colonial discourse through the points of view and the narrative techniques they use. Not all reversals, however, are productive, as an analysis of relations between immigrants and white women will show: such relations are inevitably inflected by the notion of the 'white woman' produced in colonial contexts as symbolic of the dominant group, much in the way that women are used as symbols for the nation in nationalist discourse (Wilford, 1998). The 'white woman' was one of the sites for the coloniser's prestige and respectability, and boundaries between coloniser and colonised, as in the definition of many social groups, were policed through controlling access to, and the behaviour of, the

European woman (Stoler, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1998). The immigrants' pursuit of European women in the novels constitute a reversal of practices in the colonies but does not succeed as a reversal of black/white relations still determined by the legacy of colonialism.

2.2 Marginality

Lamming and Selvon both present in their early fictions of immigration the colonial students' hostel where they had secured places on arrival in London in 1950. It is a site of community where immigrants meet each other, although the community itself is fragile, as we will see in chapter 4. The immigrants' hostel was also an institution in France, although the situation was reversed. The accommodation provided by the national agency Sonacotra catered for manual workers, not students.[1] The restrictive conditions attached to this accommodation, inherited from the experience of managing "natives" in the colonies, also served to maintain internal boundaries between the French and the immigrants (Sayad, 2006). The residents of such hostels, all adult men, were not allowed to have guests, least of all female guests, which betrays an undue concern for policing morality and fears of miscegenation on the part of French institutions (see Ginesy-Galane, 1984). Ben Jelloun addresses this issue in his novel through the list of rules for the hostel where his protagonist lives. The list begins with realistic, commonsensical rules: "It is forbidden to cook in the room (there is a kitchen at the end of the corridor)", then moves on to restrictions: "It is forbidden to entertain women (there is a brothel, *Chez Maribelle*, nearby)", and finally becomes imaginary. Ben Jelloun lists absurd rules that demonstrate the thinking behind the rules in place in real immigrants' hostels: "It is forbidden [...] to fall ill, to be involved in politics, to forget to go to work, [...] to have children with French women [...]"

[1]Sonacotra: Société Nationale de Construction de logements pour les Travailleurs, a national agency responsible for building housing for immigrant workers: initially this only concerned Algerian workers, but its mission was soon extended to all immigrant workers.

(Ben Jelloun, 1995, 18-19). This list exposes the marginal status of immigrants, who are confined to their role as workers and denied access to the French polity, and calls attention to French people's hostility to socialisation or sexual relations with immigrants. Lamming's representation of the student hostel in London suggests a similar dimension to this locale. The warden of the hostel regularly organises tea parties at which English students preparing for employment at the Colonial Office may meet the residents. Using the hostel "as a convenient place for meeting many of the people whom they might have to work with" and concluding that it is "tolerably interesting", the English students seem to treat it as one would a zoo (Lamming, 1980, 153). This attitude is made clearer when they express surprise that Africans or West Indians might study and practice anthropology: this betrays the sort of hierarchical vision undergirding the imperative of the civilising mission while disallowing this mission's realisation. Although the colonial students are in England to pursue the same courses of university study as themselves, the English students cannot envisage their reaching beyond the 'primitive' context of their native societies. Just such a logic governs their segregated thinking: they go to the hostel to meet the colonials because they do not expect to encounter them at large in British society. The hostel, initially the sign of an official recognition by the British of the special bond linking colonial immigrants to Britain, turns out to function almost as a tool of segregation.

Both sets of writers use dwellings as an important way to convey the discrimination targeting colonial immigrants. Many migrants from the West Indies to Britain and from the Maghrib to France moved in search of work, but these workplaces appear only briefly in Maghribi and Caribbean novels depicting the experience of immigrants in the period. The focus is, rather, on sites of dwelling and socialisation and the way that these reflect or express the native society's impulse to segregate and its rejection of immigrants. The institution of the hostel, a short-term dwelling that does not accommodate the family, signals the

conceptualisation of immigrants by French and British authorities as temporary dwellers. In their other lodgings also, the immigrants are relegated to prison-like interior spaces. Lamming and Ben Jelloun insist on the confining quality of immigrants' living spaces. In *The Emigrants*, the narration highlights the iron bars on the barber shop's windows and the indoor style of living that impresses on the West Indians that "there was no escape from [the basement bedsitter] until the morning" (187). Procter (2003) links this imagery in Lamming's representation of various dwellings in *The Emigrants* with a hierarchy established in the novel between the immigrants' dwellings below ground and those of the English and the anglophiles above-ground, which further emphasises the West Indians' marginality. The opening of Ben Jelloun's novel stresses a succession of confined spaces. Initially the narrator lives in a trunk, which may be a reference to the shantytowns that still existed on the outskirts of Paris in the 1970s, but more obviously denotes the lack of rootedness of this character and the perceived temporariness of his presence in France. This aspect of his life is hardly modified when he is forced to move to a workers' hostel, where his room is repeatedly described as a cage. These confined spaces are characterised by marginality: they are peripheral to the cities (shantytowns in Chraïbi, 1989; Boudjedra, 1986) and to the buildings of which they form a part (basements in Lamming, 1980; Chraïbi, 1989; Selvon, 1985, 1987a, 1990).

The immigrants' marginality extends to spaces of socialisation. Chraïbi shows how exclusion from French workers' after-work drinking isolates the immigrants, forcing them to socialise exclusively among themselves. Kateb, Ben Jelloun and Boudjedra mention the Algerian-owned cafés that existed in various French cities without specifying that these were part of the initial organisation of Algerian emigration, which involved structured groups of immigrants that sheltered new arrivals from French society because emigration was conceived of as strictly temporary (Sayad, 2006). The continued existence of these cafés in the 1970s marks

the enduring difficulty for immigrants to socialise with the mainstream population and reflects the continuing influence of hostility and discrimination immigrants encounter in other spaces. The main spaces for socialisation in Lamming's and Selvon's novels are not normative. Tornado's room in *The Emigrants*, Moses's room in *The Lonely Londoners*, Battersby's in *The Housing Lark* are bed-sits used for social gatherings in a way that was stigmatised in English representations of West Indians at the time (Procter, 2003). In *The Emigrants* the barber shop and the hair salon provide locales for community and warmth. Yet these spaces are ancillary and marginal, spaces in principle devoted to the preparation of socialisation, not social activity per se. The fact that they are shown in this novel to be primary loci of sociability indicates the unavailability of other, more legitimate places (legitimate in terms of British modes of socialisation). Their situation in basements and, in the case of the hair salon, outside the law, further emphasises the immigrants' position outside British society, despite formal expressions of welcome that reveal a distance which contrasts with the geographical coming together of people.

The two Caribbean novelists' emphasis on the dwellings as social spaces highlights a divergence in the ways Maghribi and Caribbean writers dealt with these issues. Though they accommodate socialisation, the dwellings in Lamming's and Selvon's 1950s writings are clearly inadequate. The novelists point out representative defects in their characters' dwellings, such as general shabbiness, leaks, or simply the small size. They are explicit in voicing the reasons why Caribbean immigrants were only ever offered such accommodation. But this situation is presented as an integral part of a lived experience: the dwellings' defects are described from the inside. Ben Jelloun and Mengouchi and Ramdane also opt for this approach. On the contrary, Chraïbi and Boudjedra list the various, shockingly poor lodgings in which immigrants are penned: dirty, overcrowded hotels; basements filled with thin, hard mattresses where residents fight over a few square

inches; shanty-towns; even rooms where all the immigrants get is a chair and a rope on which to rest their chins to sleep, rented by the quarter-hour (Chraïbi, 1989; Boudjedra, 1986). While this technique successfully provokes indignation, it also remains exterior to the experience, even though both writers are mentioning dwellings that their characters have inhabited. It derives from a miserabilist stance.

Despite the logic of segregation made clear in the novels, some immigrant characters circulate freely within the city, notably in the writings of Selvon and Boudjedra. The novelists nevertheless show that the presence of immigrants outside certain hostels and neighbourhoods or the factories where they are supposed to work is usually felt as an intrusion. As Benarab (1994) has shown, in *Topographieéale...* the extracts from newspapers inserted by Boudjedra into the novel, listing real murders of Algerians, make clear for the reader what the illiterate, naive protagonist does not see: his presence is unwanted. In Selvon's "Waiting for Aunty to Cough", Brackley senses the dangers that come with roaming the city at night: he discovers a wider area of London through his relationship with Beatrice, an English woman, but her aunt's reaction upon seeing him on her suburban pavement early one morning is telling of such feelings of intrusion. The middle-aged woman no sooner sees a coloured man on her street than she "begin to scream murder and thief" (133). It does not matter that Brackley has seen Beatrice home and waited with her all night because she was locked out of the house, though not without grumbling. In *Les Boucs*, the neighbours' hostility never allows the protagonist, who lives in a suburban house with his French lover, to forget that the expected place for a savage like him is in a shanty-town. Entry into the indoor, more private spaces of the French and the British cannot be counted as a victory either. Paquet (1982) shows clearly how, in Lamming's *The Emigrants*, Collis's visit to the Pearsons does nothing to change Mr. Pearson's feeling of being invaded by people who are a source of irritation. In Ben

Jelloun's novel, the protagonist tries to engage amicably with the French but is rejected each time. The women to whom he smiles on the street ignore him and, in the end, he becomes so aware of this indifference mingled with hostility, that his attempt to enter a café and sing songs from his region, which arises from an impulse to establish communication, flounders: "The words faded away inside me. I backed out of the bistro like a thief" (40).

These feelings of intrusion on the part of the English and the French translate into violence: circulating outside the confined spaces of immigrant dwellings is fraught with danger. Selvon's Brackley narrowly escapes being assaulted in an all-night café by some "frowsy women" who include him in their argument just because he is standing there (Selvon, 1987b, 129). This incident introduces the menace of arbitrary, race-related violence that would culminate a year later in the 1958 Nottingham and Notting Hill racist riots, but here the gender inversion highlights the vulnerability of the black immigrant. Not only does he require the justification of white, female company for his flânerie, as Ball (2004) has observed of Galahad in *The Lonely Londoners*, but the West Indian man's presence in Britain is so insecure and unprotected that, when alone, he is vulnerable to violence from white women as well as men. The most striking instance of the aggression targeting immigrants in the novels is, of course, the brutal murder of Boudjedra's newcomer at the end of his voyage in the bowels of the monstrous city. The violence is, however, pervasive. The Maghribi novelists, in particular, show the networks of prejudice that produce this violence at all levels of society. Kateb, in his later writings on immigration, denounced the criminalisation of immigrants in France. The Algerian dramatist, who reused certain scenes throughout his work on immigration, gave more importance to racism and discrimination with each version. The variants provided in the printed edition of his play *Mohammed prends ta valise* show that between the two productions presented in Paris in 1972 and 1975 the focus on racism increased. In those scenes from *Le polygone*

étoilé which he re-used in the play, Kateb excised examples of solidarity between French and Maghribi workers: a line from the novel showing solidarity from a French worker is used in the 1972 version, but in the play the friendly co-worker's opinion changes when he hears alarmist news reports representing immigration as an invasion. The French worker's solidarity has completely disappeared in the 1975 offering, where only his semi-hostile questions about the motivations of Algerians for migrating to France remain. Two scenes in this later version show the criminalisation of Algerian immigrants. In one, Mohammed accidentally knocks over a scooter within sight of a police station. Worried, he decides to bring it to them, and they arrest him for theft as soon as he touches it. In the next scene, a policeman encourages two *harkis* to provoke a fight with an immigrant, then calls in journalists who misrepresents immigrants as savages.[2] The trial scene crudely shows how stereotypes inform the judge's opinions when he convicts Mohammed. The earlier version of the play repeatedly shows the influence of mass-media in establishing the stereotypes on which racist attitudes are based, whereas the later version shows a more personal version of racist prejudice, as French characters have internalised the stereotypes. From workers to respectable middle-class couples to the justice system, Kateb's work shows the all-encompassing prejudice targeting North-African immigrants. Kateb portrays a French militant who defends the immigrants but his action is shown to be ineffective. As we have seen, Ben Jelloun evokes the undercurrent of aggression made possible by the indifference of the city (p. 49). Like Kateb, he also shows the context of institutional racism that enables the mistreatment of immigrants.

> I have crossed borders. I have left fingerprints [...] all over the place [...]. It was a simple question of facial features, of skin colour and of bolted doors. The search upon entering the territory was not enough for them. They sprinkled us with contempt and idiocy. (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 97)

[2]The *harkis* were Algerians who had fought on the side of the French during the Algerian liberation struggle. Most of them emigrated to France.

The humiliating border-crossing rituals, predicated on racist attitudes inscribed institutionally, authorise and inaugurate a life of violence: "You know. Outside, the racist attacks. The crime. The raids. The searches. The humiliation. The fear" (126).[3] Likewise, Boudjedra indicates the de facto official sanction to racist behaviour established by double standards in dealing with immigrants. When a tax collector, disgruntled by the flight of the hawker he intended to arrest, decides to interrogate the protagonist instead, the narrator is careful to mention that the official, not content with treating him aggressively, does not even bother to show identification. The scene establishes the continuity between this abuse of power and the rude rejection that has met the traveller almost every time he has asked someone to show him the way, in particular through the contemptuous passersby's "conniving looks" to the "civil servant" carrying out this arbitrary search (Boudjedra, 1986, 169). When the chief of police in charge of the investigation begins qualifying the murderers as "pranksters", the continuum between pervasive, low-level hostility, institutional sanction, and racial violence is made complete (231). Even when the incidents of physical violence in the novel are attributable to the immigrants themselves, as in *Les Boucs*, this relates to the surrounding, racially motivated hostility they face. In Chraïbi's novel, Waldik's violence is a reaction to racist behaviour: he was sent to jail for responding violently to a Frenchman insulting his lover Simone for sleeping with an Arab. The violence among immigrants is shown in the novel to be a misguided protest against their treatment in France: "Drunk with the drunkenness of damned men, they fought [...], convinced [...] that each one of them was fighting his own pariah's life" (136).

Racial violence is far more discreet in the writings of Lamming and Selvon, even though incidents of racial violence targeting coloured immigrants occurred regularly in Britain in the 1950s, culminating in the riots of 1958, and continued

[3]The word I have translated as "racist attack", "ratonnade", refers specifically to assaults on North African immigrants. "Raton", meaning young rat, was a term of abuse designating North Africans.

thereafter (Fryer, 1989; Pilkington, 1996). The criminalisation of West Indians based on stereotypes of drug-use is evident in *The Emigrants* and *The Housing Lark*, but portrayals of incidents of assaults or police violence are rare. Selvon made such elements increasingly prominent as his career progressed. From a remark in passing about a fight in *The Lonely Londoners*, to Brackley's misadventures in *Ways of Sunlight*, to abusive landlords and police prejudice regarding drug use in *The Housing Lark*, Selvon seems to have become more and more concerned about the enduring character of violence against coloured people in Britain. *Moses Ascending* finally tackles the issue of police violence; its denunciation made more forceful by the fact that the narrator Moses holds British culture and society in high regard and remains sceptical about this police violence until he witnesses several instances of it himself. Although violence is more prominent in the Maghribi novels of immigration from the outset, as *Les Boucs* develops a tense atmosphere of aggression, there is a parallel trend in the concern for racial violence in Maghribi and Caribbean novels of immigration. Relatively discreet in 1950s and 1960s texts like *Les Boucs* and *Le Polygone étoilé* but very prominent in the works produced in the 1970s. Lamming's novels also follow this trend: his later novel on immigration contains more violence than the first. He nonetheless figures as an exception in his treatment of the subject. In *The Emigrants* Tornado, when providing information about England during the ocean crossing, warns them against duplicity and veiled hostility, but makes no mention of physical violence targeting West Indians and Africans, although the effects of prejudice become visible when policemen assume that Higgins is carrying drugs and arrest him. *Water With Berries* culminates in an extremely violent confrontation between an Englishman and a West Indian immigrant but throughout the novel, the widespread racism in Britain is suggested discreetly in the manner of gruff publicans. There are few mentions of physical violence towards immigrants and by the close of the novel the West Indian characters have instigated more violent

incidents than British characters. This will be discussed at more length in the final part of this chapter.

The Maghribi writers' more confrontational stance in presenting a deliberately shocking picture of immigrant housing and foregrounding violence can perhaps be linked with the differing relations between the West Indies, the Maghrib countries, and their respective imperial dominators. In the 1950s, the British West Indies were undergoing a parliamentary process that would bring about the Federation of the West Indies, then independence for Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados in the early 1960s. By contrast, Morocco and Tunisia achieved full sovereignty in the mid-1950s after violent incidents provoked negotiations, and the late 1950s were overshadowed by the violent struggle for independence in Algeria and its brutal repression by the French. This sharp contrast in relations can be said to apply to the emergent literatures of the Caribbean and the Maghrib also. Although Caribbean writers engaged in important experiments in literary form that challenged canonical notions of English literature, both structurally and in the use of forms of Creole English, these were not aggressively defiant in the way that Maghribi experimental novels were. After some early novels in the realist mode in which criticism of the colonial situation was implicit, Chraïbi's protagonist Driss Ferdi in 1955 challenged his French reader by ostentatiously refusing to follow the conventions of French argumentation in his school-leaving dissertation (Chraïbi, 1995), while the fragmentary nature and complex syntax of Kateb's *Nedjma* corresponded to his assertion that "a language belongs to he who rapes it, not he who caresses it" (Amina and Duflot, 1967, 30). These attitudes denote a will to appropriate, seize the forms of the French literature to the writer's own ends in a confrontational way. The violence featured in the Maghribi novels of immigration is therefore situated in a wider context of political violence and textual violence in Maghribi literature that did not apply in the Caribbean context in the same period (see Gontard, 1981).

The literary experimentation taking place in West Indian literature in the same period could be equally disorienting for the reader accustomed to realist novels, but did not necessarily take such an oppositional stance. Wilson Harris, for instance, advocated a mixing of the various heritages and myth-structures available in Guyana, including the European, and a turning inward to focus on Guyana, away from Europe, rather than a confrontational stance (Harris, 1999). Lamming's novels in some ways mirror the development of West Indian anti-colonial consciousness. In 1960 he contrasted the non-confrontational attitude of West Indians regarding decolonisation with the urgent, earnest stance taken in West Africa and "the African's persistent and effective demand for political freedom", arguing that the influence of British culture was strong enough in the West Indies to curtail demands for independence (Lamming, 2005, 34). His second novel enacted the loss of illusions, the deflation of admiration for British achievement, the debunking of the myth of Britain as a Mother Country. Representations of British racism in *The Emigrants* constitute a subtle unveiling of the outward politeness and supposed 'colour-blind' attitude of the British. The process of observation that would lead Lamming in 1960 to draw a parallel between the applause he received after reading his poetry at the ICA and some factory workers' curiosity about the supposed monkey's tail their West Indian colleague hid in his trousers had already begun in 1954. In a slightly ambiguous scene, Lamming evokes sociability between an Englishman and one or two Caribbean newcomers on the train to London:

> 'Ave 'alf pint o' bitter John?
> My name aint John.
> Oh no 'arm meant. Jes' gettin' to know you. 'Alf a pint for me an' my pal...
> 'Ere's yours, John, an' yours darkie...
> 'E isn't no darkie. 'E's 'avin' a drink with me, an' that makes 'im my pal. Understand? (Lamming, 1980, 111)

An Englishman buys one of the recently arrived immigrants a drink and seems

to defend another against the insulting address, "darkie", possibly uttered by the barman. Yet the friendly drinker's very affability can be viewed as distancing and hurtful. Despite his apparently welcoming gesture, his words betray indifference and a superior attitude. He imposes a name on the stranger without interest in finding out the man's details. By naming him he claims knowledge in an Adamic manner, implying the absence or irrelevance of pre-existing labels: the possibility of an existing name is dismissed under the guise of benevolence. The apparent friendliness ("no harm meant") covers an easy conviction that he has the right, the authority and the power to create meaning, without regard for what meaning may already exist.

That Lamming's narration establishes such observations, with little comment, in various minor incidents scattered throughout the novel, further demonstrates the contrast in attitudes between Caribbean and Maghribi novelists. Selvon, who does not shy away from evoking discriminatory practices and even racial violence in his novels on immigration, can be included in this discussion: his novels never dwell at length on such facts and the comic approach he takes leaves an overall impression of levity, despite the perceivable earnestness of their purpose. Edmondson (1999) has argued that post-war West Indian literature is in dialogue with the Victorian tradition of English letters and its corresponding conception of the gentleman and the intellectual, because this tradition would have been foremost in the materials young West Indians studied in the colonial school system. This is strikingly discernible in the strange slipperiness characterising Lamming' s speech to the Conference of Negro Writers and Artists in 1956. Lamming's presentation of the Negro writer's situation draws attention to his unavoidable awareness of the Other, the non-Negro. When discussing the distinct relationships of the African and the West Indian to this Other, Lamming seems to step into the latter's shoes:

> The British West Indian writer [...] confuses because [...] he seems

> so perilously near to the Other whose judgment begins with the unconscious premiss that he is, in fact, *different*. [...] He seems so much nearer to us than his equivalent in Nigeria, and yet we know, in a way we cannot explain, that he is much nearer to his Nigerian equivalent than he is to us. (Lamming, 1956, 320)

In this passage, Lamming begins by evoking the Other, but in the use of the pronoun "us", aligns himself with the point of view of the non-Negro who considers the African or West Indian writer from the outside. To do so when his audience comprised Negroes in a proportion of at least two thirds indicates the difficulty in extricating himself from habits of mind ingrained by years of schooling (see Baldwin, 1969, on the audience). The interviewees in Hinds's study of West Indian immigrants to Britain refer to the processes whereby young West Indians were brought to identify with the white point of view in books and films, and similar processes may have informed the slippage of identification in Lamming's speech. The reluctance to address the issue of violence explicitly in Lamming's earlier works may proceed from a certain identification with British figures of literary authority, as Edmondson argues, and with a corresponding distaste for evoking unpleasant subjects, particularly those contradicting British gentlemanly values. Lamming's later fiction and essays attest to his success in freeing himself from this identification. His collection of essays *The Pleasures of Exile* is in large part devoted to the analysis of this posture and its roots in the colonial relationship. Reading Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an allegory of colonialism in the Caribbean, Lamming starts from Caliban's exclamation, "You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is I know how to curse" (I.ii.366-367) to convey the mixture of rebelliousness and kindred thinking that characterises his stance. "This gift of Language is the deepest and most delicate bond of involvement. [...] Caliban will never be the same again. Nor, for that matter, will Prospero" (Lamming, 2005, 109). Caliban's induction into Western modes of knowledge and rationality is fundamental to his awareness of his plight and his capacity to express it to Prospero: "It is this way [of thinking], entirely Prospero's enterprise,

which makes Caliban aware of possibilities" (109). In the case of the Caribbean, where the Amerindian population was decimated and every effort made, in the territories controlled by the British, to destroy the cultural contribution of Africa, the intellectual baggage that allows the colonised to demand independence is necessarily grounded in Western thinking.

Both sets of writers, then, can be compared to Caliban in that they use the coloniser's language to express and enact their rebellion to the coloniser's rule. To migrate to the metropolis is paramount in this process. As Lamming phrased it, the immigrants "discovered the reality of Prospero's home—not from a distance, not filtered through Prospero's explanation [...], but through their own immediate and direct experience" (Kent, 1992, 97). The novelists' depiction of the marginality and violence associated with the experience of immigration is one consequence of this unmediated experience. We will see that they also took the opportunity to respond to the colonial discourse in various ways in their novels.

2.3 Looking back, speaking back

We have seen that the novelists under study here focus on living spaces rather than the workplace and that those living spaces are liminal, with a prevalence of indoor spaces. With the exception of Selvon, the writers spend little time evoking or representing Paris and London. Some monuments are briefly mentioned in *The Lonely Londoners*, *Topographie* and *L'homme qui enjamba la mer*, whereas no landmarks are mentioned in the novels of Chraïbi, Kateb or Ben Jelloun, and Ball (2004) has drawn attention to the lack of visibility accorded the city of London in Lamming's *The Emigrants*. This may mirror the characters' struggles with the barriers imposed by racism and discrimination, or imply the "refusal to [...] legitimise a city still steeped in the architectonics of imperial power" (117). Ball also argues that by being "cautious" in his representation of the

metropolis, Lamming avoids reproducing the arrogance of the colonial gaze, and it is this significant contrast that I want to explore here. The collection edited by Bill Schwarz, *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (2003b) aims to capture and analyse the gaze returned by the colonised to the coloniser as it is expressed outside fiction, in the essays and treatises of some of the greatest minds to emerge from the English-speaking Caribbean. I am concerned here with the ways in which this return of the gaze is operated in novels about the post/colonial immigrant worker in France and Britain by Maghribi and Caribbean writers.

2.3.1 A focused point of view

Unlike a novel such as Dickens's *Bleak House*, which repeatedly introduces scenes by means of an all-encompassing description of a city or landscape that finally settles on the relevant character, the point of view in the novels of this corpus, even Selvon's, usually follows the immigrants closely. Chraïbi, like Lamming, focuses on interior spaces and rarely represents his characters circulating the city. When he does, we only see the Butts themselves; the surroundings are irrelevant: the reader is only aware of a generic street corner or building site. Ben Jelloun, beyond the hostel room, also neglects or refuses to describe his protagonist's surroundings. The main narrator's fragile mental state, his sense of self assaulted by the indifference and hostility he encounters, makes for a fragmented, unreal apprehension of the city: "the street crosses him" rather than the other way around and he "goes through the passersby and the cars" (36, 69). Beyond the barrenness of concrete, which is communicated to the protagonist through the imagery used to describe him, the city remains abstracted, almost immaterial, and is not represented. The opening of *The Lonely Londoners* subtly engages with representations of London in Dickens and Eliot, although it distances itself from this tradition through the modified Caribbean dialect used in the narration (Looker, 1996). The narrative also immediately focuses on Moses as he "hop on a

number 46 bus" and follows him inside the bus, declining to provide an overview of the city. In the novel, Selvon's narrator occasionally describes a small area including a street or two, but only insofar as he is conveying the experience of the immigrants and what the immigrants can see: the Harrow road is the locale of Tanty's localised settlement; the Bayswater road is used to explain the disconcerting effects of the fog for the inexperienced immigrant. When Galahad relishes walking in the West End, what is significant is not the monuments themselves, which go undescribed, but Galahad's elation, conveyed through tone, at being at the centre of a city with a history of power and worldwide influence. In this passage, the descriptions focus on Galahad and on the people surrounding him. Similarly, the narrator's breathless praise of the English summer only gives the barest sense of geography, briefly situating the events described in Hyde Park or Oxford Street but, once more, giving more attention to the people and their actions.

2.3.2 Returned gaze

The novels are firmly focused on the ground-level point of view of the immigrant. Although at times he is all too visible, the immigrant, ensconced in his underground cave or circulating the streets as a "transparency", can return the colonial gaze. This returned gaze might resemble the "Frog Perspectives" described by Richard Wright: the perspective of "someone looking from below upward, [...] who feels himself lower than the others" (quoted in Gilroy, 1993a, 16). Wright adds, "the concept of distance involved here is not physical; it is psychological." Here, the immigrants are made to feel socially lower through their confinement to liminal spaces and the racism, discrimination and violence they face. Wright sees ambivalence as a defining characteristic of the Frog Perspective: "the subject [...] loves the object because he would like to resemble it; he hates the object

because his chances of resembling it are remote, slight." This ambivalence is discernible in Lamming's Dickson and Miss Bis and in Chraïbi's Waldik (see chapter 1.1.2), but, as I will attempt to show here, the gaze deployed by the Maghribi and Caribbean novelists of working-class immigration is not always ambivalent. Djebar's essay "Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound" shows how the veiled woman, who is able to circulate in the streets because of the mobile prison that is the veil, recovers a gaze on the city and on its men (Djebar, 1999). The post/colonial immigrant living in the metropolis, whose presence is felt as illegitimate as we have seen, similarly is a dominated figure newly circulating the territory of its dominator. In this, the immigrant's circulation in the metropolis and his mobile gaze can become subversive or dangerous, as Djebar argues that the veiled woman's gaze is to the Algerian man. The novelists scrutinise the metropolis, exposing those aspects of it suppressed from the European's self-presentation in the colonial discourse of the civilising mission. This exposure is intended to quell any desire to identify with the object of the gaze.

There is almost a point by point opposition between Selvon's engagement with the city of London and the way Europeans had presented other regions of the globe in the eighteenth-century natural science tradition of travel writing analysed by Pratt (1992). The methods of natural history, she argues, required that the plants and animals studied be taken out of their context in order to be integrated in one of the systems of classifications invented by Linnaeus, Buffon and others. Not only did this attitude enable writers to ignore the world views and systems of knowledge of the local populations, but many travel writers also applied this "objective" method to the people they encountered, describing them in static, ethnographic portraits dissociated from the main narrative. The people encountered therefore disappeared from the landscapes described, leaving those landscapes open to European appropriation. Selvon's cityscape, on the other hand, is sketchy at best, despite the conspicuous naming and re-naming of

well-known buildings and streets. Selvon nevertheless turns an inquisitive and analytical eye on London, focusing on those who people the landscape. In each of the passages noted above, what retains the narrator's attention is the relations between those people. The description of the Harrow road leads to an analysis of the city's compartmentalisation and the articulation of this spatial configuration with social divisions: the spatial separation results in a situation where "People in this world don't know how other people does affect their lives" (76). The section in praise of summer is occasionally cited for its style devoid of punctuation, conveying a stream of consciousness reminiscent of high modernism. This ten-page evocation of outdoor summer life in the London parks is also a catalogue of the perversions of the city's sexual life. Peopled with prostitutes and their clients, voyeurs, and other shady characters, it combines with the section on social divisions to counter the image of British gentlemanliness pervading colonial discourse in the West Indies.

Conceptions of Britain as the Mother Country, source of civilisation and model to be followed in the Caribbean, were constructed around the figure of the British gentleman as developed in the Victorian age, encompassing a hegemonic masculinity predicated on heterosexuality, responsibility, and morality (Edmondson, 1999; Collins, 2001; Downes, 2004). But in Selvon's novel, responsibility is undermined by social isolation and anonymity, while morality is shown to be but a veneer. What unites "all sorts of fellars from all walks of life" in London, despite the divisions created by architecture and social privilege, is their common pursuit of sex and/or prostitutes (104). The narrator emphasises the revelatory character of the passage by means of repeated disclaimers and assertions of truthfulness: "people wouldn't believe" what happens, the narrator explains; they "would cork their ears" rather than believe the racy stories he is recounting, "but" they are true (107 and 108). These recurring references to the gap between the self-presentation of the British as a civilised, reserved, moral people and the reality

Moses encounters in the London summer culminate with the exposition of their hypocrisy: "it have a lot of people [...] who cork their ears and wouldn't listen but *if they get the chance they do the same thing themselves*" (109, my emphasis). Having debunked the foundations of the supposed English moral superiority, Selvon proceeds to undermine the image of the coloniser's masculinity, a move other writers also make. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Lamming's *Emigrants*, and Ben Jelloun's *La réclusion solitaire*, the masculinity of English men is undermined by various examples of sexual deviance. All three novels relate instances of homosexual advances by English men to West Indians, while Selvon and Lamming also include incidents in which an English man asks a West Indian immigrant to sleep with his (white) lover in his presence: by relinquishing sexual possession of the white woman, the white man diminishes his stature. Ben Jelloun similarly recounts an evening in which his protagonist receives advances from a Frenchman. We will return to this theme and its implications in the next section but in this context, suffice it to say that the formidable image of the European coloniser is deflated in such incidents. The gaze that the novelists of immigration turn onto the imperial city is a demystifying one, unveiling the fallacy of the image the coloniser presented to the colonised.

A similar process of gazing and exposition is at work in Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale....* Except for brief incursions into the past and the lives of the veteran immigrants, the greater part of the novel takes place inside the corridors of the underground railway system, the metro, roaming the bowels of the city, following the errancy of a newly arrived immigrant who makes his way across the city with difficulty, as he cannot read. Boudjedra borrows the conventions of the Nouveau Roman, focusing on objects and detail to the extent that the characters almost disappear (Ibrahim-Ouali, 1995). Far from being a late, derivative borrowing of a style that had been in fashion some years earlier, as Bonn (1994) has suggested, this peculiar style bears an important relation to the purpose of the

novel. Ibrahim-Ouali has shown how Boudjedra's knowing use of intertextuality in all his works and the exaggeration of the traits of Nouveau Roman writing in *Topographie* suggest caricature rather than derivation (Ibrahim-Ouali, 1995, 52; 1998, 144, 236, 239). The convoluted writing style engages the reader, who cannot remain passive (Benarab, 1994, 34; Ibrahim-Ouali, 1998, 229). But Boudjedra's excessive descriptions signify the chaotic effects of the metro environment on the protagonist, effects that are transferred to the reader: his "description differs fundamentally from those of the Nouveau Roman writers" in that it carries meaning and political purpose, whereas they rejected such elements (Ibrahim-Ouali, 1998, 237). We have seen that Boudjedra's novel indicts the oppressive and alienating rationality of the modern Western world through his descriptions of the metro, and Ibrahim-Ouali shows that his style implicates Western writing in the indictment. *Topographie* thus counters a type of Western gaze in its writing much like Selvon's novel does. In appropriating a Western literary discourse and distorting it to fit his own purpose, Boudjedra can, like Lamming, be seen as a "Caliban-like figure, educated by Prospero but rebelling against that education" (Hulme, 2000, 222).

The excessive descriptions of Boudjedra's novel are attributable to a mysterious figure that appears intermittently, the Voyeur. He is not linked specifically to the narration until the end of the novel, where his description and analysis of an advertisement poster uncovers the intentions of the marketers, intentions that the protagonist cannot fathom, because he cannot read. The Voyeur is eventually identified with the veteran immigrant who has helped the protagonist get from Bastille to Concorde. This educated worker, probably a trade union activist, knows his way around the metro system and the city, and knows the ways of the system that oppresses his compatriots and him. In the face of the ubiquitous advertisement posters that disconcert the traveller, his knowledgeable perspective combines with the protagonist's naivety to evade the manipulations

of the capitalist consumer society: neither, for opposite reasons, is taken in by the adverts, whereas the French crowd is shown to be gullible (Ibrahim-Ouali, 1998). Once the Voyeur is identified at the end of the novel, it becomes possible to ascribe to him all the analytical passages that have punctuated the novel and which put forward the alienating character of the urban, technological environment that also oppresses the French: they are controlled and harassed by such advertising posters, by television, by the inescapable symmetry of the modern setting of the metro, and by the necessities of modern life. Ibrahim-Ouali argues that the use of advertising slogans during the descriptions of sordid immigrant lodgings and in connection with the immigrant's death suggests that the society of affluence of which these advertisements form a part feeds upon the labour of the immigrants. Mengouchi and Ramdane, whose immigrant character Hassad roams the city visiting the sleek, modern buildings he has helped build, also stress this point. The narrator/writer explains that "the names of the true builders are always silenced": Hassad's name will never appear on mentions of the celebrated Tour Maine-Montparnasse or the Georges Pompidou centre which he has helped to build and for which some of his friends have died (Mengouchi and Ramdane, 1978, 80). In Boudjedra's novel, the Voyeur's analysis of the means used by advertising men to disguise the unpleasant bodily associations of the products they are trying to sell (toilet paper, tampons), is offered as a parallel for the ways in which the prosperous, post-war French society refuses to admit to the equally unpleasant exploitation of foreign workers that is at its foundation: the unpleasantness is foreclosed by ascribing negative characteristics to the immigrant himself, and the contrast between the insults the crowd flings at the protagonist and its love of courtesy appropriately concludes the description of the contrast between the soft image of an advert selling toilet paper and its scatological subtext.

2.3.3 Voices

The immigrant's returned gaze reveals the hypocrisy of post-war French and British society. It is associated with a new voice, speaking back to the metropolitan dweller. Initially, this is a voice overheard by the reader. Lamming's *The Emigrants* conveyed the reductive gaze of the English on the West Indians and Africans by means of voices, through scenes of dialogue between English characters and immigrants. As we have seen, Lamming carefully demonstrates that the goodwill minor English characters show towards the West Indian immigrants is neutralised by their unacknowledged inherited colonialist outlook (see p. 76). In two further scenes, English characters are shown to rely on inadequate generalisations in dealing with coloured immigrants, neglecting to distinguish between West Indians and Africans. The immigrants' voices are heard as they respond to the mistakes of the English characters. During the tea-party organised by the hostel warden, Dickson's bewildered response to the warden's wife's comments on African dancing, "Do I really look like an African?", provokes her embarrassment (104). In the next scene, a policeman enters a barbershop catering to West Indians and Africans. He stresses that "no-one wants to bully" the barber or his customers, but his simplistic view of coloured immigrants becomes clear when he explains that by "your people", he means "the coloured folk" (157). He does not understand that his homogenising gaze triggers the surliness he encounters. When a second mention prompts a Jamaican man to ask: "Which people?", his reaction is "a mixture of kindliness and bewilderment" indicating his sincerity as well as his ignorance (158). In both incidents, the English characters' attempts at communication are hampered by their unwitting reliance on a colonial outlook defined by oversimplification. But the juxtaposition of the scenes renders the immigrants' speech intelligible to the reader: the latter is privy to the preceding debate among the barber's customers on the validity of the idea of a unity of African or West Indian people and has witnessed Mrs. James's discomfiture. The

reader is therefore immediately aware of the cause for the Jamaican's response, but remains external to the scene.

Selvon also uncovers the disconcerting gap between the politeness of the English and their prejudice in *The Lonely Londoners* by recounting incidents witnessed by his characters or through their voices, as when veteran Londoner Moses explains "English diplomacy" to newcomer Galahad (40). Whereas Lamming's reader overheard voices speaking in Caribbean accents but remained on the familiar grounds of a narration in standard English, Selvon's narrative voice in this novel conspicuously taps into the mainly oral tradition of Caribbean Creoles. The "modified [...] dialect" he uses was designed to allow non-Caribbean audiences to understand and engage with his writing better (Dasenbrock and Jussawalla, 1995; Fabre, 1988, 66-67). But the narrator seems at times to address specifically those people in the Caribbean who have not experienced migration. In *The Housing Lark*, the narrator's comically disgruntled description of the unpredictable English weather seems to continue this trend, explaining English behaviours to West Indians who have yet to experience them first-hand. But there is a transition when the narrator begins addressing an identifiably English reader directly, taking him or her to task for the distanced and indifferent stance with which the English act out their prejudices and racism. The narrator interrupts his story-telling to deride English racist habits of thought, refusing to describe his characters physically because "what difference it make to you? All you interested in is that he black—to English people, every black man look the same" (Selvon, 1990, 24). This sudden shift of the narrator's gaze out from the pages of the book onto the reader exposes a narrow-mindedness that was seldom admitted to. Selvon's bold, extra-diegetic move in *The Housing Lark* has quite a different effect from Lamming's presentation. It involves taking on the stance of a Fool or, in the Caribbean context, the Anansi spider who provokes more powerful animals in the folk-tale tradition. The European reader is implicated in the novel's

comments on racism rather than remaining external to them.

This challenging use of the narrative voice also occurs in the Maghribi novels. The Voyeur's knowledgeable stance in Boudjedra's *Topographie* provokes the chief investigator's suspicion from the outset and, although merely a witness in the case, he is detained. Boudjedra's technique, in which the voices of various narrators take over suddenly with no warning from punctuation marks, means that, as in *The Housing Lark*, when the voyeur confronts his arbitrary treatment and the absurdity of his being accused of the murder, the protest rings out as if to the reader. As in Michel Butor's *La Modification*, in which the narration is carried out entirely in the second person ("vous", you), the lack of dialogic punctuation here gives the impression that the Voyeur addresses the reader directly, even though it is clear that he is addressing a character in the novel. This drives home the criminalising tendencies of the French police institution, which have been suggested throughout the novel. This final twist in which a fellow immigrant is accused and the violent youths, whose existence is known but whose responsibility is diminished by the chief's qualification of them as "pranksters" ("plaisantins", 231), shows the pervasiveness of institutional racism. Not only is this accusation the culmination of a process whereby a priori suspicion has lead the policeman to investigate the victim rather than the perpetrator, but the novel's way of mediating characters' voices implicates the reader in this arbitrary decision that runs against the due course of law. This address to the reader transfers the culpability from the police system to the whole society.

La réclusion solitaire, through its first-person narration, can also be considered to address the reader directly. There is no omniscient narrator; various voices speak in succession, presenting different aspects of the immigrant's experience: the protagonist, a twenty-six year-old Maghribi man, occasionally relinquishes the narrative space to other immigrants or to characters located in the Maghrib, or to the image of a woman that haunts his imagination. The protagonist's tone

differs from those of Boudjedra and Selvon's narrators; it is emotional and draws on pathos to engage the reader, an appropriate measure when the protagonist's purpose is to deconstruct the figure of the immigrant worker as pure labour power and restore his full depth of humanity by asserting and claiming an emotional and desiring life. For most of the novel, this is not done through a dialogic address. The polyphonic narrative simply presents each narrator's experience, or the narrators address each other through letters. But in a small number of passages concerning the colonial relation and racial violence, the protagonist addresses the reader: "My country, your bosses know it well" (49). By making his character address the reader directly to express his grievances, Ben Jelloun operates a gesture similar to Boudjedra's and Selvon's, implicating his reader in the historical fault of colonisation and the contemporary issues of racism and exploitation.

Marginalised, confined to underground spaces, the immigrant character is nevertheless present in the metropolis, and gazes, then speaks back to the dominant group, baldly drawing attention to its flaws and hypocrisy. While all the novelists engage with the issue of racism and discrimination in their postures of gazing and speaking back at the metropolis, their approaches to a large extent reproduce the split in the treatment of immigration issues in the social sciences observed by Castles et al. (1984). Following the continental focus, Ben Jelloun, Boudjedra, and Mengouchi and Ramdane target industrial capitalism and consider racism as one of its constituent elements, whereas Selvon and Lamming follow the British approach in their focus on race relations, with little attention to capitalist structures.

2.3.4 Gendered gaze

The reference to Djebar's analysis of the gaze of the veiled woman above prompts us to interrogate the gendered identity of the immigrant's returned gaze, which is

almost exclusively male. Novelistic representations of Maghribi immigrant workers in France elude the figure of the Maghribi woman in a foreign land. The migration of whole Algerian families had begun during the struggle for independence, prompted by the violence in Algeria, and family reunion continued in the 1960s and 1970s (Sayad, 2004; Voissar and Ducastelle, 1988). Despite this, the Maghribi novelists obey the traditional view of the immigrant as a lone man who leaves his family behind at home and, perhaps, the endogamous injunction to keep the women within the group, hidden from the view of outsiders. The Maghribi woman is absent from the novels of Chraïbi, Kateb, Boudjedra, Ben Jelloun, and Farès. On the rare occasions where a Maghribi woman is represented in France, a certain tension reminds us of the perceived anomaly of this situation, revealing the anxiety of Maghribi men to keep Maghribi women under control when they are abroad. They are otherwise in danger of being considered in the same light as the white women, who are perceived as disrespectable. This anxiety emerges in *L'homme qui enjamba la mer*, where Hassad is anxious to marry his daughter Zoulikha to a respectable Maghribi young man. Zoulikha herself occupies the thoughts of her betrothed Zoubir but is almost invisible and inaudible in the narrative: the reader never knows she is there unless a male character refers to her explicitly, and the men or the narrator take charge of conveying her utterances to the reader, so that she is not heard. Far more space is devoted to the thoughts of her father and her suitor on the subject of her marriage. This situation can easily be related to the place of women in stoutly patriarchal societies, but even in the Algerian context the novel is conservative in this respect. Not only had several Algerian women become published novelists by 1978, so that female voices were beginning to be heard, but in the following year *Une femme pour mon fils* by Ghalem (1985) presented an attempt by a male author to explore the situation of a young woman negotiating the traditional and modern aspects of Algerian society. Nevertheless, in the context of immigration, even this novel sensitive

to modernisation and women's desire for more freedom and agency reaffirms the anxiety of preserving Maghribi women's respectability, endangered by the foreign context. Hocine, one of the main characters, is frustrated when his parents marry him to a young Algerian girl and returns to France, where he enjoys freedom from family duties and access to French women who are not sexually inhibited. In a brief scene, he sees a Maghribi woman in the streets of Paris and is immediately attracted to her, but this woman's husband suddenly appears, lays his claim, and drives Hocine away. Maghribi novelists depicting the immigrant experience maintain a textual confinement around the women of the tribe, shielding them from the gaze of the white reader. Djebar's essay calls attention to the continued confinement of women after the liberation of Algeria. The emergence of women writers within the literary flourishing in Maghribi literature has provided a returned gaze of its own, confronting both the coloniser and the Maghribi man, and sometimes set in the metropolis. A comparison of the silencing trend in men's novels about immigration with narratives of the Maghribi woman in France by women such as Assia Djebar and Taos Amrouche, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Lamming and Selvon took note of the relatively high number of women migrating from the Caribbean to Britain in the period (Peach, 1968). In the 1950s, both writers presented as minor characters women who have migrated from the Caribbean. But, in Lamming's novel, the women are not involved in responding to the metropolis in the same way as the men are. In Lamming's *The Emigrants*, the women are not included in the reflections on the relationship with England and the migratory impulse, whether on the boat or in Tornado's room, even though their purpose in migrating is probably, as much as for the men, to get 'a better break.' The only explicit discussion of a woman's intentions in migrating sets her apart from the men: Miss Bis is avoiding scandal rather than seeking opportunity. This takes no account of the patterns of migration in the Caribbean,

where women had used migration, like men, to constitute a capital and buy land, and migrated to Britain in search of higher wages (Thomas-Hope, 1999; Chamberlain, 1998; Byron, 1998). The women's voices are heard in a single scene, in the hair salon waiting room. The scene flags the fact that they also experience racism and must, like the men in the barber shop, devise strategies to resist the negative attention of the British. This is, however, framed in terms of cosmetic concerns. The conversation also pertains to sexual politics in immigration, as both white and black men neglect black women. We will return to this below. Lamming seems to feel that women were only preoccupied with finding a husband, not with analysing their position in Britain. Simoes da Silva (2000) and Nair (1996) have shown how Lamming excludes women from the development of a national vision in *The Emigrants*. In *Water With Berries*, the figure of the Caribbean woman in Britain has disappeared.

Selvon's approach in *The Lonely Londoners* seems similar: the women migrants are minor characters and fall under the objectifying language the "boys" use for all women. But Selvon's novels show a gradual engagement with the increasing agency of Caribbean women in Britain which is a result of their engagement with the metropolis. The language of objectification that has been noted by so many critics is a clear sign of the articulation of racism and sexism analysed by bell hooks, in which the black man and the white man share the impulse to establish themselves by dominating women (hooks, 1991). Nevertheless, the women are shown to resist this situation: as Forbes (2005) has observed, Agnes and Tanty put an end to Lewis's domestic violence by calling on the protection available to them under British law. The narrator also recognises, to an extent, that women also seek 'a better break' in Britain when he matter-of-factly notes that some of them take up prostitution because "they have to make a living" (107). Selvon and his narrator do not dwell on this, but the mention is a comment on the difficulties faced by the women and perhaps a recognition that

those difficulties are not exactly the same as those the men face. In both cases, the women are in a difficult situation but take advantage of their position in the metropolis: the prostitutes exploit the white men's exoticist attraction to black women by charging higher prices, although Selvon does not obscure the dangers of the trade. This emphasis remains, however, a way of confining women in a role as sex objects. In *The Housing Lark*, female characters represent a more assertive presence and they participate in the novel's speaking back to the colonial outlook and racism prevalent in the metropolis. They complain as much as the men about the difficulty of escaping poverty within the context of discrimination in housing and employment and take more initiative in resisting this situation within the limits imposed by Britain: they are determined to bring the scheme to buy a house to completion. Moreover, in a crucial scene enacting the encounter between the immigrants and the natives and former colonisers, the women participate equally in responding to and destabilising the colonial relation. In the sequence of scenes narrating an excursion to Hampton court, the Caribbean presence is somewhat threatening to the English, as the group from Brixton refuses to behave according to the strictures of British etiquette. The excess is expressed through voices, shouting rather than speaking; food, as the gargantuan picnic of staple Caribbean dishes is contrasted with frugal English sandwiches; and ease of mind, as the visitors ignore decorum and recline on the grass. The narrator "suppose old Henry [VIII] was still alive" and imagines his surprise upon seeing "all these swarthy characters walking about in his gardens" (118). Significantly, "in reality it was Teena who look out the window", not King Henry. She appropriates his position not only through a gaze over the property but vocally also, through a loud exchange with her husband that shocks the English attendants. Teena is visiting the palace and teaching her children history. Although it is unclear whether any of the women participate in the discussion on English history after lunch, Caribbean women are an integral part of the Hampton Court sequence and

its exposition of the presence of Caribbean immigrants in Britain, their belonging there by virtue of colonial ties, and their awareness of the power relations involved even in simply narrating history. Their knowing engagement with history suggests their superiority over the disapproving English, as they at least know about English history as well as their own. This awareness of the colonial ins and outs of their presence in Britain gives them the strength to conduct their business as they see fit, in all its freewheeling, disordered *joie de vivre*, without feeling threatened by snooty English museum attendants or bus drivers. The good-natured chaos of the party is jointly produced by the men and the women. In *Moses Ascending*, this participation continues, as one of the Caliban figures who fights the English is a woman born in England: Brenda. She is a powerful character who manipulates the men who see her as an object (Harney, 1996). Forbes (2005) remarks that, although Brenda is British, she relies on weapons from her West Indian heritage to do so and, in her commitment to the Black Power Party, she takes a confrontational attitude to mainstream Britain, affirming difference rather than assimilation. Nevertheless, in using the immigrant figure because of its potentially destabilising presence in the metropolis and as a catalyst for responding to colonial discourse, the Maghribi and Caribbean novelists under study here to a large extent reproduced sexist assumptions that privileged a male perspective.

2.4 White relations

All the immigrant characters to varying degrees exhibit a challenging response to the coloniser through their presence and their actions in the metropolis. A particular challenge to colonial history and the social configuration of colonial spaces emerges in relationships between the North Africans or the West Indians and white French and British women. Many of the male characters in the novels under study here avidly pursue sexual relationships with white women, notably in the novels of Lamming, Selvon and Boudjedra (see chapter 1.3.1). This can be

seen as part of the freedom of the metropolis: in Caribbean societies, where strict hierarchies of class associated with skin colour are in effect (as is apparent in the women's discussion in Lamming's *Emigrants*), and in Maghribi societies where the coloniser separated himself from the colonised by means of legal status and urban segregation, the white woman was a status symbol, an icon of the power and respectability of the dominant class, and was unattainable. She was yet desirable because of the prestige associated with whiteness by virtue of the social, economic and power divisions of colonial society. To represent the post/colonial immigrants' intercourse with white women therefore also constitutes a response to colonial strictures: one very concrete way of reversing the colonial relation is to appropriate or possess what was forbidden.

> I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*.
>
> Now [...] who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.
>
> [...] I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. (Fanon, 1986)

To have sexual relations with a white woman was, in part or symbolically, to seize some of the power from which the colonised was barred, whether this was done in a spirit of transgressive rebellion or of conforming assimilation.

As hooks (1991) has shown, this attitude is based on a sexist logic that the black man shares with the white man. Hooks declines to analyse why the social reality of widespread rapes of black women by white men within the system of plantation slavery was transmuted into an enduring stereotype of black male sexual excess and dangerousness, but the two derive from the same logic. If, as hooks asserts, "the intent of this act was to continually remind dominated men of their loss of power", if "rape was a gesture of symbolic castration", then by the same token, any sexual relations between a black man and a white woman resulted in the white man's symbolic castration and must be prevented (57). If the master asserted his dominance by constantly reminding the black man that

the latter could not protect 'his' women, then he needed to protect his own; the development of negative stereotypes of black men as predatory, probably predicated on the valuation of male slaves in terms of sexual potency for economic profits (see Phillips, 2002), readily fits into discursive and coercive strategies to this effect. The common logic here is the patriarchal consideration of women not for themselves but as attributes of men, and the inscription and resolution of conflicts between men onto women's bodies. The consequence, as hooks adds, is that "both groups [white men and black men] have equated freedom with manhood, and manhood with the right of men to have indiscriminate access to the bodies of women" (59). This is a logical extension of the fact that "enslaved black men shared some basic patriarchal values with white men, expressed in terms of an assertion of masculine authority and power over women" (Beckles, 2004, 238).

Fanon associates this desire with the violent process of decolonisation: in the segregated, Manichean world of the colony, "The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession – all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible" (Fanon, 1967b, 30). In the novels of immigration, however, sexual possession of the white woman does not translate into freedom; moreover, they are not necessarily predicated on an anti-colonial stance, but pertain rather to assimilation. None of the relationships depicted transcend the clichés of colonial discourse, or the power-plays of the colonial and post-colonial situation. Selvon represented relationships between Afro-Caribbean or Indo-Caribbean men and white women in some of his novels set in Trinidad, and has commented in this regard that such relations are inscribed in "the whole concept of being colonized", which entails being "indoctrinated" in "looking up towards the white man as if it is [...] a goal to be attained" (Dance, 1992, 235). In *The Lonely Londoners*, the narrator's observation that in London "a spade

wouldn't hit a spade when it have so much other talent on parade" suggests that the 'boys' follow a similar logic (107). Waldik's relationship with his lover Simone in *Les Boucs*, like Dickson's attraction to his landlady in *The Emigrants*, arises from his belief in the illusion of the civilising mission. As we have seen, both characters migrate to further their education (see p. 41); being educated in the traditions and culture of the coloniser, they assume a belonging in French and British society respectively. All of these characters share an assumption that they can develop relationships with white women on a basis of equality (although, in the case of Selvon's boys, those equal terms do not include commitment), and all are disappointed. Selvon's narrator makes it clear that the white men and women who sleep with West Indians do so on the basis of stereotypes of primitivity and sexual potency: "the cruder you are the more the girls like you you can't [...] be polite and civilise they don't want that sort of thing at all they want you to live up to the films and stories", he explains (108). When a Jamaican attempts to have a cultural conversation with one of his conquests, he discovers that "the number not interested in passing on any knowledge she only interested in one thing" (109). Waldik's position is little different, even though he is in a stable relationship with a white woman and they have a child. Despite his attempts to resist racist stereotyping, by the time of the events described in the novel, Waldik has fallen victim to it. His identification with the stereotype shows through in his relation to his lover:

> elle [...] humait mon thorax, tu sens le sauvage, une voix toute d'excuse. Et je la reprenais dans mes bras de sauvage.
>
> (she [...] would smell my torso, you smell like a savage, a very apologetic voice. And I would take her back in my savage's arms. 19)

We might have thought Simone was one of the rare, open-minded, anti-racist natives to be found in the metropolis. Instead, it appears her attraction has exactly the same motivations as the other French characters' rejection of immigrants.

She is drawn to him because he is exotic; she does not contest the representation of North Africans as dirty, uncivilised, untrustworthy. Waldik responds to this categorisation, accepts her definition of him as a savage. But this degrades him, and his whole life, down to the most intimate interactions, is suffused with the hostility implicit in such categorisations: "even my sperm spurted full of hatred" (19). He begins harassing her, though he does not assault her, until she throws him out of the house. Selvon's Jamaican, meanwhile, "thump" the woman who refused to talk to him about culture when she calls him "a black bastard" "in the heat of emotion" (109). Disappointment at the failure of assimilation through relationships with white women, then, often leads to violence in these novels (however alienated and unconscious the project of assimilation may be, as in Selvon's novel, where most of the boys have no intention of becoming British).

This violence is especially prominent in Lamming's *Water With Berries*. The actor Derek and the painter Teeton both attack white women at the end of the novel, following the realisation that they had deluded themselves regarding their position in England. We have seen that Teeton at the opening of the novel mistook his position in his landlady's house as one of partnership. Likewise Derek, whose career has descended from playing Othello at Stratford-upon-Avon to playing a succession of corpses, rejects his Indo-Caribbean friend Roger's suggestions that this evolution is related to racism. Yet in the course of the novel he comes to contrast his own difficulty in defending himself with Othello's confidence and ability to publicise his strengths; he also comes to recognise the pervasiveness of racist feeling in Britain when his friend O'Donnell, in a fit of rage, insults Roger in his presence. Significantly, O'Donnell suggests that "There ain't a nigger whatever the shade who wouldn't ditch his closest friend for a piece of white tail" (Lamming, 1971, 210). The combination of these events leads Derek to question "whether his sense of personal integrity had sprung from some source of self-deception" and wonder whether he has deliberately shielded himself from an

awareness of discrimination (215). Moreover, O'Donnell's suggestion may have the same effect on Derek as the realisation for Eldridge Cleaver that most black men in America had a preference for white women. Being aware of the oppression of African Americans, Cleaver felt disgust that he had been "brainwashed" into desiring white women "by the very process the whites employed to indoctrinate themselves with their own group standards" (10). Though he later came to reject his own actions, Cleaver initially turned this hatred to what he considered a political use, in raping white women to express his impulse for insurrection. Derek, newly aware of his illusions and of the true nature of his position in Britain as either unwanted or as the "property" of his agent, and troubled by his involvement in his friend Roger's marital strife, rapes a white actress on stage. Teeton, having also encountered visceral racism not only in his landlady's brother-in-law but in her eyes as well, shattering his illusion of partnership, kills her after she saves him by killing her brother-in-law. In this novel, Lamming depicts the alienated state of the West Indian who, having been indoctrinated in the British colonial discourse of civilisation, has been beguiled into forgetting the atrocities of Caribbean history and accepting a post-colonial situation in which Britain retains her mantle of propriety and a dominant position, without atonement. He had already remarked on this particularity when contrasting the decolonisation processes in the West Indies and in Africa in 1960 in *The Pleasures of Exile*. *Water With Berries* is an expression of Lamming's belief that both the West Indians and the British must engage with the history of violence and the horrors of slavery before a future can be envisaged, and that this burden of history cannot be resolved without violence (Tarrieu, 1988; Kent, 1992). Yet this expression rests on the victimisation of women, once again used as a territory for the conflict.

The pursuit and possession of white women, then, consolidates the very patriarchal logic deployed by the coloniser. Further, by acting voracious or violent,

the post/colonial immigrants conform to the stereotypes elaborated in the colonial context to criminalise and control the colonised. Lamming's novel echoes the alarmist, xenophobic speeches of Enoch Powell to make this clear: after the rape, the audience "had a lucid vision of the cities submerged by endless tides of blood" (242). This is a reference to Powell's much-publicised, so-called "Rivers of blood" speech, given only three years before the publication of the novel, in which the Conservative politician envisaged dominance of the black man over the white in Britain and dire racial strife if immigration were allowed to continue (Powell, 1991). Similarly in Chraïbi's *Les Boucs* Simone's suspicious, prejudiced neighbours see Waldik's breakdown and harassment of her as a justification for the warnings they had previously given her about living with a North African.

Ben Jelloun is particularly explicit about the ways in which such stereotypes are used to oppress the post/colonial immigrant worker. In his essay *La plus haute des solitudes*, he explains how the immigrant worker falls victim to two contradictory representations: "that of a violent, sexually obsessed man, and that of a transparency – a man that would exist only as an object in the production process, excluded from desire and emotional life" (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 16). The protagonist of his novel notes that in the repressive environment created for Maghribi workers in France, any attempt by the Maghribi man to establish his full humanity is treated with scorn as subversive, and shows the immediate application of stereotypes to this effect: "To protest was already a provocation. It was doing politics; being a candidate for the rape of their little girls; being sexually obsessed; being a professional agitator" (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 97). This representation converges with that of the immigrant as a transparency to exclude the immigrant from serious commerce with "respectable" French women. The protagonist tries to smile at French women on the street, but they "[throw his] smile back at [him] in a crunched up wet Kleenex" (37). This image is significant, as it folds in the various aspects of natives' reactions to immigrant workers.

The image of a disposable industrial product exposes the fact that this is exactly the state to which France attempts to assimilate immigrants. The immigrant worker's presence in the nation is problematic, and must therefore have a justification, which is his work. He thus becomes reduced to this function, which comes to define his whole existence (Sayad, 2004). Ben Jelloun shows that, because of this, the immigrant‘ is no longer considered a human being worthy of social relations. The element of physical disgust and repulsion triggered by a used tissue full of mucus evokes viscerally racist views of the immigrant as inferior, even animal-like. Just as, as Stoler (1996) has shown, boundaries between colonised and coloniser groups had to be carefully policed through the control of sexual behaviour in the colonies, so at home, boundaries between the national polity and the newcomers are protected by excluding the immigrant from the realm of respectability. As a result, his only experience of white women takes place with prostitutes, or with women who are not accepted as respectable (Collins, 2001). Boudjedra also refers to this consequence of the policing of the borders of the national group, describing the "sleazy bars specialising in ultra-quick and relatively affordable tricks to allow the foreign workers confined within watertight circuits, on the margins of real life and expelled outside of any emotional life, [...] to evacuate their excess anxiety and feverishness" (242). In Britain too, there was great resistance to relationships between West Indian immigrants and respectable English women. Pilkington (1996) explains: "There was a common assumption that a white woman involved with a black man was bound to be a prostitute, as no 'respectable' woman would so demean herself" (176). This is hinted at in Lamming's *Emigrants* when the women complain that West Indian men socialise with women who have inferior social standards, and in *The Lonely Londoners* where the boys visit prostitutes and otherwise socialise with young women who have come from Europe rather than English girls. Despite the easier access to white women in the metropolis, the post/colonial immigrants find themselves in

a social system that applies the same logic of sexism and respectability as in the colonial context, with the result that they are still excluded.

Perhaps the clearest sign of the novelists' perception of the failure of sexual relations with white women to successfully contest or reverse colonial relations is the fruitlessness of all the encounters involved. Relations with prostitutes are so by definition, but more serious relationships are also concerned. In both of Lamming's immigration novels, pregnancies resulting from such relations are aborted. In *The Emigrants* the reason given is economic: Phillip might lose his funding, and therefore his opportunity to become educated, if the pregnancy became known. In *Water With Berries*, Derek connects his friend Roger's horror of having a "mixed-race" child with a misguided desire for purity, born of shameful feelings about his society of origin, which is characterised by ethnic diversity. In the light of the love affair between Miss Bis/Una Solomon and Frederick, who both blindly repeat their previous, ill-fated engagement, Lamming may be commenting on the undesirability of establishing serious relationships between West Indians and the English until both can see clearly the legacy of the colonial relation. Chraïbi gives a similarly gloomy treatment to the issue of Waldik's relationship with Simone: the child is seriously ill with meningitis at the opening of the novel and it is unclear whether he survives. This pattern in the treatment of cross-cultural sexual relationships suggests that the novelists are pessimistic about the future of immigrants in the imperial metropolis, an issue to which we will return in chapter 4. The writers use the post/colonial immigrant's liminal position as a vantage point from which to challenge and deflate the coloniser's discourse about civilisation and cultural superiority. Yet they also give an account of the damaging consequences of this imposed marginality on individual immigrants, as chapter 3 will show.

Chapter 3

Psychic Dissolution

3.1 Introduction

The dominant experience for the immigrant characters is one of psychological de-structuring. Many of the novels that form my main corpus make use of the experience of madness. It is prominent in the novels of Lamming, Chraïbi and Ben Jelloun, but even Selvon and Boudjedra make brief mentions of the notion that madness is a threat for the immigrant. In *Topographie* the old men who have returned to the village, worried about the failure of their obscure manoeuvres to dissuade the protagonist from emigrating himself, exclaim in disbelief: "The idiot! He doesn't understand that that's where we went mad" (Boudjedra, 1986, 149), while Selvon's protagonist in *Moses Ascending* notes incidentally that "Big City has gone mad, walks about streets muttering to himself, ill-kempt and unshaven, and does not recognise anyone" (Selvon, 1985, 10). The presence of mental illness in novels about immigrant workers to some extent reflects reality. The experience of mental health difficulties among immigrants, including psychotic breakdown, has interested some psychiatrists, and epidemiological research has shown that immigrants are more vulnerable to mental illness than both the residents of their destination society and their compatriots who remain at home (Littlewood and

Lipsedge, 1997). Lamming, Chraïbi and Ben Jelloun all choose to make experiences of psychotic breakdown prominent in their depictions of immigrant workers. This chapter will examine how they establish this condition as a representative experience, then it will analyse the forms of mental illness presented and the meanings they are given.

3.2 A representative condition

The writers who foreground mental illness as a major component of immigrant experience in their novels use various devices to present it as a representative condition of the post/colonial immigrant.

3.2.1 Lamming

Towards the end of Lamming's *The Emigrants*, Dickson, a schoolteacher from Barbados who had distanced himself from the group on the boat owing to his ambition of finding a job as a teacher and studying for an M.A. in England, is brought by the Governor to the home of Tornado and Lilian. Dickson is incoherent, almost unconscious, and flees as soon as he becomes aware of the others staring at him (Lamming, 1980, 199). These are stereotypical signs of 'madness'. In the same section, the affluent Redheads' party is disrupted by the arrival of Higgins, who had disappeared after being wrongfully arrested on suspicion of carrying drugs. Higgins explains he has just come from a nearby mental hospital. It is significant that Higgins, one of the unqualified workers, should barge in on the middle-class Redheads' party, where Dickson was expected. Dickson's intrusion is prepared by several mentions of him, but in the context of the party, where guests wonder why he hasn't arrived. When he does, it is not at the party, but in the working-class setting of a basement flat. The intrusion of mental illness in these contrasting domestic settings, through characters who respectively belong

to the other setting, acts as a kind of unifying force in a section of the novel where social divisions among the West Indians come to the fore. Another major character, Collis, does not suffer a spectacular breakdown, but presents strange perceptual symptoms suggestive of psychological trouble. It is recalled during his chance encounter with Lilian at the end of the novel that Dickson and Higgins have disappeared. Collis becomes aware of the similarity between the fates of these two very different characters:

> It seemed such an absurd coincidence that he and Higgins who were so different in their ambitions and their actual equipment should have suffered the same estrangement. [...] I suddenly felt that Dickson's fate might in a way have been awaiting me, or any man who chose one country rather than another in the illusion that it was only a larger extension of the home which he had left. (228)

This passage reinforces the structural parallel, making their representative character explicit. It also offers a framework to interpret their fate. Collis' epiphany links this experience of madness to the colonial situation, in particular the notion that the bonds between Great Britain and her colonies were more than bonds of economic exploitation. This final interpretation can be contrasted with the behaviour of Mrs Redhead, who is scolded by her sister for paying more attention to her English guests than her West Indian ones. The danger of psychotic breakdown acts as a warning to West Indians who are loyal to Britain that they should abandon the illusion of their belonging in British society. Finally, the main characters in Lamming's later novel *Water With Berries* also experience moments, in situations of conflict with white, female characters, when their sense of self is shattered. The pervasiveness of these effects suggests that Lamming elevates the condition of inner fragmentation to a characteristic of the experience of Caribbean immigrants to Britain.

3.2.2 Ben Jelloun

Ben Jelloun presents several immigrants enduring psychological afflictions: "the blonde, brown-eyed man" suffers from erectile dysfunction; "the stateless bird" has suffered a breakdown and has had psychiatric treatment. It is perhaps not surprising that Ben Jelloun should choose to approach the phenomenon of Maghribi immigration from the angle of mental illness. *La réclusion solitaire* is a fictional adaptation of his doctoral work in social psychiatry, in which he provided counselling in a psychiatric unit specialising in services to Maghribi workers, so that his experience of the situation of the average immigrant was heavily coloured by this issue. The protagonist and narrator represents a synthesis of his two friends' afflictions: his penis is "cold and lifeless," and he has aches and pains he cannot localize (101, 34-35). But he suffers from further psychic dissolution, drifting to "a field beyond words" (56) because of the break-up of his social ties: "[J]e traversais les passants et les voitures. J'étais devenu une transparence." ("I crossed the passers-by and the cars. I had become a transparency," 69). Moreover, the limited detail provided about *La réclusion solitaire*'s anonymous narrator-protagonist makes him a representative figure. He is 26 years old, lives in a hostel, like thousands of immigrant workers in 1970s France, and has a low-grade job in the building industry. His experience of mental illness is the novel's main focus: he announces its predominance early on, and the reader follows his mental journey of withdrawal into imaginary life and his hallucination of a relationship with the photograph of a woman.

Over and above synthesizing the various psychological or psychiatric conditions affecting North African immigrant workers in France, the protagonist is elevated to the status of a spokesperson for immigrants in France through the play of narrative focus. Gaudin (1998) has argued that Tahar Ben Jelloun's early novels all make claims to authenticity through the use of first-person narrators. The mix of a confessional mode of narration with an undefined identity makes

Ben Jelloun's protagonists into ideal vessels for the representation of a people. Benarab (1994), in a cogent reading of the novel's narrative technique, has shown how the narrator-protagonist facilitates other narrators who provide accounts illuminating complementary aspects of the immigrant experience. He reports the experience of his room-mates, "the blonde, brown-eyed man" and "the stateless bird," but also hands over the narration to a young student at home and to an enigmatic character called Moha. Although it does not seem certain that, as Benarab argues, the photograph which becomes the focus of the narrator's hallucinations is always the main trigger in this transmission, Benarab is correct in linking the facilitation of other narrators with the protagonist's mental illness. He argues that this yielding of the floor is a sign of the narrator's diminishing capacity for communication, resulting from the oppression he suffers (in particular in terms of a repressive physical environment, the immigrant hostel). Indeed, the hallucinatory escape into a field hidden inside a crack in the wall of his room denotes a break from reality. But, Benarab points out, this very weakening of the narrative function, shifting towards a psychotic discourse, that is, a discourse that does not distinguish between the real and the imaginary (in that there is a failure to refer to external reality in those moments; see Todorov, 1978), allows the text to become polyphonic as the other narrators come in. Through these multiple voices, Ben Jelloun can delineate the interlinked factors leading to psychic dissolution and set out its multifarious effects. Not only is the mentally ill manual worker the representative figure of the immigrant in this novel, but mental illness becomes a tool for the comprehensive representation of the immigrant experience.

3.2.3 Chraïbi

Chraïbi uses several avenues to make his protagonist Waldik into a representative figure for Maghribi immigrants, but not all are convincing. Waldik is unusual in

the fact that he is literate, and speaks and reads French, but his living and working experience in France differs little from that of the average illiterate and unskilled migrant. His education does not save him from being assigned the hardest physical tasks once he does find work: when they realise he is not a union member, his employers send him to work in the deepest pits of the mines. His French colleagues refuse to socialise with him, seeing him as no different from other Maghribi immigrants. Finally, the catalogue of his successive dwellings, if they can be called that, shows that his material experience differs little from that of his compatriots.

Waldik's project to write a novel taking stock of the situation of the Maghribi in France and denouncing it, is also framed as a way in which he is representative: it is envisaged as a testimony from the inside. He tells his lover Simone:

> I am convinced that I, an element of this variegated mosaic press agencies name the North-Africans, I had to, not redeem myself individually for the society in which I live in order to have a right to its sympathy, *but redeem the North-Africans*. For them, suffer in my human dignity and my human flesh. [...] Then translate this into a kind of testimony. (65)

Chraïbi has Waldik present this testimony as an attempt to redeem all of the Maghribi population in France in the eyes of the French, because his fate is inescapably linked to that of the group as a whole. He cannot improve his lot as an individual. Even though he is educated, others' opinions of him will always be coloured by the perception of North Africans as a group. Waldik compares his attempt to represent North Africans for the French and change the latters' opinion to a Christ-like function. The object of his endeavour is vilified but he feels that the power of his bond to his compatriots means he can never be vilified by the association.

> But to bear something within oneself [he says], deeply, intensely, for a very long time [...] hated, despised, beaten, but with the certainty that as long as one bears this something nothing can happen to you, nor debase you in your own eyes, exactly like Christ carrying his Cross

(65)

The parallel with Christ is intended to reinforce the notion of a common fate and to expand on this by suggesting that the protagonist becomes representative through symbolically taking on the group's fate and becoming the archetypal immigrant. This seems an awkward manner of establishing Waldik's position, and might not be very effective. The Christic theme is not strongly sustained and not necessarily noticeable on a first reading. The reviewer in *La Croix*, a Catholic newspaper, went so far as to say readers would not notice it unless previously aware of Chraïbi's intention (Guissard, 1955). Waldik, when he makes this speech, is undergoing such tension that he will later suffer psychologically, to the point of attempting suicide. There is not as strong a sense here as in Lamming's or Ben Jelloun's work that the ensuing madness is to be taken as a representative mode of experience linked to migration, but the fact that Chraïbi goes to such lengths to establish Waldik as a representative figure, only to have him suffer a mental breakdown, is likely to be significant.

3.3 A pathogenic encounter

Lamming, Chraïbi and Ben Jelloun all portray psychic dissolution as a major component and a characteristic of the immigrant experience by establishing that their characters are representative. Their novels present different forms of mental illlness but the causes are comparable. All three novelists show clearly that psychic dissolution is not merely representative of the immigrant condition but is in fact caused by the experience of being an immigrant worker in the metropolis.

3.3.1 Shattered illusions: Lamming and Chraïbi

Lamming provides a specific framework of interpretation for his characters' travails. In *The Emigrants*, the only clues we have as to Higgins' breakdown are

the early demise of the plans he had made for his sojourn in England, and his wrongful arrest for suspected possession of drugs. This narrows down the possible causes for his paranoia to discrimination by English institutions. Dickson's madness hangs as an enigma over the later stages of the novel. He does not seem to have as strong a reason as Higgins for breaking down. His confrontation with unthinking English prejudice in earlier episodes has been mild compared to Higgins', and not worse than that encountered by other characters. The fateful episode of his breakdown is recounted at the end of the novel. Dickson, lying homeless in Hyde Park, relives the scene. We understand that he had been a lodger with an English woman he had met on the boat, and had thought that she wanted to become romantically involved with him. His memories are rendered in a stream-of-consciousness technique which displays his mental illness through the breakdown of syntax, but also allows the reader to apprehend his aspirations:

> out of them all she chose me [...] nothing like the intelligence it can reduce all difference to the understanding she and me [...] what could have happened [...] to make her choose me *the common language of a common civilisation* reason she could see he could see. (254, my emphasis)

Though some physical attraction is undeniable, this passage shows that Dickson expected far more than a sexual relationship. As an educated West Indian, he had naturally assumed a community of culture with the English, and was blind to potential obstacles to it. The reader might not remember it at this point, but the landlady is presented towards the beginning of the novel as a philistine with only "a vague sense of imperial relations," having offended a Venezuelan passenger by remarking that "Spain was once very nice to those countries [South America]" (31). The reader is soon reminded of the remoteness of the possibility of a true intellectual exchange between Dickson and his landlady. Having prepared for an intimate rendezvous, and feeling overwhelmed by his desire, Dickson is shocked to see her enter with her sister and comment blithely that "they only wanted to see what he looked like" (Lamming, 1980, 256). This is a starker fictionalisation

of the sort of anecdote Lamming later recounted in *The Pleasures of Exile*: the much-vaunted colour-blindness of the English only served to cover up ignorance and the preconceived notion that black people were savages, and perhaps not quite human (see Lamming, 2005; other such stories can be found in Hinds, 2001).

Dickson's breakdown is related to his landlady's reifying gaze, which fixes him as an object, not a person. This is reminiscent of Fanon's analysis of the experience of the black man in *Black Skin, White Masks* two years earlier: "In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema" (Fanon, 1986, 110). This reification dismantles Dickson's sense of self: he develops a phobic response to the sense of being seen, and to words related to looking and seeing. The landlady has no understanding of Dickson as a human being. Lamming shows the abyss that exists between her childish and exploitative treatment of him as an object of titillation, and his expectations, as a human being (but also as an educated colonial), of a free and well-rounded relation based on cultural and intellectual understanding. Here, as in the case of Teeton's confrontation in *Water With Berries* with the racist anti-colonialist Fernando, who threatens to kill him, the mode of interaction between the West Indians and the English reverts to one based on the radical reduction of the Afro-Caribbean man's intelligence, aspirations, and humanity. Teeton's episode is discussed in detail in chapter 4. In both cases, the result of this sudden sense of threat is a quasi-psychotic breakdown and a dissociation between man and body: Dickson feels that the women "devoured his body with their eyes," and that he only "gradually" recovers his integrity "through the reflection in the mirror" (*E*, 256); Teeton, when Fernando threatens to kill him, becomes "a stranger to his body [...] squatting in some foreign shelter of flesh and bone that could never be his own" (*WWB*, 230-231). Teeton's uncertainty as to "whose lungs were in charge of his breathing" and Dickson's feeling that his body "disintegrated and dissolved in [the women's] stare" can both be compared to some states of mind described

in Louis Sass's study of the similarities between schizophrenia and modernism.

Using an approach based on Wittgenstein's interest in "the understanding which consists in seeking connections" (quoted in Sass, 1992, 9), Sass brings out the similarities between the symptoms specific to schizophrenia-like illnesses and certain aspects of modernist literature and thought. He shows that the states of mind experienced by various protagonists of modernist novels or by modernist artists (as evidenced in their diaries and correspondence), and the particular relationships between self and world which they reveal, are reminiscent of experiences described by schizophrenic patients. In this context, Sass describes the phenomenon called passivity, which involves the delusion that one isn't in control of one's own body, that it might be controlled by outside forces:

> A schizophrenic person may [...] actually lose the sense of initiating his own actions. [...] [In] schizophrenia the cogito may come to seem the most dubious or evanescent of phenomena, and, with this loss of the awareness of one's own subjectivity and capacity to will, there may occur a more general fragmentation, a dissolution of all sense of one's own cohesiveness, separateness, or continuity over time. (214-215)

The experiences of Teeton and Dickson can easily fall into this category. Lamming's suggestion is that the immigrants' loss of self is a direct result of their experience in Britain; more specifically, it follows an incident of obvious racial prejudice. This conclusion cannot be avoided after Collis' analysis of Dickson's predicament and the sequence of events leading to their respective breakdowns.

Such a clear linking of racism to psychic dissolution, and schizophrenia in particular, at first seems inconsistent with the traditional understanding of this mental illness in Britain. Schizophrenia is believed by many British psychiatrists to have an as yet undiscovered physiological basis, and it is assumed, therefore, that its development is more or less independent of events affecting the patient. Nevertheless, Rack (1982), in his guidebook for British practitioners dealing with immigrant patients, notes that this view is not universal and that other traditions

of psychiatry, including continental Europe, India, Africa and the Caribbean, accept the idea that psychosis (including paranoid psychosis, a subset of schizophrenia) can be reactive, that is, caused by external factors such as stress.[1] It is now recognised that recent troubling events often precede "acute onset schizophrenia" (Acute onset schizophrenia, 2004). Moreover, research suggests that the act of migration may be a factor in the advent of mental illness. Statistics show that rates of mental illness tend to be higher among immigrants than among the populations of both the sending and receiving countries (Littlewood and Lipsedge, 1997). Psychiatrists have ventured two explanations for this: the "selection hypothesis" which posits that those who migrated were unstable and therefore more prone to mental illness than those who stayed at home, and the "stress hypothesis", which argues that the act of migration entails various stressful factors that could cause mental illness (Al-Issa, 1997). The selection hypothesis has been discredited (see Littlewood and Lipsedge, 1997), and the stress hypothesis now prevails. Littlewood and Lipsedge (1997) note that there is no direct link between the act of migration and the development of mental illness, but that certain factors can affect certain social groups, including immigrants, more acutely, thus creating specific patterns in the prevalence of mental illness for each group. These factors include economic and material conditions (affecting rates of mental illness for the poor), but also the degree to which one's expectation of being understood is

[1]This has partly to do with the culturally determined nature of certain symptoms or manifestations of mental illness. Littlewood and Lipsedge note that "Immigrants in Britain bring with them psychological responses to difficulties characteristic of their community" (1997, 98). This interpretation taps into notions developed in ethnopsychiatry: that each society provides its members with "accepted" or "recognised" ways of deviating from its norms. Mental illness is one of these "patterns of misconduct" (see Devereux, 1977; Linton, 1936). Such a pattern of behaviour, adhered to in a different social context, might be misrecognised. Rack explains that some characteristic modes of expression of mental illness, which are recognised within one culture as a stress reaction, may correspond to symptoms which in Britain usually point to psychosis. The patient's illness may therefore be interpreted as endogenous, so that environmental factors may be disregarded, whereas they might not have been disregarded in the patient's native society. Rack tends to assert the applicability of specific examples rather too easily to regions across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean without sufficient demonstration, in a way which almost contradicts his aim to foster sensitivity to cultural variation. But the notion that the habits of diagnosis of British psychiatry are culture-bound and that practitioners must be aware of this when treating patients from other cultures is useful.

frustrated (here, Littlewood and Lipsedge give the example of the deaf). Social isolation, a clash of social norms, the "discrepancy between one's aspirations and the actual achievement in the host country", and the devaluation of the culture of the sending country by the society of the receiving country are all among the stress factors involved in migration that might lead to mental illness (Al-Issa, 1997, 4). Littlewood and Lipsedge, while recognising the difficulty of gathering reliable statistics for mental illness, show that certain types of mental illness affect different immigrant groups. They, for instance, note that, according to the available statistics, Irish immigrants in Britain have higher rates of alcoholism (which they count as a mental illness) than either the native English or other immigrant groups, and West Indian immigrants have higher rates of schizophrenia. They also note that West Indian immigrants are particularly affected by two factors correlated with high rates of mental illness: cultural proximity to the English population and a drop in social status after arrival in England. These analyses and statistics are far from precise, since they do not account for gender, level of education, rural or urban origin, or other factors that may affect susceptibility to mental illness. The question of the causes of schizophrenia is a vexed and unresolved one, which does not much concern a novelist searching for an emblem of the condition he is representing. Lamming's representation of mental illness, though based on his theoretical analysis of the role of colonial history in current relations between England and the Caribbean, nevertheless accords with the available statistics on mental illness among immigrants.

Sass has noted strong parallels between the preoccupations of modernist artists and the modes of experience typical of schizophreniform illnesses. Lamming seems to find a strong parallel between this state and that of the Caribbean immigrant discovering the gap between expectations and the reality of living in England. Bill Schwarz notes that Caribbean immigrants in the 1950s experienced "a simultaneous sense of homeliness and unhomeliness" (2003a, 9), reminiscent of

the precursor signs of schizophrenia described by Sass. Symptoms include being overwhelmed by objects' "mere being" because one cannot perceive their "emotional resonance or functional meanings"; being unable to perceive connections between things that normally appear as a complex whole; and a more general sense of distance from the world, a feeling that the world has lost its authenticity or familiarity (Sass, 1992, 47-50). Schwarz describes the experiences of newly arrived Caribbean immigrants in the 1950s in terms of a confrontation with "a discrepant reality in which dislocation between expectation and experience was fierce" (8-9). For emigrants perceiving this gap between their expectations and "the lived reality of the civilisation in whose name [they] had been educated" (8), the experience could well have taken the shape of an unexpected inability to perceive relationships between things, or their wider meanings. Sass quotes a schizophrenic patient's description of her feeling of "unreality" when a friend visited her: "I certainly recognised her, [...] I knew her name and everything about her, yet [. . .] I was in the presence of a stranger" (48). Such words can accurately describe the situation in which a Caribbean "arrivant" realised how inadequate a preparation for life in Britain colonial education was. It is not surprising, then, that Lamming should choose to portray psychotic breakdown as a representative experience for Caribbean immigrants.

The protagonist of *Les Boucs* suffers from serious bouts of mental illness throughout the novel. At one point he attempts suicide, and later becomes an alcoholic and harasses his former partner. Other scenes in the novel are infused with a strangeness that indicates altered states of mind. The most obvious of these occurs in Part 1, Chapter 6, where the first person narrator describes a man sitting in an office. The reader has no reason to believe that this narrator is not Waldik, the protagonist who has been narrating so far, but it is only gradually that the reader realises that the man being described is also Waldik. The first person narrator insists on the narrated man's delayed reactions: "it has probably

been three or four days since Mac told him to sit down. But it is only now that he hears the voice" (78). He also describes a feeling of dissociation from the body: "Two black shoes are side by side on the carpet. [...] But he does not yet know that they are his and that his feet are in them" (79). This indicates a dissociation between his sense of self and himself as a site of perception, a "self-disturbance" akin to the experiences of schizophrenics Sass describes (1992, 216). Later on in the chapter the cause of these feelings is unveiled: Waldik has taken five grams of barbiturates in an attempted suicide, which explains his delayed reaction, and perhaps his dissociation.

Yet Waldik's state is not necessarily solely attributable to the medicines. His mental stability already seems uncertain in scenes taking place over several days prior to his suicide attempt. There may be an indication of this in the strange presence of flies behaving unnaturally in Part 1, Chapter 3, when Waldik first meets Mac O'Mac, the French writer who will help publish his novel. They fly in a perfectly regular formation ("rigorously isosceles"), and one fly stops in mid-air, which indicates they might be a hallucination (36-37). We are told that Waldik's friend Raus kills the flies when he enters the room, but perhaps by entering the room he has simply broken Waldik's trance, making the flies disappear. The narrator flags his state of stupor on several occasions previous to the flies' appearance in this scene. He even asserts:

> avec acuité, avec un sens impitoyable des détails je savais, comme si l'extraordinaire tension où j'étais m'eût projeté vers l'avenir, que de cette nuit-là date ma folie.
> (with accuracy, with a pitiless feeling for detail I knew, as if the extraordinary stress I felt had projected me towards the future, that to that night dates back my madness. 33)

Here again, it is suggested that the psychotic breakdown the immigrant character suffers is a consequence of his experience in the destination country. The stress that Waldik is feeling, having just come out of prison and wondering where his partner is, gives him a lucidity that allows him to interpret events to come.

This peculiar lucidity, combining stupor and close attention to innocuous detail such as flies (be they real or imaginary) can perhaps be related to the precursor symptoms of schizphrenia discussed above (p.116). Waldik goes on to interrogate Simone that evening, turning the lights on and off in a jarring, tension-creating manner, and continuing the interrogation and speculation even though Simone is evidently panicked. The fact that the interrogation goes on for four more days is a further sign that Waldik is losing control of himself.

Ostensibly, the reason for Waldik's breakdown is sexual jealousy, as it is soon clear that Mac has seduced Simone. This can perhaps be inferred from his very name, which resembles the French slang for pimp : "maquereau" or "mac." Waldik, in his peculiar lucidity, notes some details when they both arrive : Simone is "souriante, détendue, comme après un assouvissement physique" ("smiling, relaxed, as after the quenching of a physical need", 34), and allows Mac to pat her shoulder. Waldik reports these events without drawing conclusions, but is bothered that evening by "the wholly intuitive iota that something had happened while I was in prison" (68). This is what drives him to harass Simone, and his obsessive interrogation of his partner uncovers a more significant element. Waldik's sense that something has changed also results from her reaction to his friend Raus. The shock of hearing the latter announce the hospitalisation of her child for meningitis had led Simone to an explosive expression of pure hatred for Raus, and this has puzzled Waldik : "I didn't know you were a racist", he tells her (67). He believes that this sudden change in her behaviour reflects an attitude he had not previously been aware of, and was triggered by Mac's advances. His speculation as to what Mac might have said to provoke this change in her reveals a further anxiety : the discovery of the hypocrisy of French liberals.

In the 1962 novel *Succession ouverte*, Chraïbi's fictional alter-ego Driss Ferdi explains that the most hurtful aspect of Western liberals' attitude is that their praise of him as an intellectual quasi-automatically implies a distinction between

himself and the uneducated immigrants, and this distinction allows them to continue to despise uneducated immigrants almost guilt-free, despite their supposedly liberal credentials (1999, 30-33). The critique of Mac O'Mac in *Les Boucs* goes further. Waldik's stupor when they first meet seems related to Mac's condescending attitude, arrogance and breezy manner, which make the narrator feel like "a mere guest in [his] own house" (34). The only shreds of his speech that Waldik's consciousness lets filter to the reader are filled with the pompous expressions of a complacent literary critic, without saying anything about the book itself (Waldik is convinced that Mac has not bothered to read it). As he interrogates Simone, Waldik imagines that Mac has suggested that her relationship with Waldik could only degrade her, and has described him as :

> The typical case of a [...] neo-intellectual coming from another continent [...]. Using our European language and chicanery with some fluency, but only that ; - our history, [...] our institutions [...] : all of that is foreign to him, he is not its outcome like you and I. (69-70)

So far this is only Waldik's imagining, but this only highlights his greatest fear to the reader : that of being excluded from the ranks of the civilised. A later scene of dialogue confirms this impression when Mac introduces Waldik condescendingly to his wife as "an Arab who wants to do literature" (91) and frames his paying Waldik's fare back to Algeria as an act of pity and Christian charity. His putting such a spin, to his inarticulate African wife, on what is simply getting rid of a sexual rival, shows the depths of his callousness. Mac's stature as a defender of Maghribi interests (both in France and in the matter of decolonisation, one assumes), is promptly deflated in each scene where he appears.

For Waldik, this encounter with the insufferable Mac O'Mac, a public figure noted for his support for the North African cause, is the ultimate imperial betrayal : the denial of belonging in a common civilisation, despite the promises of redemption from inferiority through education. This experience is closely comparable to that of Dickson in *The Emigrants*. That it should come from a supposed

ally in the colonial confrontation, is all the more cruel. But this scene's significance as Waldik's final disillusion is not immediately apparent. It is only in scenes recounted after this one, in the second part of the book, that we witness the cumulative betrayal of France's economic promises leading up to this moment. As we have seen, Waldik, as a Maghribi immigrant in France, has experienced bold-faced racism and horrid living and working conditions. We gradually realise that his decision to write a novel despite his terrible experiences is a sign of the depth of his faith in European humanism. And only at the very end, when the original promise of education and civilisation is recounted, do we realise the full extent of the betrayal. Waldik has learned to live a tense life suffused with hatred, but what ultimately breaks him is the devious disguising of racism as solicitude.

Lamming, Chraïbi and Ben Jelloun all link psychotic breakdown with the experience of racism, itself linked to the colonial relation. But Ben Jelloun takes an approach that is distinct from that of Lamming or Chraïbi. Writing in the mid-1950s, the time of decolonisation, the latter both place a strong focus on the relationship between coloniser and colonised. The characters are confident of their status as human beings and convinced of their belonging in the realm of civilisation elevated by the colonisers to the pinnacle of human achievement, yet encounter relentless rebuttals from representatives of this civilisation. In both cases, the writers use the shattering of their characters' psyches to show the damaging contradictions inherent in the colonial civilising mission. As implemented through the educational system, the civilising mission produces in the colonised the illusion of belonging in the metropolis, and because it demands the abandonment of other cultural norms and systems, the realisation that the promise of belonging and equality was a fallacy leaves the colonial who encounters his coloniser in the metropolis with no structures to shore up his personality. Ben Jelloun's approach does not analyse the Maghribi immigrant as a colonial. Writing almost two decades after formal decolonisation, in a time better described as neocolonial,

he focuses on the exploitation of immigrants as workers. While he addresses the influence of colonialism in the phenomenon of post-colonial migration from North Africa to France, the relation he portrays between immigrants and France differs from that portrayed in the earlier texts.

3.3.2 Flight from the post-colonial nightmare : Ben Jelloun

The mode of psychosis presented in *La réclusion solitaire* distinguishes it from *The Emigrants* and *Les Boucs*. The narrator does not have a sudden breakdown, but rather slips further and further away from everyday reality, into a world dominated by hallucination. His weakening grip on reality is conveyed in several ways. The narration provides very few diegetic details which would allow the reader to situate the story. At most, we know he lives in a city, in a shabby hostel, and probably works on a building site. The only specific geographic location named is the Parisian neighbourhood of Barbès, an area that has long had a large immigrant population. Moreover, Ben Jelloun's poetic style is brimming with disorienting tropes. Moncef-Mejri (1993), in a useful study, details the poetic aspects of the novel. He notes that the text more often than not uses words in a sense that deviates from their normal acceptation, resulting in enigmatic meanings. The critic analyses the various techniques Ben Jelloun uses to work out his tropes and argues that the dominance of metaphor over other tropes denotes the narrator's aspiration to freedom in his constraining context. He concludes that the enigmatic character of the text is perhaps excessive and might put disoriented readers off. Curiously, he does not draw a link between the form of the text and the overriding theme of psychic dissolution. The disorientating nature of the text, leading to a dream-like experience as the reader follows the narrator's rambling memories and emotions, is likely to be deliberate, intending to immerse the reader in the experience of an alienated mind. We follow the narrator as he has increasingly durable hallucinations that the woman from the photograph on

his wall (cut out of a magazine or an advertisement) becomes real and makes love to him. He is also very disoriented when he goes to work.

As we have seen, Ben Jelloun considers other psychological difficulties alongside psychosis : psychosomatic pains and erectile dysfunction. The protagonist suffers from debilitating pains associated with constant feelings of fear and anxiety : "On this tiresome Sunday, the fear, the anxiety. Foreign body stuck into my body [...]. I ached. An indefinable pain" (34). His room-mate the "stateless bird" suffers from serious mental health problems. Initially, he is absent : he has been interned because "it hurts inside his head" (20) ; in a later scene where he is in the room, he is still described as "absenting himself discreetly" and as having "vague eyes" (41). He has been medicated and interned, and it is suggested that his treatment led to his death :

> The stateless bird was chained
> straitjacketed
> poisoned
> assassinated
> put in a cell
> intercepted
> and put in the metallic crate (111)

Together, the protagonist and the stateless bird form an example of what was long called in France "la sinistrose de l'immigré maghrébin" or the North African syndrome. This is a cycle beginning with complaints of physical pain (sometimes associated with a workplace accident), leading to numerous visits and tests, and eventually diagnosed by French doctors as psychosomatic, so that the patient was

referred to psychiatrists without necessarily understanding why.[2] It was sometimes felt that such patients were malingering, because they complained about pains for which no medical or organic cause could be found. The "sinistrose" syndrome is no longer used as a category, as it is now recognised that the symptoms involved actually point to depression. Al-Issa cites research showing that the somatisation of pain is a common symptom of depression among immigrant Maghribi patients, whereas a "mood of sadness," a major symptom of depression in Western countries, is not often present for depressive Maghribi patients (1997, 139). The close association in Ben Jelloun's text between negative emotions and unexplained pain suggests a causal link.

Finally, through the narrator, a connection is established between depression and erectile dysfunction. In his essay on the psychological needs of Maghribi immigrants, *La plus haute des solitudes*, Ben Jelloun shows the importance of virility in establishing social and familial status and self-worth for Maghribi men. According to Ben Jelloun, the patients make little distinction between their virility and their capacity to work and be breadwinners. In *La réclusion solitaire* the narrator and the blonde brown-eyed man are representative of this situation. *La plus haute des solitudes* highlights the linguistic and ontological link existing in Maghribi culture between virility (especially erectile capacity), breathing, and life : the words designating the male genitals are the same as for "breath" ("nafss") or "soul" ("rouh") (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 64). *La réclusion solitaire* translates this conception into French : when their virility fails, both men consider that death inhabits their bodies. The narrator explains to the reader : "Today I know

[2]Several monographs have dealt with this phenomenon, including the published version of Tahar Ben Jelloun's thesis in social psychiatry, *La plus haute des solitudes* (1997a), Ifrah, *Le Maghreb déchiré* (1980) and Ham, *L'immigré et l'autochtone face à leur exil* (2003). As McCulloch (1995) reminds us, Fanon (1967b) published an early paper on the subject, and was among the first to offer an interpretation of the syndrome relating it to the patients' situation as immigrants. Ben Jelloun focuses on the economic, social and cultural contexts which might influence the immigrants' psychological problems, while Ham takes a classical psychoanalytic approach. Ifrah works in the tradition of George Devereux's ethnopsychiatry and attempts to keep a balance between individual psychological imbalances and social or traumatic causes in his analysis of the problem.

it. Death has dwelled in my cage, my temples and my kidneys" (70) ; and his room-mate uses similar semantics : "My breath... It's over ! [...] It is cold as ice. Dead" (104). Peripheral indications leave no doubt as to what it is he refers to as "breath" : his penis.

Towards the end of *La réclusion solitaire* , looking back on his period of illness, the main character mentions racist behaviour, including institutionalized racism in the form of unwarranted police searches, and violent assaults, as a cause for his escape into madness. The protagonist makes clear that his pathological withdrawal into his own mind was made necessary by the violence he experienced :

> Recourse to the underground of my life was not a pleasure, but a need, a necessity. You know. Outside, the racist attacks. The crime. The raids. The searches. The humiliation. The fear. (126)

The isolation resulting from the French natives' indifference to him wears him down. Everything is done to destroy community life, and loosen ties to the home country, but no alternative belonging is offered. He suffers from the refusal of contact and conversation, and from being seen with contempt and hatred. As we have seen, he sees a link between urban indifference, racism, and racial violence (see chapters 1.3.1 and 2.2). The second part of the novel charts his unsuccessful attempts at communicating with French people, culminating in his inability to sing songs from his country in a French café. It is after this final descent into isolation, into an emotional cul-de-sac, that we witness his withdrawal and conversations with the photograph.

Indifference and racist violence are not the only factors contributing to his mental illness, his *dis*ease. The repressive character of his living space has been analysed in chapter 2. The denial of an emotional life does not just extend to the limits imposed on social life (social activities relating to Maghribi culture are forbidden) ; it does not stop at infringing on the most intimate aspects of immigrants' lives (no guests are allowed in the hostel, especially female guests) ; it reaches to the policing of thoughts :

> — It is forbidden [...] to think of bringing one's family over, [...] to sympathise with ultra-left splinter groups, to read or write insults on the walls [...] ;
> — It is forbidden to climb the trees ;
> — It is forbidden to paint yourselves blue, green or mauve [...]. (20)

In Ben Jelloun's parody of hostel regulations, residents are even forbidden from using their imagination. Every aspect of the Maghribi immigrant's life in France is characterised by a reduction of his humanity, down to the denial of his emotional dimension. A further aspect of institutional repression is brought out in the stories of the minor characters. The stateless bird explains that the Social Security will not recognise his problems. This is significant. Ben Jelloun saw many such patients during his work as a counsellor, and shows in *La plus haute des solitudes* that many patients considered their health problems a direct consequence of work accidents, and of the life they were made to live, in particular the separation from their wives. They considered their difficulties, including erectile dysfunction, as just as much of a disability as any physical problem preventing them from working, whereas French social services did not. In *La réclusion solitaire*, Ben Jelloun represents this gap in communication between Maghribi patients and French medical and social institutions as another aspect of the emotional repression targeting immigrant workers. This is made evident in the stateless bird's story : he complains that doctors gave him lots of drugs without listening to him, and laments : "Deported and threatened, I must not shout. A stone falls, it doesn't scream ; isn't that right ?" (115). The immigrants are aware that their complaints are silenced, and of being reduced to a non-human status by French society. The indignant stateless bird exclaims, incredulous : "There's nothing wrong with me ! there's nothing wrong with me ! [...] I am poisoned by lack, the lack of life and pure water" (114). This reflects Ben Jelloun's insistent depiction of the treatment of immigrants as no more than a workforce, almost as machines. The denial of their social and emotional needs emerges as a major aspect of the unacceptable condition of Maghribi immigrant workers in France.

The protagonist has a hesitant impulse to act against the pervasive institutional repression, but it is short-lived : "I was trying to explain to my compatriots the other day that we should demand a little bit more existence. They were willing. But what could we do ?" (36). He eventually acknowledges that, from the moment of arrival, "complaining was already a provocation" (97). Faced with the contempt of officials, powerless to defend himself because of the criminalisation of Maghribi immigrants, the narrator " [se laissait] aller à des rêvasseries pour ne pas vomir la colère [qu'il] broyai[t] en silence." ("[let himself] drift into daydreams so as not to vomit the anger [he] ruminated in silence", 97).

Nevertheless, this immigrant worker is committed to being in France: his objective is to make money and provide for his family. His images of home are inhabited by the presence of a tree and child he wants to nurture, and he explains to the French reader:

> Je suis venu, nous sommes venus pour gagner notre vie ; pour sauvegarder notre mort ; gagner le futur de nos enfants, l'avenir de nos ans déjà fatigués, gagner une postérité qui ne nous ferait pas honte.
>
> (I came, we came to earn our living, to safeguard our death, to earn our children's future, the future of our already tired years, earn a posterity we would not be ashamed of. 48)

Despite the real repression he faces in France, the constraints in the emigrant's life (as we have seen, these include poverty inherited from the colonial period and post-colonial political repression; see chapter 1.1), mean that he cannot evade his unbearable situation. This places him in a quandary similar to that identified by Leed (1979) among World War I soldiers in the trenches. The historian analysed the war neuroses which appeared in World War I, including shell-shock, as reactions of avoidance in the face of new and unbearable conditions of warfare. For men whose code of honour or fear of punishment ruled out desertion, Leed argues, the neuroses had the specific function of allowing soldiers to leave the unprecedented and extremely distressing conditions of the field of "industrial" battle without openly flouting their own values of honour and duty or the direct

orders of their superiors. Unlike Lamming's characters, Ben Jelloun's immigrant is fully aware of his relegated position in the host society, but his duty to his community at home forces him to remain in France, even as his situation as an immigrant in France strips him of his humanity by reducing him to a living machine and denying his emotional dimension and needs. He escapes into madness in order to survive this blocked situation. The only other solution is suicide, and he has consciously prepared for madness as a preventive measure against this: "I spend the so-called rest time preparing for dementia, so that the scream will be contained in this body, so that suicide does not come after a bout of fever" (54).

3.4 Function of psychic dissolution

In all three novels, the characters' psychological breakdown is shown to be a direct consequence of the situation of being an immigrant in the imperial metropolis. The authors appeal both to the notion of mental illness as a nosographic category, and to the common-sense and philosophical notion of "madness" as a category that interrogates and challenges our Reason (cf. Foucault, 1976). Felman's 1978 study of the relationship between literature and madness establishes, based on her reading of the controversy between Foucault and Derrida, that literature is the only site where madness and Reason can meet. She concludes that madness participates in the pathos which is literature's means to a specific and irreplaceable kind of knowledge.[3] Madness is always a subversive force because it challenges Reason. Her study of works by Balzac and Flaubert demonstrates the thematic and rhetorical use of madness as a means of carrying out philosophical and ideological critiques of society. Feder, in her own study, indicates that in the Western literary tradition since the nineteenth century madness has been seen as a the location of a special insight, particularly in the uncovering

[3]Cf. also Mouralis' similar argument about the link between madness and the pathos of literature in his study of madness in African literature, *L'Europe, l'Afrique et la folie* (1993).

of a "barbarous underworld" in European civilisation (Lukács, quoted in Feder, 1980, 232-233). Madness has also been used in certain postcolonial literatures to engage in critique and resistance. Deh's doctoral thesis on madness in North- and sub-Saharan-African literature provides many examples of its use for the purpose of political, social or moral critique (Deh, 1991, part two). This often takes the form of denouncing or deploring the de-stabilisation and violence of African societies by the colonial relation or by the workings of the post-colonial world, such as modernisation and the penetration of industrial capitalism or the arbitrariness of certain independent regimes. These societies are either viewed as mad or as pathogenic, and the mad characters are often represented as the only people able to foresee and analyse such deleterious developments. The presence of madness as a theme and a plot device can therefore be linked with a conception of a literature of resistance, whether this is resistance to "political structures" or to "discursive hegemonies" (Flockemann, 1999, 69). Madness is an important tool with which the three writers I consider here denounce the role of racism in the situation of the immigrant, but their accusations go further. Lamming and Chraïbi also denounce the habits of minds formed in the colonised as a consequence of the colonial relation. Ben Jelloun extends his critique to the whole framework of industrial capitalism and to postcolonial regimes.

3.4.1 "Decolonizing the mind"...

In both Lamming and Chraïbi, the psychotic breakdown occurs at a moment of crisis and dawning awareness of the true character of colonial relations and their deleterious effects on the colonised. Dickson and Waldik's confrontations with European characters' radical reduction of their humanity are used by both writers to comment on the colonial relation and the illusions it creates among the colonised. This is a disallowed truth insofar as they accuse liberal Westerners of harbouring unacknowledged racist prejudice. This was not an easy task: liberal

French and British readers probably constituted, for better or worse, the main segment of their readership. The two novelists also use the theme of psychic dissolution to make further assumptions, also difficult to accept, and indicate the path to a different outlook for the immigrant and the colonised, in particular those taken in by the myth of the benevolent metropolis.[4]

The psychological difficulties that affect Higgins and Dickson ostensibly result from unhappy interactions with English characters. Dickson's breakdown is the result of a confrontation of his illusions, born of a colonial education, with the reality of prejudice. Moreover, all the occurrences of mental illness in the two emigration novels are related to issues of racial prejudice. This attests to the fact that Lamming is taking to its logical conclusion his argument that even the most anodyne incidents denoting a colonial mentality of white supremacism cannot be separated from coarser forms of racism (see chapter 2.2). Lamming here shows his determination to display the full extent of the damage caused by attitudes the English regard as innocent. The everyday experience of the Caribbean migrant in Great Britain can be related to a schizophrenic mode of experience, and in the case of Higgins and Dickson, Lamming pushes the comparison further. Dickson's experience seems a starker version of the process, so violent that it overpowers his inner balance and makes him mad. But the interpretation Lamming provides for their experiences is unusual.

As we have seen, Caribbean immigrants in Britain are particularly vulnerable to schizophrenia, but Lamming's representation of this is not completely consistent with the existing data on paranoid psychosis in this group. Paradoxically, members of ethnic minorities suffering from discrimination are more likely to direct paranoid feelings inside the minority group, with accusations of sorcery or plotting (see Littlewood and Lipsedge, 1997, 136-145, 240-241; and Rack, 1982, 129-130). Fellow immigrants are blamed for the lack of success, but the real

[4] I borrow the phrase "decolonizing the mind" from Ngugi's 1986 collection of essays of that title.

sources of stress (discrimination in employment, housing and education, as well as racially-motivated violence) remain un-named. It is plausible that the tendency to refer to sorcery or accuse one's neighbours is consistent with beliefs the immigrants brought with them from the Caribbean. Fisher undertook anthropological work on representations of madness in Barbados in the 1970s. He found that social representations of madness served the enforcement of social norms by discouraging people's ambitions, thus preserving a social order that maintains lower-class populations at a disadvantage. One might go mad from "brain-fag" (excessive intellectual exertion), or because one made neighbours jealous of one's success, thus inviting retaliation in the form of sorcery attacks. According to Fisher, whether a person is seen as having gone mad through the work of obeah (sorcery) or from "studiation" (worrying too much, a sign of weakness), the wider social order disappears as a cause, and the individual's responsibility is foregrounded. These representations "rest on an unshakable cultural premise: poor black people are responsible for their own misfortune and for the misfortunes of others" (Fisher, 1985, 107).

Littlewood and Lipsedge, in their study of the situation of ethnic minorities in relation to mental illness and psychiatric institutions, have ascribed the tendency to blame other immigrants for one's mental illness to unwillingness on the part of migrants to renege on the optimism of the initial movement of emigration. They also invoke the influence of identification with the values of the majority population:

> For someone who moves to another society and hopes to become part of it and who arrives to identify with its citizens, to be consciously aware of rejection may be so threatening that it can be initially articulated only in other terms. (142)

While West Indian immigrants to Britain in the 1950s did not intend to settle there, they did identify with British values and the British heritage. Ramchand (1970) has shown how the English-speaking Caribbean societies had been oriented

to Britain for centuries, and how this still affected mid-twentieth century attitudes. The role of the colonial school system in this is apparent in Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* and V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, which further indicates that the school curriculum centred on English history and literature. Walcott's essay about his beginnings as a playwright evokes the consequence of that orientation in the school system, which led West Indian youths to believe that no black person could achieve great things: "Despite my race I could not believe that [God] would choose such people [the black, slave revolutionaries of Haiti] as His engines" (Walcott, 1998, 11). The testimonies from Hinds' study of Caribbean immigrants in Britain clearly show how the colonial educational system, as well as books and films, positioned black pupils as white and British when they identified with the heroes. There was some dissonance, as they still felt a connection to the black characters, who were always "savages", but the total effect was one of distance from the "savages" and identification with the white hero (Hinds, 2001, 10-12). This identification may have meant that the "arrivants" believed the discourse of British "colour-blindness", which Lamming denounced in *The Pleasures of Exile*.[5] Accepting the idea of institutional or generalised racism and discrimination in Britain would have amounted to giving up on the dream of economic success; it may have been easier to blame fellow immigrants than to relinquish this identification.

Lamming's representation of mental illness in *The Emigrants* runs counter to this tendency. The framework surrounding his mentally ill characters clearly points to the social system as the cause of breakdown. The treatment of psychotic breakdown in these novels is an integral part of Lamming's aim to cut through the veil of West Indian illusions regarding Britain, by pointing to the real source of stresses on immigrants: the English way of seeing which denies the Caribbean point of view and is at the base of processes of discrimination.

[5] I borrow the term "arrivants" from Kamau Brathwaite's collection of that title ().

This explicit interpretative framework presents the various characters' breakdowns as examples of "disintegrating personalities pathologised by their experience in Britain" (Nair, 1996, 73). But beyond the issue of British prejudice, there are additional dimensions to the representation of psychosis in Lamming's novels of emigration. A closer examination of the scene describing Dickson's breakdown reveals a related but distinct potential cause for it, or at least a pre-existing condition. Dickson recalls his anxiety during his preparations for the rendezvous, and Lamming in this description reveals the beginnings of dissociation between Dickson's mind and his body:

> The shaving lotion stung his skin which looked in the mirror too thick, too set, too black, too everything.[. . .] His neck rose like a black log out of his collar. He clasped it with his fat, reliable hands. [. . .] He pulled his upper lip, a rat's tail emerging from a syrup between two fingers, and examined his gums. (253-254)

This preoccupation with his body pervades the scene. It alternates with his abstract musings on intellectual fellowship and higher civilisations. Already, before the shock of the encounter with a reductive Other, the reader feels a strong discrepancy within Dickson's apprehension of the event: his preoccupation with his body contradicts his own aspirations and egalitarian discourse. The concentration on different features of his own body gives a sense of reification which is not, in the end, very remote from that operated by his landlady. In particular, the image of the lips and gums is a powerful reminder of the slave trade and the health checks performed before the purchase of a slave. Dickson is dimly aware of this backdrop for his relationship with the Englishwoman. Further, while he is having a drink with her, prior to the expected moment of seduction, Dickson does not listen to what the woman is saying, but is gradually overwhelmed by his physical desire; this distresses him: "he saw his hand [. . .] pregnant with blood and eager for contact, and he rebuked his hand" (254). The reifying relationship to his own body, and now this recoil from his sexuality, denote a possible subconscious acquiescence with the colonial stereotype of the black man as hypersexual

and animal-like. The rebuke arises from his higher goal of an intellectual (pure) encounter, which makes it impossible for him to admit that he might appear to conform to this stereotype—even though he already feels that he does. Another of his thoughts betrays his awareness that his desire for an equal and intellectual relationship is only a fantasy. Once he feels sure that the evening will lead on to an intimate conclusion, the image springs to his mind of a "ship [tossing] in his head and [a] row of black heads peering from the deck in envy and wonder at him" (255). This image rests on the hierarchy of blacks and whites in social terms and in terms of power in the colonial societies of the Caribbean. His success distances him from fellow blacks, and one can suppose a flash of pride at their envy, which reveals his awareness of separation and prejudice, hopelessly undermining his fantasy of equality. There is eventually a tentative acceptance of his sexuality, but his landlady is unwilling to enter this realm with him: she turns on the light and stares, establishing a distance in which he is imprisoned, and in which he is confronted with the animal-like, physical aspect of himself which he disavows. He feels degraded by her gaze because he agrees with the racist assumptions which underlie her actions.

Importantly, the signs that uncover these internal tensions are also strongly related to symptoms of schizophrenia: though he still possesses a sense of control over his actions, Dickson's thought-process appears increasingly erratic in this scene, and his focusing on individual features of his body in turn denotes a weakened sense of cohesiveness. Sass analyses the phenomena of 'passivity' and fragmentation in schizophrenia as resulting not, as traditional interpretations concluded, from a deficit in self-consciousness, but on the contrary as the result of hyper-reflexivity, where concentrated observation of inner mind processes prevents the apprehension of the link between the patient (the observer) and his or her thoughts or actions (the observed) (1992, 220-223). The marked presence of Dickson's body in the retelling of the seduction scene can be seen as such an

instance of hyper-reflexivity: as we have seen, it is reminiscent of the difficulty for the black man, evoked by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skins, White Masks*, of relating to his own body in a white society. The white population's excessive attention to his skin colour leads to hyper-reflexivity. Dickson's oppressive awareness of his own physicality is, in part, the result of his awareness that he will be seen by a white woman. However, the important point is that she is not solely responsible for this state of affairs. The English insult acts as a catalyst, exacerbating a conflict that already exists within the West Indian character, and the roots of which are to be found in the societies of the Caribbean (as a consequence of European colonisation and slave trading, of course). Dickson's mental breakdown can be seen to result not only from the damaging character of relations with the English based on an unexamined colonial history, but also from his inability to transcend the racialised way of seeing he internalised when growing up in Barbados.

The episode of Derek's breakdown in *Water With Berries* points to another target for criticism in Caribbean societies. The ruminations which lead up to this moment associate his rage with his upbringing by Pentecostal fathers in the fictional Caribbean island of San Cristobal. His rage and resentment against the theatre he is in appear only after feelings of guilt over his interference in his friend Roger's domestic problems have triggered resentment towards the Pentecostal fathers whose education he blames for this impulse to get involved. Derek transmutes this guilt and self-hatred into disgust at the depravity of the English theatre. In this, he is paradoxically following the Pentecostals' moral teachings once more: he knows that they "would have been horrified, indeed, to know that [...] a boy in their care had discovered the magic of drama" (239). But the contradiction between his revolt against his education, and the fact that it provides the only outlet he finds for his erupting feelings, is felt in the total dissociation between himself and his vengeful body: he is "startled by the hush" of the audience, and even though we are following his thoughts, it is not apparent until the

next page that the audience is silent because "the body [is] now pricking its way violently through the girl's thighs" (241-2). Again, we have a schizophrenia-like state, as Derek does not feel in control of his own actions.

In the cases of Derek and Dickson, two of the major instances of psychotic breakdown among Lamming's emigrant characters, the notion that the psychosis is a result of the pressures of life in Britain for the West Indian coexists with strong signs indicating that the seeds of psychic dissolution lie in the society of the West Indies. Nair (1996) explains that the association of sex and madness in the characters of Dickson and Derek exemplifies Lamming's inability to move beyond colonial stereotypes. But the pointed reference to the slave trade during Dickson's preparation and the denunciation of the Puritanism of the Pentecostal fathers during Derek's breakdown suggest that Lamming is, instead, singling out for criticism colonial stereotypes and religious education, denouncing their continued influence in the conservative attitudes common in his native Caribbean. Dickson, after all, goes mad because he cannot overcome his own self-perception. Lamming suggests the onus is on him to shed his illusions and change his attitude to the English, even if the English woman is also criticised.

The character of Tornado, who provides a contrast to Dickson in *The Emigrants*, reinforces this analysis: it is clear that he suffers the same ordinary discrimination as other characters, and that he does not encounter great economic success. We may safely assume that he holds factory jobs similar to those Collis cannot seem to keep. Unlike Higgins or Dickson, however, he holds no illusions regarding his relationship to England. He warns other travellers on the boat of the kinds of insults they can expect. He avoids socialising outside his class and community. And he remains sane. In exposing the deep-seated psychological factors which prevent his characters from achieving the historical awareness and the self-awareness that he advocates, Lamming furthers the presentation of his analysis of the decolonisation of the Caribbean. The examples of Derek and Dickson

relate to the overall scheme of Lamming's novels in that they both demonstrate the false consciousness of the emigrants in relation to Great Britain, creating (at least for the reader) the conditions for the next step, return, and simultaneously reinforcing the impulse to return by highlighting the need for reform and cultural renewal in the Caribbean itself.

In his use of mental illness, Chraïbi takes issue with the Western liberal, his ineffectuality and hypocrisy, and the broken promise of the French "civilising mission" and policy of assimilation. Waldik's breakdown stems from the erosion of the hope he had placed in France as the locus of humanism. He is presented as the victim of an alluring discourse, a process highlighted in the ironic structure of the novel, which ends its catalogue of bleak experiences with a return to the moment that ignited Waldik's faith in French humanism in the first place. Chraïbi's preface to his next novel makes this process of disillusion explicit. His first novel, *Le passé simple*, had depicted Driss Ferdi, a young middle-class Moroccan disenchanted with the corruption of his own class and his choice to invest his hopes in France and its humanist tradition. In the 1956 piece Chraïbi establishes a link between Ferdi, Waldik and his own experience, and presents *Les Boucs* as the result of the dashing of these grand hopes:

> All things considered, he [Chraïbi/Ferdi] set off for France: he needed to believe, to love, to respect somebody or something.
>
> In France, land of freedom and brotherhood, land of refuge above all, he witnesses the slow decrystallisation of his own brothers in misery: it was *The Butts*. (Chraïbi, 1956b, 13)

This reflects Waldik's intellectual journey in some way: the son of a poor peasant, he goes to France hoping to get work and an education, lives the humiliating life of the ordinary immigrant, and decides to write a novel denouncing the situation. His final disillusion with France provokes a psychotic breakdown. As in Lamming's novels, the structure of *Les Boucs* provides a foil to his mad character allowing us to interpret the experience.

Waldik's faith in the French humanist tradition, apparent in his literary aspirations, is contrasted with the attitude of the other immigrants in the novel. As we have seen, the Butts have abandoned the signs of belonging to French society, in the form of their identity and administrative papers (see p.60). Waldik's friend Raus is also presented as distant from, and unaffected by, the realm of humanism and culture. The unbridgeable gap between the immigrants and the French, a consequence of their treatment by the French, is made evident in a startling exchange. Responding to Raus's enquiry about Mac, who has just left the house, Waldik explains he is a writer whose novel has had a print run of 100 000 copies. Raus replies, "in a tone of intense regret": "So much fuel!" (42). Raus in fact advises against Waldik's project to write a novel, clearly signalling his lack of belief in the notion of humanism, and his lucidity about French hypocrisy. Waldik stresses Raus' atavistic, uncomplicated belonging to his people, noticing that he sits on the floor because chairs separate man from the earth. The ending of the novel suggests that Raus' rejection of Western civilisation as irrelevant is in fact what protects him from the degradation involved in this stereotype: "Il n'avait jamais été un Bicot." ("He had never been a wog." 180). Waldik expresses envy for Raus' lack of complication, for his wholeness. The implication here is that Waldik's commerce with Western modes of thinking, not just the hope he invests in it, but his attempts to assimilate into French society, is the source of his trouble. More than the rejection he faces, what he must overcome is his desire for belonging, which stems from his belief that French humanist thought can counterbalance the dark influence at the heart of colonialism. He is living with a French woman, in a house rather than a shantytown or an immigrants' hostel, and his project to write a novel testifies to his adherence to the values of the French intellectual world, one in which the political commitment to social justice was paramount in the period, under the influence of Sartre. The episode of his psychotic breakdown marks his becoming aware that the dream of assimilation

he is pursuing is unattainable, since even liberal Europeans are prejudiced and patronising. Waldik comes to accept the error of his ways: "Ceux-là savaient ce qu'ils faisaient, qui ont étranglé tout espèce de foi - et qui pardonnent à ceux qui croient en quelque chose" ("They knew what they were doing, those who have strangled any kind of faith - and who forgive those who believe in something," 34). By "they," he means the Butts, who represent a further stage in the rejection of Western civilisation. Their treatment by the French has triggered a complete rejection of organised society, to such an extent that they come to embody the antithesis and failure of this civilisation to live up to its own standards (see above, chapter 1.3.2). The French cannot abide to see them, because they are a stark sign of "the bankruptcy of civilisation" (25), since the treatment of immigrants is in blatant contradiction to the supposedly universal applicability of the Republican ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Both Chraïbi and Lamming assert the necessity of abandoning the illusions peddled by colonial propaganda and advocate self-sufficiency and a focus on the unacknowledged richness of the oral culture of the ordinary people. But Chraïbi in *Les Boucs* seems singularly unable to move beyond the essentialist stereotypes established by colonial discourse.

The impossibility of assimilation is also approached from a different angle in the novel. Delayre (2006) argues that in both *Le passé simple* and *Les Boucs*, Chraïbi presents a character who affirms his double belonging and is stuck between two camps that demand that he shed one aspect of his identity: the French require him to be only French, the Moroccans, only Oriental. This is easily arguable in the case of *Le passé simple*. In *Les Boucs*, Waldik is indeed caught in between the French, who reject him, and the Butts, who consider him a Christian, but it is less clear that he asserts a double belonging. His desire to write a novel defending Maghribi immigrants seems to me a further sign of his desire for assimilation - in wanting to raise a compassionate reaction that would redeem France in his eyes - more than a demonstration of solidarity with the Butts. Moreover,

his assertion that "For ten years my Arab brain, thinking in Arabic, has been grinding European concepts, in a manner so absurd that it is sick because of it", indicates a belief that multiple belonging is unattainable because the two worlds beckoning Waldik are irremediably incompatible (54). Waldik here ascribes his psychological trouble to his encounter with European thought, and his Western education, rather than simply racism. His formulation is, however, problematic in suggesting an essentialist view of the matter. It seems to bow down to colonial stereotypes, for instance dominant paradigms in contemporary colonial psychiatry that supposed contact with Western culture inevitably led to deculturation and insanity because Africans were considered less mentally resilient than Europeans (see Vaughan, 1991; McCulloch, 1995). This is an ineffective critique of the colonial standpoint, as it leads to an impasse by using the coloniser's conceptualisations, thus implying that Moroccan or Arab culture and the culture of the West will forever be mutually exclusive. The opposition participates in the overall opposition of modern and traditional societies in the novel (see above, chapter 1.3.2). The contrast between Waldik and the other immigrant characters establishes the peasant outlook as more valuable because it ensures dignity, thus exposing the ethnocentricity of European thought. The conclusion of the novel enacts this separation. Waldik finds in Isabelle the ideal, humanist French world he aspires to and assimilates, leaving the Butts behind in a realm of their own, beyond human society whether French or Algerian.

Chraïbi would eventually overcome this difficulty in asserting the value of traditional culture. He would develop later in his career a sort of pre-colonial, pre-Islamic humanism by exploring the early history of Islam in the Maghrib. In this, he would present a call for open-mindedness and intercultural dialogue; his appeal is for both the positive elements of the humanist tradition and some common sense from a non-modern perspective to counter the dehumanising tendencies of Western modernity. His most memorable characters would be those who, secure

in their rooting in vernacular Maghribi culture and common sense, would take on Western, modern civilisation on their own terms and adapt it to their needs, for instance the mother in *La Civilisation, ma Mère!...* and Detective Ali in *Une enquête au pays*. An essential ingredient in developing these less limiting ways of envisaging a double belonging is the introduction of humour. Detective Ali, a policeman from a poor background, is poised between the modern city and the quasi-pagan ethos of mountain-village life, characterized by a strong bond with nature and the elements. What makes him successful is his reliance on popular wisdom and an earthy common sense to turn the workings of modern, bureaucratic society to his advantage: he is an incarnation of the traditional figure of Djoha, who can be both a fool and a trickster. Detective Ali's success stems from his rooting in the popular tradition: he can navigate both worlds, whereas his pompous superior, so proud of the modernisation of Morocco, is lost and ineffectual in the village.

The theme of psychotic breakdown leads in *The Emigrants* and *Les Boucs* to a questioning of intellectual and philosophical orientations challenging received ideas, both for the French and British, in the denunciation of racism, and for the colonised, in condemning the habits of thought formed under colonialism. The writers affirm, more or less explicitly, the necessity for efforts on the part of the colonised to overcome an internalised racist view of man, in the case of the West Indians, and the notion that industrial and rational development is necessarily desirable, in the case of the Maghribi.

3.4.2 ... and beyond

As we have seen, Ben Jelloun, writing in a post-colonial context, does not focus on the colonial relationship; he does, however, denounce the situation of Maghribi migrants in France and its basis in racism. The immigrant protagonist's unrestrained expression of emotion is a plea for recognition as a human being and a

denunciation of the modes of exploitation operating in the capitalist, not just the colonial, system. His madness allows him to expose the dark underside of France's post-war economic development. It is also a tool to attack the independent regime in Morocco.

In 1965, as a secondary-school student, Ben Jelloun was involved in student protests and forced into military service, which, he asserts, precipitated his entry into literature. He began writing in order to react to his political situation. Since then, part of his identity as a writer is defined by the posture of a public letter-writer, that is, someone who will give a voice to the voiceless. In *La réclusion solitaire* and in his next novel, *Moha le fou, Moha le sage*, Ben Jelloun used madness to convey his political message. The immigrant's hallucinations provide a platform for the expression of a young Moroccan student, whose attempts to teach revolutionary theory and methods to the rural population resulted in arrest and torture. The first instance of the young student's speech is clearly framed as a hallucination:

> In the wall, a crack. In the wall, a field. [...] We are sitting on a rush mat, our gazes seek each other:
>
> *You know, it isn't easy for a city-dweller to turn up in the peasants' world.* (21)[6]

This student has tried and failed to educate the peasants in Marxist theory. His second appearance, mediated by the photograph that is the centre of the protagonist's hallucinations, illustrates his unsuccessful efforts to protect them against rich farmers who abuse their access to water resources, and who disguise expropriations as development projects. This character, emerging within the protagonist's mental illness, is the focus of a strong critique of the way the post-colonial regime in Morocco treats the poor, so that the immigrant's psychosis is a tool to denounce the excesses of the post-colonial regime. Ben Jelloun would use this device again in his next novel, in which a mysterious and elusive figure, Moha,

[6]The changed typography indicates in the novel that another narrator is speaking.

roams Morocco and retells various stories to denounce all the faults of contemporary Moroccan society. A figure named Moha already makes an appearance in *La réclusion solitaire*, lambasting the power of money. There are stark differences, however, in the way madness is used in both novels. In *La réclusion solitaire* , probably because of the Western context, Maghribi interpretations of mental illness and psycho-sexual problems are marginalised: they only appear in relation to the blonde brown-eyed man's story, where traditional Maghribi treatments nevertheless somewhat assuage his suffering. The protagonist's psychic dissolution is not described in scientific terms; he conveys it to us through his non-modern references, conveying his experiences in their unreality. Neither does he refer to Maghribi interpretations of altered mental states: there is no mention of spirit-possession, nor of the figure of the wise fool (buhlul), nor of the mystic madman (majdub, see Dols, 1992; Raqbi, 1988; Khadda, 1994). Furthermore, the treatment he receives reinforces his powerlessness, already indicated in his illness: the medicines he is administered prostrate him, so that he "slept all the time", and drain his mind of all thought, leaving "emptiness, or a big white cloud" in his head (134). By contrast, Moha is framed in the traditional Arabic conception of the madman who raves and denounces society, but is left alone because his ravings are considered to be divinely inspired (Khadda, 1994). His is a far more powerful voice, perhaps because he is not uprooted like the anonymous migrant. Their divergent modes of madness serve to critique arbitrary institutional violence, the brutality of post-colonial regimes, and the conditions created by industrial modernity.

3.4.3 The question of efficacy

Plaza, in her 1986 study on writing and madness, argues that literary texts are the only kind of text in which madness can be "acclimatised" and made, to an extent, communicable or intelligible without causing the reader's rejection (123).

She nevertheless insists throughout that madness constitutes a failure of intelligibility, of communication, of reason. It is the opposite of literary creation: writing can be a weapon against madness, and the reason literary texts succeed in acclimatising madness is because they exercise control over the threat of unintelligibility. Deh, in his examination of the uses of madness for the purpose of political critique in African literature, also reminds us that madness, while it may express disagreement and even rebellion, is the opposite of actual rebellion.

Lamming, Chraïbi and Ben Jelloun are all successful in acclimatising madness within their texts, and use it as a way to introduce important issues. They appeal to literature's special knowledge to comment on the political and historical situation surrounding migration. The objective is to communicate the experience of 'madness' to the reader through the pathos of their characters' lives, in order to provoke an awakening to the structure of neo-colonial economic exploitation in *La réclusion solitaire*, or of the deep-seated racism and exploitation upon which European modernity has built itself, as well as the need to distance oneself from fascination with the prestige of the coloniser and of industrial modernity in *The Emigrants* and *Les Boucs*. 'Madness' in the novels is thus on the side of opposition and protest against oppression, and this raises the question of its efficacy. The three writers do not seem to advocate the notion that madness is the site of a special knowledge for those who experience it. Ben Jelloun's immigrant's experience of psychic dissolution is shown to be the result of his isolation from French society, but he is also aware that his withdrawal into hallucination entailed further isolation. The moment of healing coincides with the realisation that connections to other people are possible, and it is only after emerging from his hallucinatory state that he can offer explanations for it. His path to reconnection with social life is the encounter with another exile, a Palestinian refugee: the recognition of others' suffering and engagement with political life and the Palestinian struggle (following the massacres in 1971, which had an impact in France, as we will see

below, chapter 4.4.2), all allow him to break out of his isolation (Kamal-Trense, 1998). Psychic dissolution constitutes a kind of failure in this novel, whereas 'madness' is a far more elemental and powerful force in Ben Jelloun's following novel, *Moha*, in which the eponymous figure becomes the representative of ordinary Moroccan people as a whole and comes to symbolise their resilience. For Chraïbi's Waldik also, psychic dissolution is an impasse. He finds solace only when he meets a woman who convinces him to stop seeing himself as a victim of colonialism and racism. Only then does he stop drinking and harassing his initial partner Simone, and envisage a future. Similarly, in Lamming's novels, while madness is used to highlight important issues and delineate his critique of racism and the colonial outlook, it is not a way out for the characters who undergo psychic dissolution. There is no suggestion of a solution for Dickson, Higgins or Derek at the end of *The Emigrants* and *Water With Berries*. Teeton's situation is only slightly more positive, as we shall see in the next chapter. In a dangerous city, faced with discrimination, where responses to the coloniser have ambiguous results and their psychic integrity is compromised, what future do the writers envisage for the immigrants?

Chapter 4

The shape of immigrant communities

4.1 Introduction

Sayad, in his work on immigration, constantly reasserts the tension between the empirical reality of the *durability* of the phenomenon, and its *temporariness* in legal discourses and in the minds of migrants as well as authorities in sending and receiving countries (Sayad, 2006, 135-145). This chapter will interrogate the attitude to the temporality of the immigrant experience in Caribbean and Maghribi novels of immigration. Does the future they depict endorse a view of immigration defined by temporariness or durability? In other words, do they focus on return or settlement as the final consequence of migration?

4.1.1 Conceptualisations of immigration

Official and public discourses are never univocal, but certain views become dominant in different periods. In France and Britain, the immigration of non-whites from the colonial empires was staunchly conceived of in temporary terms. By the middle of the twentieth century, French policy on immigration had long been

structured in terms of "immigration de peuplement" and "immigration de travail", and in the not exactly overlapping terms of "desirable" and "undesirable" immigrants (Wadia, 1999; Noiriel, 2007). This reflects tensions between economic sectors needing cheap labour and demographers who advocated immigration to remedy low birth rates, and who worried about the adulteration of the nation's makeup. Non-European immigrants, colonial immigrants in particular, were cheap and easy to recruit, but viewed as difficult, even impossible, to assimilate into French society, and therefore undesirable. They were used to satisfy the needs of employers but their presence was considered purely from an economic standpoint, and it was always believed they would not remain in France. In the 1950s and 1960s, the employers' needs prevailed, and immigration, even clandestine, was tolerated (Noiriel, 1988, 2007; Naïr, 1992), although restrictions began to appear in the 1960s (Abdallah, 2000). In the case of Britain, Carter et al. (2000) show that, already in the early 1950s, resistance to non-European immigrants influenced the government's treatment of immigration. Fryer (1989) indicates that public opinion on the "visible" immigrants conceived them as only temporary residents in Britain and Carter et al. (2000) show that governments responded to this officiously in the 1950s. The increasingly restrictive immigration legislation of the 1960s, responding to public hostility to non-white immigrants, aimed to curb immigration and keep non-Europeans out (Cashmore, 1989; Castles et al., 1984).

In the 1970s, official discourses in France, Britain, and the independent Maghribi nations, strongly emphasised return. In the European countries, the frontiers of the national polity as well as the legal international borders were closing, and the immigrants who were constructed as impossible to integrate into this polity were encouraged to leave. Political authorities and employers alike attempted to use immigrant workers as a buffer to protect nationals from the 1970s economic recession (Castles et al., 1984; Noiriel, 2007). In Britain, the exclusionary

logic governing the 1962 and 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Acts culminated in 1971 with the halting of primary immigration (as opposed to family reunification, where immigrants join a relative already present legally) and encouragements to return (Fryer, 1989). In France, under the presidency of Valery Giscard d'Estaing, from 1974 to 1981, laws came into force attempting to halt primary immigration and introducing measures to encourage immigrants to leave (Noiriel, 2007; Simon, 2002). It was also in the ideological and economic interests of the recently independent North African nations to encourage the return of their expatriates and their financial resources (Naïr, 1992). I have found no indication that Caribbean nations also encouraged emigrants to return, but it is possible that they also did, for similar reasons.

We now know that, despite these encouragements, and although some migrants did return, Caribbean and Maghribi populations, among others, have settled in France and Britain. The French and British attempts to close their borders to non-European immigration had the unintended result of immobilising immigrants on their territories (Castles et al., 1984). Women and children had been among the immigrants since the 1950s (Sayad, 2004; Fryer, 1989), but in the 1970s family reunification became the dominant component of immigration: the migration flow shifted from a majority of young working men (and some women) to a majority of women (few of whom, in the Maghribi case, intended to work outside the home), children, and some elderly people (Simon, 2002). The presence of families and children implied a longer-term residence in the country of destination. It also opened the way to the emergence of unsettling new groups, as children born and socialised in the new country developed multiple attachments and did not fit neatly into either the 'country of origin' or the 'country of destination'. The logic of multiculturalism in Britain rests on the notion of various communities residing on the same soil, and in France, although Republican ideology disavows any level of social organisation between the individual and the

state, the brandishing by politicians of perceived 'communalism' ('communautarisme') as a threat to the French polity that needs to be addressed indicates that the some sections of the French mainstream nevertheless conceive of the non-European populations settled on its territory as communities (Bronner and Ternisien, 2003; E. R., 2006).

4.1.2 Diaspora theory

Diaspora theory has emerged since the 1980s as a dominant paradigm in British and North American academia for discussing immigration, and it perforce colours my approach to the question of settlement in the novels studied here, even though the latter were written before this emergence. The ways in which they may diverge from the tenets of diaspora thinking, because they belong to a slightly earlier historical moment, is of interest to me.

Diaspora theory evolved as a useful paradigm to account for transnational practices in minority or immigrant groups, whereby instead of making a clean break with home and learning a new ways of life in a new society, migrants sustained varied bonds - personal, economic, political - with their country of origin (Glick Schiller et al., 1999). These could not be explained by the dominant framework of analysis for migration, which took the homogeneous national polity associated with a given territory as its normative model (Armstrong, 1999). Theorists have adapted the biblical notion of Diaspora to account for dynamics of migration and ethnic-minority formation in the modern and contemporary world: Armstrong distinguished between mobilised diasporas of exiled communities and refugees, and the proletarian diasporas of workers needed by the developing industrial societies of Europe and America. In the 1990s, Clifford provided a loosened concept, based around a range of criteria, only some of which need be present in order to qualify a minority group as a diaspora. The "main features" he identifies are "a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the

host [...] country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship" (Clifford, 1999, 218). The concept has been used to study populations of Caribbean origin in various locales (see for example Cohen, 1992, 1997).

As immigrant, post/colonial, "guest-worker" populations stayed in France and Britain for longer and longer periods, and as younger generations claimed their belonging in the country of their birth while affirming a differential identity based on stigmatisation and cultural and familial identification, the Caribbean and Maghribi populations took on certain aspects of modern diaspora. The emergence of diaspora as a conceptual tool for the consideration of immigrant communities highlights their power to disturb established thinking on the phenomenon of post-war working immigration in France and Britain, predicated on temporariness and return rather than persistence and settlement, and steeped in a nation-based thinking that construed sending and receiving countries as mutually exclusive sites of belonging. Diaspora, as a concept, enables us to conceive of multiple attachments, and to step away from monolithic identities (Gilroy, 1993a,b; Hall, 1994).

The novelists considered in this study have engaged with the related issues of return and settlement in widely divergent manners. This chapter will assess whether their novels engaged with the sociological processes of settlement that were in play by the mid-1970s, how they represented them and why. To what extent do the novels of immigration studied here participate in this emergence? The desire for return is a salient feature of almost all the novels considered here. It corresponds to the established thinking on migration, but can also be interpreted as demonstrating the emergence of a diasporic community, since a desire to return to the homeland is a factor in defining diaspora. The emphasis the novels place on return also has as a consequence, which is not necessarily highlighted, for the maintenance of a separate identity. The immigrants represented here, despite the

fragmentation of community, do not blend in to the majority. For all this, do the novels chart a dynamic of settlement and the development of multiple belongings? These two issues are treated separately, first return, then settlement. In light of the dialectical relation between them, this separation is inevitably somewhat artificial, as most novels deal with both issues, or deal with one by dealing with, or not dealing with, the other. This nevertheless seemed the clearest way to address this theme and bring out the elements of comparison. The novels under consideration here were written in the first period of large-scale settlement of Caribbean and Maghribi populations in their respective imperial metropolises. Before examining the twin issues of return and settlement, it is interesting to interrogate the writers' treatment of the idea of an immigrant community in this context.

4.2 Fragile communities

4.2.1 A characteristic ambivalence

We have seen that both Caribbean and Maghribi novelists of immigration emphasised the marginality of the immigrant within the metropolis. Several writers show how this situation forces the immigrants together, which creates communities of sorts. *The Lonely Londoners* is framed between two considerations of the isolation and vulnerability of the newcomers. The final page offers a striking image of "black faces bobbing up and down among the millions of white, strained faces" (Selvon, 1985, 141-142), suggesting the isolation of the islanders in a sea of English hostility, while the opening pages give an insight into the context of arrival: West Indians keep arriving even as "English people start to make rab about how too much West Indians coming to the country [...] and big discussion going on in Parliament about the situation" (24). This is clearly indicated as the sort of reason pushing Moses, a veteran immigrant, to act "like a welfare

officer" for the new arrivals despite his misgivings. He helps them "because he used to remember how desperate he was when he was in London for the first time and didn't know anybody or anything" (25). Part of the cohesiveness of the group thus derives from the fact that they stand out from English society, and do not blend in. Margaret Joseph (1992), noting that Selvon indicates "a kind of communal feeling" between the English working class and the West Indian immigrants, takes it as a positive sign of integration in opposition to the marginal position of immigrant characters in novels by Lamming and by Jean Rhys (75). The association Selvon makes is, however, based merely on the fact that both are oppressed groups, living in the worst accommodation: "when you poor things does level out", the narrator tells us (75). The beginning of the novel provides a contrastive example when Moses remembers being fired from a job because white workers had refused to work with a black man and gone on strike, thus showing the limits of such communal feeling. While Selvon saw the parallels in the exploitation of more vulnerable sections of society, he was also aware of the tensions inherent in living alongside a group which perhaps felt more threatened than most by immigrants. Selvon's arresting evocation of "black faces bobbing up and down" suggests that West Indians in London form an island, a separate group whose identity is, in many ways, imposed from outside.

In Lamming's *The Emigrants*, despite the availability of some communal spaces, the sense of community established during the initial boat journey is not secure. As in *The Lonely Londoners*, there is a feeling that the group is created in part by hostile pressures from the mainstream society: as we have seen, exiting the marginal spaces of community life invariably leads to trouble (see chapter 2.2). Dickson's penetrating the enclave of English life in the immigrants' hostel when he has tea with the warden results in his being insulted, and Collis' encounter with an English family ends in misunderstanding and hurt feelings. Furthermore, the street appears in the middle section of the novel as

the site of institutional violence from the British administration. There is a real sense of threat from the police, both in Miss Dorking's hair salon, as she is very careful of what visitors she lets in for fear of an inspection, and at the barber shop, where exiting the premises makes one vulnerable to forcible searches by the police. The tension is highest when representatives of the police attempt to penetrate the communal enclaves. The policeman's entry into the barber shop exposes this: not only are the West Indian and African immigrants in this novel forced together by outside hostility, but the English force an identity on them which they refuse (see above, chapter 2.3.3).

Such a state of affairs is also evident in Chraïbi's *Les Boucs*, where the immigrants are aware of being categorised, almost moulded into a shape imposed by the French. The image of the wind conveys the omnipresence of insults directed to immigrants, and the protagonist Waldik's unsuccessful attempts to socialise with French fellow workers show the process whereby immigrants are shut into a stereotyped image and prevented from modifying it in the minds of the French people alongside whom they live. He smokes with them after work, "telling them about himself and his country, begging their sympathy as men", but the French miners "shook his hand without looking at him, convinced that he was a dog that worked with them in the mine" (135). Waldik's friend Raus summarises this situation in a diatribe:

> [L]e monde, l'Europe, le Chrétien ne veulent nous considérer, nous Bicots, que par ce petit vasistas (qu'ils ont percé, muni de barreaux, fait surmonter d'un écriteau : voilà l'Arabe, le seul, le vrai) ouvrant sur nos mauvais instincts, sur nos déchéances à nos propres yeux.
>
> ([T]he world, Europe, the Christian will only consider us wogs through this small fanlight (that they cut, fitted with bars, topped with a notice: here is the one, true Arab) opening into our bad instincts, our degradations in our own eyes. 18)

Seeing no alternative, he bitterly decides to embrace that definition of himself, that reduction of his humanity: "Il disait [...] : je chômerai, je vagabonderai, je volerai, je tuerai... foi de bicot, de malfrat, d'arabe, de crouillat, de sidi, de noraf"

(He said [...]: I will be idle, I will drift, I will steal, I will kill... on my word as a wog, a hoodlum, an Arab, a rascal, a sidi, a noraf. 18).[1] In this novel, even more than in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Emigrants*, the process by which external pressures contribute to creating an immigrant 'community', because the pervasive hostility lumps the colonial immigrants together, is made explicit.

As a consequence of their rejection by the majority population, the groups presented in these novels are characterised by ambivalence and reluctance. *Les Boucs* shows more starkly than the other novels that sociability amongst immigrants exists in large part as a reaction to hostility from the majority group: the North Africans employed in the mines resist being forced to socialise exclusively among themselves:

> [Les mineurs arabes] fuyaient [leur cabane] tacitement comme la peste. Car ils savaient que là, tôt ou tard ; tous les soirs, *la société les faisait se retrouver, entre Arabes* [...] comme un groupe de naufragés sur un radeau [...] .
>
> ([The Arab miners] tacitly fled [their shack] like the plague. Because they knew that there, sooner or later, every evening, *society would make them meet, among Arabs* [...] like a group of shipwreck victims on a raft [...]. 135, my emphasis)

Coming just after the description of Waldik's attempts to socialise with French miners, this passage emphasises the immigrants' impulse to engage in human contact and sociability. What is most striking, however, is their reluctance to spend time together—it is suggested here that they have nothing in common beyond their poverty and the catastrophe of their failure: a shipwreck. The refusal to be seen only in terms of their misery is the basis for their reluctance, because to be grouped with other immigrants means conforming to an imposed image and accepting a state of degradation.

[1] "Bicot" is a very insulting word used to refer to North Africans. It derives from the word for "kid", a version of which can be used as a term of endearment (biquet). I translate it as "wog" in order to convey both the offensiveness and the patronising nature of this insult. "Sidi" is derived from an Arabic formal form of address North Africans would have used whenever addressing French persons in North Africa, and used disparagingly by the French to refer to North Africans. "Noraf", short for North African, is also used disparagingly.

In *The Lonely Londoners*, such reluctance is sometimes discounted by the narrator, for example in his mocking treatment of a light-skinned character who pretends he is Latin American in an (unsuccessful) attempt to escape the prevailing racism. But it is also clearly admitted to in the opening pages. Moses's bad mood as he goes and meets newcomer Henry Oliver, is indicative of this:

> 'Jesus Christ,' Moses tell Harris, a friend he have, 'I never see thing so. I don't know these people at all, yet they coming to me as if I is some liaison officer, and I catching my arse as it is, how I could help them out?' (24)

Despite his reluctance, Moses does help the others, and they establish a social life in London, bringing the habit of "liming" to the Bayswater road, Oxford Street and Hyde Park. Some anecdotes show them displaying solidarity, as when Moses lends his coat to his friend Cap one winter, but this solidarity is by no means unconditional or characteristic of their relations. All of these men hail from different islands and despite their common identification as West Indian, there is a hint of prejudice, or envy, between different islanders, for instance when Moses associates Tolroy's ability to save money with his Jamaican origin. There are also regular instances of deception regarding girlfriends or small amounts of money. Selvon shows clearly that a common origin in the Caribbean does not overrule selfishness.

Lamming also presents the fragility of communities created by external pressure. Collis's observation that "after the hostel was closed most of [the immigrants] had drifted to different places" highlights the artificial nature of the groups formed on the boat and in the hostel (Lamming, 1980, 227). The middle section of the novel intertwines scenes from two contrasting milieus to illustrate the fragility of the sense of community which had built up among the emigrants in these two locales. A party at the well-appointed home of the West Indian lawyer, Mr. Redhead, is described and contrasted with the working-class world of Tornado, the Jamaican and their girlfriends, who number among the West Indian

factory and office workers, who only find accommodation in dingy basements. They distance themselves from the Redheads: Tornado explains he turned down their invitation to the party because he knows they only wanted him there to play calypso. Class divisions are emphasised, as are the divergent aspirations of the emigrants. Mrs. Redhead, Miss Bis and Dickson want to associate with English people, following the prejudice of their native colonial society, biased towards the metropolis. On the contrary, Tornado's commitment is to himself, and to returning home.

These fragile, artificial communities seem to lack even the basic social bond of solidarity. Kateb, in his short pieces on immigration from the late 1950s and early 1960s, notes that some solidarity exists between men from the same region in Algeria, but this is not unconditional: Lakhdar easily moves out of the room he shares with his friend Chérif after a disagreement (Kateb, 1997, 57, 60-61),[2] and some men leave their debts behind for others to pay (Kateb, 1986). In *The Lonely Londoners*, while English landlords refuse to rent to West Indian immigrants, West Indian landlords exploit them, as the narrator points out: "When it come to making money, it ain't have anything like 'ease me up' or 'both of we is countrymen together' in the old London" (27-28). The end of Lamming's *Emigrants* seals the failure of a sense of West Indian identity and solidarity in London. In the heavily ironic final scenes of the novel, we enter one last subterranean locale: the Governor's nightclub. This scene shows that the fragmentation of the immigrant community is complete because the nightclub contrasts with the barber shop and the hair salon, which we do not see again. Various characters are seen there, but they pursue their own paths and stories; they meet by chance, no longer by a 'natural' convergence on sites of group activity. In the last scene, a group of newly arrived immigrants come seeking help, led by the Strange Man, the unsuccessful stowaway from the crossing that

[2]This may hint at the different factions engaged in the liberation struggle. Arnaud (1986) notes that Kateb could never stand these divisions and always worked towards reconciliation.

began the novel. He represented a dissenting voice in the boat deck debates, both on the opportunities his fellow migrants sought to seize by emigrating, and on the sense of community tentatively built during the crossing to Europe (see p.26). In this final scene, he explains he was finally convinced by the others' logic and therefore sought to emigrate again, but he finds that those, including the Governor, who had argued for a sense of community, do not believe in it anymore. The novel ends as the Governor refuses to help them and gets into a fight with the Strange Man. In *Les Boucs*, solidarity among immigrants appears to be completely nonexistent, as North African middlemen extract 'payment' from Waldik when he first arrives in France, stripping him of almost all his possessions before they let him see the employment officer. In the sordid basements where each man has to himself only the space occupied by his mattress, the men fight viciously to maintain boundaries, and when they are involuntarily forced to keep each other's company by French indifference, they get drunk and fight, "convinced that they were fighting, not Arabs like themselves, but that each one of them was fighting his own pariah's life" (136). It is therefore difficult to speak of immigrant "communities" in these early novels. In the context of a society in which they are on the lowest tier of the exploited, any such communities are, at best, dysfunctional, as each man is so dispossessed that solidarity becomes an unaffordable luxury. Chraïbi shows well how these men become trapped, fighting the wrong target in the shallow illusion that it might improve their situation, and in the very act preventing any improvement.

4.2.2 Solitude: a defining experience

In the context of the breakdown of community, the overarching experience is that of solitude, even when one is in the company of fellow migrants. Both Selvon and Ben Jelloun depict a type of "loneliness-in-company" which they indicate is customary and characteristic. In *The Lonely Londoners*, weekly get-togethers are

recounted through the point of view of a withdrawn Moses:

> Some Sunday mornings he hardly say a word, he only lay there on the bed listening [...], and Harry looking at his watch anxiously [...], but all the same never getting up to go, and Bart saying that he sure one of the boys must have seen his girl Beatrice, [...], and Galahad cocky and pushing his mouth in everything and Big City fiddling with the radio. (139)

The snippets of conversation Selvon recounts, while giving a good idea of the pace of conversation and a typical jaunty attitude, also suggest paths that come close but never really meet, as each man remains wrapped up in his own preoccupations. This notion also drives the narrative and comic tension in "Basement Lullaby", from the 1957 collection, *Ways of Sunlight*, where the moods of two musicians sharing a room develop at cross-purposes, and neither listens to the other.

The immigrants' hostel in Ben Jelloun's novel is the site for similar relations. Unlike the one described in *The Emigrants*, this is shabby, decrepit, and only evokes the slightest sense of solidarity: it is "a building in which the tired, leprous walls must shelter a few hundred solitudes" (15). Here, as in Selvon, men gather but do not communicate:

> The blonde brown-eyed man drew with a thread and a needle little circles on his trousers. The dark-haired man with laughing eyes put family photographs away in a plastic album. The third, stupefied with tranquilisers, had vacant eyes [...]. Me, I looked at the wall. (41)

The four men are in the same room but might as well be alone. Ben Jelloun goes further than Selvon in asserting the primacy of solitude. His 1970s books on Maghribi immigrant workers proclaim it as a fundamental aspect of the immigrant worker's experience by displaying it in their titles: *La réclusion* ***solitaire***, *La plus haute des* ***solitudes***. They seem to make the notion of community almost redundant. In the opening pages, the narrative's attention to confined spaces is intertwined with an imagery of solitude and of being drained of life: the immigrant

is envisaged as "fine sand/mixed with crystals of salt and despair", and feels orphaned (9). The fact that he is solitary also in the most intimate aspects of his life is immediately pressed upon the reader, as he evokes the imaginary woman that accompanies his masturbation and describes his hand as a vagina (12-14). His situation does not improve much when the authorities forcibly remove him to an immigrants' hostel where, in addition, they are isolated from the world at large: "We no longer heard anything; it was as if the room had been sound-proofed, or someone had moved it to a deserted place" (41).

The difference from Selvon's men is that Ben Jelloun emphasises, not only each man's withdrawal into his personal life, but also their complete separation from (French) society. Selvon's men talk, and they talk about their life in the city (they are "going about in the vast metropolis like veteran Londoners", 138), whereas Ben Jelloun's men are silent and never engage with the city except as a terrifying realm of unsteady walls ("mur chancelant", 40), or anonymous streets, or cafés full of unsmiling faces. This reflects the situation of largely illiterate and non French-speaking men exposed to racist violence and who, in the words of Albert Memmi, "can't even go around alone; moreover they take a single subway line, always the same ride during which time they thus feel secure; away from that, removed from that rigid behaviour, fixed once and for all, they panic, as neurotics" (Memmi, 1968, 132-133). Unlike the West Indians, they are not armed with language skills to navigate the city, something Boudjedra emphasises in *Topographie idéale...* In his choice to focus on the personal, psychological experience of the immigrant Ben Jelloun plunges the reader into the experience of one representative man, defined by his solitude.

4.3 Return: Impossible or ambivalent

4.3.1 A privileged injunction

The depiction of such a negative and crushing experience coexists, as we have seen, with a contrasting image of the region of origin which is the locale of a structured community (see chapter 1.3.1). To what extent do the novels enact an impulse to return home to that community? Chraïbi's novel was written long before French authorities started implementing return policies. Sayad (2004) indicates, however, that migration in the period was conceived by the migrants' home communities as temporary, therefore supposedly incorporating return. The early novels of the Algerian literary boom of the 1950s treat emigration exactly in this way, as their characters leave the village then return (Feraoun, 1998, 1954; Mammeri, 1992). Chraïbi does not. His protagonist in 1955 is offered a return ticket to Algeria, yet comes back to France after only two months, unable to cope with seeing his father so old and frail, and tormented perhaps by the guilt of his failure to realise his dream in the metropolis. The notion of return seems irrelevant to a novel in which those who stay behind in Algeria are tormented by the "mirage of Europe" as by "a tapeworm" (88). Return is not seriously entertained as a possibility, as the end of the novel gives no indication that either Waldik or the Butts will move back to Algeria. This idea is eclipsed by the urgency of critiquing the inhuman situation of migrants in France and the fascination France exerts on Maghribi men. Chraïbi figures, however, as an exception among the writers studied here. Return is elevated to an ideal for ideological or emotional reasons in the novels of Lamming, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun. Yet it is rarely achieved. The novels of Lamming and Ben Jelloun give, rather, and seemingly despite the authors' best efforts, a sense of entrapment, while the experience of Boudjedra's returnees is disappointing. In this, Boudjedra seems more open to the contradictions of the immigrant's existence, and comes closer to Selvon who, unlike the other writers,

consciously explores the tensions involved in the notion of return in his writings on the immigrant experience.

The influence of the colonial relation is important in determining the privileging of return. In the Algerian context, the animosity characterising the liberation struggle meant that continued emigration after independence contradicted the national ideology, in part because it highlighted a continued economic dependence on France. This explains why emigration was a rare literary subject in Algerian literature in the 1960s and 1970s (Benarab, 1994; Bonn, 1994, 2001a). Boudjedra set his 1975 novel on the immigrant experience on 26 September 1973, a few days after the Algerian government had decided to suspend emigration to France, in the wake of a spate of racist attacks and murders targeting Algerians all over France. As we have seen, the exploitation of immigrant workers, as well as the hostility and stereotyping targeting them in daily life, and finally the violence to which they fall victim, are all represented in this novel, as the protagonist who is arriving from Algeria is murdered just before he reaches his destination (see chapters 1.3.2 and 2.2). Boudjedra wrote *Topographie* after having spent three years in France himself, and intended it as a denunciation of the whole system of emigration: the exploitation of men, the draining of human resources from Algeria, and the reproduction of the system through the deceitful discourse of officials and of emigrants themselves. In interviews at the time, he indicated that the return of all emigrants to Algeria was the only acceptable solution to the treatment of immigrant workers in France and Algeria's development problems (Boudjedra, 1975b). This corresponds to the official position in Algeria at the time. It is a utopian position, which does not take into account, for example, postcolonial Algeria's failure to produce sufficient employment opportunities (see Stora, 2001).

The overall scheme of Lamming's novels also shows the significance of the colonial relation in determining the value or return and settlement in his work.

Water With Berries shares with *The Emigrants* the sense that emigration to the colonial centre is a major factor in the disillusionment of the colonial subject, his discovery of the inauthenticity of his colonial situation and of the necessity of changing it at home in the Caribbean. While the two characters apparently most vulnerable to the illusion of belonging to British society, Derek in *Water With Berries* and Dickson in *The Emigrants*, do not become aware of their condition, the novels themselves serve to enlighten the reader in this matter. Like Boudjedra, Lamming considered that returning home to participate in the project of post-colonial nation-building was indispensable. Munro saw *The Emigrants* as indicating that "[for] Lamming, emigration is a phase of discovery that leads back to the West Indies and the rejuvenation of the spiritually moribund society the emigrants fled" (Munro, 1979, 131). Similarly, Kom concludes that there is nothing left to do for the West Indians at the end of the novel but "to turn their back on the England which has evidently rejected them. England becomes merely a school where they learn to be themselves, that is, authentic Antilleans" (1981, 52). Nair (1996) considers that in Lamming's representation, return to the Caribbean is a necessary further step in the teleology of migration to England set out by C.L.R. James in *Beyond a Boundary* (1969). Where James sought to engage with the site of his intellectual origins, Lamming argues that this engagement leads to disillusion, which in turn should be a catalyst for an attempt to foster the development of Caribbean culture based on the non-European and syncretic practices and traditions of its popular culture. As we have seen, this cultural project requires the artist and political leader to de-emphasise the English and colonial inheritance and delve into the currents of Caribbean living culture repressed by official history and respectable culture and society (see chapter 1.2.3).

4.3.2 Entrapment

The conclusions of Lamming's two novels dealing with the experience of emigration do not follow through on the ideological agenda for disillusion and return that is set out. Lamming does not manage to provide it as a conclusion to his emigration novels, as if he could not connect the experience of emigration and that of return. The possibility of return to the Caribbean is deferred in both *The Emigrants* and *Water With Berries*, and Lamming finds himself forced to start a new novel, *Of Age and Innocence*, with new characters, to be able to represent return and competing attempts at cultural and political renewal in the Caribbean.

Very few of his characters in fact achieve the sort of awareness Lamming advocates. Those who do fail to return. Moreover, in *The Emigrants*, the possible figures for the leader or intellectual who, in later novels, attempts the kind of cultural renewal called for by the wider scheme of Lamming's analysis, are shown to be settling in England in a material way, and to reject any leadership role. As we have seen, the economically successful Governor refuses to provide guidance and shelter to the latest group of West Indian immigrants at the end of the novel (see p.156). This is unexpected, as we are told that he considers "his one great defeat" to be his inability to help smuggle the Strange Man into England two years previously (260). Why, when given the opportunity, does he refuse to help him and atone for this defeat? His refusal comes before he finds out that his former wife is now in a relationship with the Strange Man, so that sexual jealousy cannot be blamed for his refusal. His retort, "But this is a club" (268), highlights his status as a private entrepreneur who doesn't have the means to take responsibility for community issues. With this position his outlook has changed: his failure to help the Strange Man is now " a small thing in the sum of success" (260). He envisages this success in individual terms, as predicated on his independence and ability to adapt, and opts for this path decisively. In a way, the Governor joins

the successful Redhead family in adhering to the British value of individualism, in what Lamming perceives and presents as a betrayal.

The other figure for an intellectual and a leader is the writer, Collis. His insight concerning Dickson and Higgins, as we have seen, makes him the only character in the novel to perceive the community of fates of the immigrants, despite the diversity of their circumstances, and to realise the mental decolonisation advocated by Lamming.

> There was a feeling, more conscious in some than others, that England was not only a place, but a heritage [. . .]. But all that was now coming to an end. England [. . .] was just there like nature, drifting vaguely beyond our reach. (228-229)

At this point, Collis can be considered a mouthpiece for the author. He realises that the West Indian who is convinced by the colonial propaganda that he is a British citizen will see his hopes and sense of identity shattered when this conception comes to clash with his treatment at the hands of the prejudiced white natives of the British Isles. But this awareness does not spur the result implied by the logic of the novel and of Lamming's œuvre as a whole. Despite his insight into the dangers of the colonial myth, Collis feels no desire to return to the Caribbean. His disagreement with a Yugoslav man who lectures him on the public responsibility of the writer shows that Collis will not devote his newly liberated consciousness to the construction of a post-colonial culture at home, nor even enlighten others about colonial alienation. Despite his insight into the common condition of men who migrate from a colony to the colonial centre, the retelling of the altercation with the Yugoslav *after* the moment of insight, although in the chronology of the novel this encounter happens the previous evening, indicates that Collis does not approach his literary work from a standpoint of public responsibility. The structure of the novel, in manipulating time, closes off the potential positive consequences of Collis's insight. So what at first sight seemed to be an achievement of the process Lamming advocates, in fact turns out to be

a flight to the opposite extreme. Collis is not blindly trying to merge with the English, unlike Dickson, the Governor, Miss Bis or the Redheads, but his refusal to commit to the Caribbean shows a different kind of blindness to history: while the colonial illusions must be debunked, the Caribbean's relationship to England is not neutral, as he would like to think. Collis' own brand of schizophrenic symptoms in the novel is a clear sign of this. He is suffering from a strange affliction, a defect in facial recognition, which prevents him from seeing the difference between an Eastern European and an Afro-Caribbean character and, he predicts, will eventually lead him to "see the faces without their attributes" (264). The result of Collis's artificially neutral position is an impoverishment of his apprehension of the world, in which he cannot connect with others. The suggestion is that he will be left unmoored and directionless, feeling like Moses in Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* a "great restless, swaying movement that leaving you standing in the same spot" (141). Collis refuses the role that Lamming believes is essential for a West Indian writer, of representing his people. As a character in this novel, on a meta-narrative level, he represents his people to the reader, so that Lamming himself fulfils his own vision of the artist. But Lamming ultimately cannot represent, in the novels where his main theme is the experience of emigration, a West Indian who returns.

Furthermore, some West Indians who are already free from illusion find themselves attracted almost inescapably to Britain. Tornado is significant in this respect. His speeches on the ship indicate that he has already undergone the process of disillusion which Collis will also identify: he describes England for the others, and interprets its alien-ness as well as the colonial structures of economic dependency for them on the train from Portsmouth to London. He makes it clear that he hates England and asserts his determination eventually to return to the Caribbean: "if there is one thing England going to teach all o'we is that there ain't no place like home no matter how bad home is" (77). We have seen that

Tornado forms a contrast with the other main characters in the novel: he seems protected from mental illness by his commitment to his identity as a working-class, Afro-Caribbean man with no illusions about Britain. Unlike Miss Bis, who tries to flee the influence of specific Caribbean cultural forms, Tornado does not subscribe to the idea that English cultural forms are superior. This makes him an even better candidate for the kind of cultural renewal Lamming advocates. He also notes that seeking a better break in England and failing is more damaging than failing at home, because this failure is accompanied by the realisation that they are not part of Britain and they are not equal: the emigrants "learn that the picture of the place they choose to make men o'themselves, that picture wus all wrong. There ain't nothing they can do but [...] get back" (189). This knowledge initially leads him to formulate a vision of the process very close to that suggested by the overall scheme of Lamming's novels: "those comin' after goin' make better West Indian men for comin' up here an' seein' for themselves what is what" (77). And yet, as time goes by, his determination to go home is dampened, and he accustoms himself to the idea of staying in Britain. The routine of hard work which fails to sustain a living grinds him into resignation. His case is at once an illustration of the colonial situation which pushes men to seek their fortune outside their home islands, and of the murky resistance which gets in the way of the project of return.

What reasons does Lamming provide for this entrapment in Britain, which is so opposed to the project he articulates both in *The Emigrants*, at the level of his oeuvre and, indeed, in his own career?

Sandra Pouchet Paquet (1982) has noted that the emigrants represented in Lamming's novels all fail in some way and that their final situation involves a kind of stasis. The fact that both the English and the West Indians are still trapped in colonial myths and subject positions has, of course, a bearing on the matter. But return is not presented as possible even for Collis or Tornado, despite their

awakening. One factor preventing return is the transformation of the individual by his stay in a foreign country. The Governor is an example of this, as we have seen. Yet Lamming does not have the same feeling as Selvon does for the ambiguities of the migration experience. Lamming's nationalist project prevents him from acknowledging fascination with the industrial metropolis, and the attraction of the freedom it allows, compared to the small Caribbean communities. In *The Emigrants*, the most flagrant reason for even the most committed West Indians' failure to return to the Caribbean is that the hard work they undertake does not have the intended economic returns. Yet economic success, the ability to provide for a family, are a significant part of the sense of successful masculinity for the emigrants. As the discussions on the boat indicate, the journey is also an initiation into manhood: they go to Britain to make men of themselves. At the end of the novel, Tornado has not attained this: his partner Lilian gets the extra cash they need by pawning Dickson's clothes. Tornado has therefore failed in the project of self-affirmation, despite his advantage over the other emigrants, the lack of illusions. This is indicated in his neighbour the Jamaican's observation that he has become "less aggressive, almost passive in his acceptance of what [has] happened to [the emigrants]" (189). If Dickson is emasculated by the objectification inherent in his positioning in relation to the English, Tornado is emasculated by the exploitative conditions of work in which his efforts do not bring the economic returns that are so closely intertwined with the sense of masculinity. There is a strong parallel here with the predicament of North African workers described by Tahar Ben Jelloun (1997a), as we have seen (see above, p.123). In North Africa too, virility and the economic role of provider are the two pillars of hegemonic masculinity. The delayed achievement of economic success and an acceptable form of masculinity are the main deterrents to return, even when the historical and cultural conditions set out by Lamming are fulfilled. Ben Jelloun, while he depicts a dynamic similar in limited ways (the analysis of the colonial relation

is absent, but discrimination, poverty and the psychological consequences of immigration are shown to prevent return), is less explicit in his presentation of the issue of return, which is treated as an underground issue.

Ben Jelloun's characters are also trapped in France by economic conditions. The protagonist is one of the "single" immigrants who populated hostels in industrial regions in France and were considered little more than a disposable workforce by French industrialists and authorities. As we have seen, this view of immigrants was predicated on the notion of a temporary stay: eventual return was part and parcel of this conception of the immigrant condition, from both points of view, and in the 1970s when Ben Jelloun wrote this novel, there was much emphasis on this. The novel echoes this conception of return as an ideal implicitly, through imagery. As we have seen, its narrator establishes a stark opposition between the barren industrial world of the West and the light-filled, natural world of his home (see p.52). His highest desire, which in part drives his hallucinations, is "to be loved" (71); the imagery and the scenes depicting his interactions with others all suggest that this fundamental desire can only be fulfilled at home: life in France contains only rejection by women, loveless visit to prostitutes, and loneliness-in-company among other immigrants. It is conceived of as undesirable, almost unreal. The notion of return is therefore implicitly elevated as the ideal, although it is not explicitly evoked. Unlike Chraïbi, Ben Jelloun does not analyse a feeling of fascination with France, and return, though it remains underground, plays a greater part here than in the earlier Moroccan novel.

Like *The Emigrants*, however, Ben Jelloun's novel does not enact the desired return. Despite the protagonist's yearning, there is no sign that he will go home: the economic and political situation prevents it. Poverty at home, the duty to support his family and the rural community, and the brutality of the post-independent regime, all maintain him in his position as an emigrant. Emigration is forced, almost involuntary. We have seen that the impossibility of returning is

the cause of his mental breakdown (see p.126). Despite the absence of an active journey home, return is in fact evoked in the opening pages of the novel, and this opening seals the impasse of the immigrant condition: "A body will today take the path to return. It travels in a metallic box" (10). The only return envisaged in this novel is a final one. Later passages indicate that it is the "stateless bird" who travels home thus, but his death is never stated explicitly: we are told he "left, on tip-toe, without making a sound" (117). In this euphemism the notion of returning is curtailed: departure from the site of suffering is seen, but the arrival at home is skirted, because it is envisaged as impossible. It seems that in *La réclusion solitaire* the only outcome to the position of the immigrant is death. While Ben Jelloun's representation of the immigrant corresponds to official discourses on immigration, his treatment of the situation of immigration in some ways exposes the illusions contained in these official discourses. The constraints that drive migration in the first place and the discriminatory conditions prevailing during the sojourn in France prevent return. The novels of Ben Jelloun and Lamming, while asserting the primacy of return, do not fulfill the injunction to enact this. But the assumptions set out in each novel mean that to remain in Europe is presented as a failure.

4.3.3 Nostalgia for the land of exile

Boudjedra, whose novel is structured in a similar binary opposition between immigration as a trap and a preference for return, does include figures of return, and these complicate the relationship between remaining and returning. Although Boudjedra's novel focuses on the experience of an Algerian arriving in France for the first time, the author comments on the experience of migrants who have returned home through the figures of the laskars. They are a small group of men who lived and worked in France for many years, and to whom the protagonist goes for information before setting off. The protagonist remembers them, and

the omniscient narrator imagines their reaction upon hearing of his dismal fate.

On their first appearance, they are characterised in part by their "voluminous wallets", a hint at the figure of the prosperous returned migrant (21). They enjoy the prestige that comes from ostentatious spending. The author acknowledges the place of the returned immigrants themselves in perpetuating the dynamics of emigration at an individual level. The mystification sustained by returnees' ostentation and positive glossing of their experience abroad is criticised in the laskars, through their devious attitude to the protagonist's questioning. They assume that he will not believe a truthful account of the terrible condition of immigrant workers in France, and will resent it as an attempt to prevent him from getting what they have, so they adopt a reverse psychology approach, extolling the marvels of the underground. They do not believe his project will succeed, and are appalled when it does. Much of the time devoted to them in the novel emphasises the recklessness of their attitude, and their culpability for his death. The positive gloss they put on their stay in Paris, emphasising the sense of adventure involved in roaming through the big city, and their access to money in what remains a subsistence economy in the mountain village, is a factor in the ill-fated protagonist's desire to emigrate.

Yet Boudjedra is also sympathetic to the laskars. The experience of returning is ambivalent, at best. They have found that emigration is never without its price, which is why they would like to warn the protagonist against it, even though their misguided plan fails. They also find themselves somewhat isolated from the community: it is obvious to everyone that their financial clout is their only real tie with the rest of the village. They never again become completely re-integrated into the closely policed, Muslim society of their origins. In fact the village only tolerates their nights of debauchery because "they keep it alive with their savings brought back from there or their pensions" (51). They have brought some vices back from Europe, and hide their drinking, smoking, and chess

and checkers games from the notables and the Imam. Their marginalised status means they suffer, like the workers in France, from an emotional deficit. This is evident in their pathetic posturing in attempting to retain "disciples" they can impress with their stories. But the "disciples" who visit them have utilitarian, interested reasons for doing so, which "deeply hurts" the laskars (147-148). It is suggested that their money is running out, and they gradually lose their status in the village, notably because of the inroads of education in the region: it is a little girl, rather than they, who writes out the address the protagonist is travelling to. They lead an idle life but, in terms of emotional life and social belonging, it differs little from that of immigrants in France. They have no family life, socialising only amongst themselves, drinking and playing chess to pass the time, and - above all - they are constrained to an almost illicit intimate life: they "copule[nt] avec les mendiantes (quelle déchéance après avoir joué les séducteurs des années durant !)" ("copulate with beggar-women (what degradation, after acting the playboys for years!)", 88). All of this reflects the pervasive but unspoken sense that emigration is always a fault. Sayad, in his sociological study of migration, describes a mix of envy and resentment at the competition returnees now represent, as a reason why communities put returnees on trial, in particular from the point of view of culture.

> these men returned from immigration [...] are also and above all men of the in-between-two-demeanours or of the in-between-two-cultures. And, without doubt, the most pernicious way to put them on trial [...] is first and foremost a trial on cultural grounds. [...] From both sides, emigration and immigration are suspected of subversion and more or less openly accused of cultural adulteration. (Sayad, 2006, 158, my translation)

The laskars hide because in their case the accusation would be true. The betrayal of community entailed in departure, even when this departure is necessary for the community's survival, is never really forgiven.

The exclamation of disdain "Quelle dégradation [...]!" signals the last, most

ironic aspect of the returnee's experience, given the sense (felt by the emigrant himself) of emigration as betrayal: nostalgia for the place of exile. Part of the reason they want to retain "disciples" is in order to be able to reminisce for them, and show photographs of their former lives. Their nostalgia and continuing fascination for France's glamour is deftly suggested in the notion that they show their old photographs "dans un geste théâtral de vieille catin montrant le portrait de quelque prince qui l'aurait jadis entretenue" ("with the dramatic gesture of an old whore showing the portrait of some prince who had kept her once upon a time", 116). The immigrant is transformed by the time he spends in an alien land, and can never return as he once was. For their enjoyment of the freedom afforded by the modern, industrial city, the price is a position, in their native village, emotionally not much better than that of an immigrant. Boudjedra wrote *Topographie* in order to denounce the total phenomenon of immigration: both the exploitation and inhuman treatment of immigrants by the French, and the complacent sending away of vital forces that the Algerian nation then lacked for its own construction. Nevertheless, despite his advocacy of an end to migration and the return of all immigrants, Boudjedra recognises the difficulties and paradoxes inherent in the returned immigrant's position, and portrays them sensitively in his novel.

4.3.4 An intrinsic tension

Selvon's novels of migration also present the hardship and stasis involved in life in the imperial metropolis for the post/colonial migrant. The idea of return is recurrent in these writings but it is not raised as an ideal or an injunction. Instead, Selvon consciously explores it as a source of tension and contradiction in the life of the immigrant. He gives over some space to nostalgia for the Caribbean in his first writing about life in London. It is a main theme of the short story "Come Back to Grenada" where, unlike in *The Lonely Londoners*, the weekly

"oldtalk" in the immigrants' rooms "does always be about home in the West Indies". The hero in this short story spends half the time wishing he could save up enough to go home. But while the boys always reminisce about home "none of them making the suggestion to go back". The narrator suggests they refrain because "they shame to say they miss home", but the opening of the story offers another explanation: the attractions of summer in London, in particular all the pretty women (Selvon, 1989a, 167). The story is structured around this tension between wanting to return, and wanting to stay in Britain. Selvon would revive this tension in his novels through the character of Moses, who in *The Lonely Londoners* longs to go home. The novel indicates the material and social reasons for the difficulty of returning to the Caribbean: when Moses reflects on his situation, he clearly blames his lack of economic progress. Yet Galahad's quick response that he will never go back returns to the fascination of London life unveiled in "Grenada". Moreover, as Salick (2001) rightly points out, Moses's vision of return is that of a holiday or a dream, more a chimera to help him through the difficult times than a real aspiration. It was twenty years before Selvon would give a concrete representation of this desire, nodding to the reality of return in the character of Tolroy: after sending for his family in the earlier novel, Tolroy in *Moses Ascending* has managed to prosper and arranges to return to the Caribbean, with his family. The tension is still alive in Moses in this novel, but a process of adaptation to British ways consequent on his long stay in Britain is by then clear, most obviously in his narrative voice's mix of registers. When he finally returns to Trinidad in *Moses Migrating*, his posture is that of the tourist, and he realises that his home is now Britain. More than any other writer in this study, Selvon is frank about the fascination with the metropolis, and the irreversibility of the migrant's journey. Minoli Salgado, borrowing from chaos theory, appropriates the notions of irreversibility and the information barrier as a defining feature of diaspora experience (Salgado, 2003). The experience of

emigration makes return impossible, because the emigrant could never return to the way he or she was before leaving, or to the situation that existed before departure, just as it is impossible to go back in time, because it would require that every particle in the universe be restored to its previous state (see also the discussion of this phenomenon in Sayad, 2006). Selvon explored this issue extraordinarily sensitively almost as soon as he arrived in London, in his short story broadcast in 1951, "Poem in London" (Selvon, 1989c). This address to an unknown interlocutor who did not migrate presents migration as at once an ending and a beginning, and gradually slips to the notion of a birth. What is conjured up is the moment of becoming, the shift from the state of emigrant to that of immigrant which irrevocably separates the traveller from those who stayed behind. The bewilderment, the encounter with the city, its veteran migrants and its racists, are all evoked and dismissed as founding moments, until finally the elected moment of birth is described: the first encounter with the lived magic of the English countryside. The reason for the deferral of return in the novels of the following decades was contained in one of Selvon's first pieces about London.

While most of the writers I consider here adhere in various degrees to the notion of migration as temporary and to the aspiration of return, they find it almost impossible to depict, or do not focus on it. The only one who does, Boudjedra, shows all the complexities and ambivalence it involves. If the immigrants are trapped or choose to remain in France and Britain, what future do the novelists envisage for them?

4.4 Settlement?

4.4.1 Disengagement

For most of the writers considered in this study, the notion of the immigrants' settling in their country of destination is something of a blind spot.

In the early 1970s, the settlement of some of the Caribbean population in Britain had become apparent, but it seems that Lamming had perceived this outcome as early as 1954. Despite the elevation of return to the Caribbean as a desirable outcome, his novel charts to some extent the transformation of *Emigrants* into *im*migrants. Settlement in Britain is negative: it is a failure of the characters' individual projects and of Lamming's nationalist project. But some telling images hint at a sense of settlement when Collis evokes the street he lives on at the end of the novel: "I had walked this street for more than two years [...]. Now it was my street. [...] It was a *convenience* which had been created for me" (223, my emphasis). The vocabulary is reminiscent of Collis' observation of an English family's home just after his arrival in Great Britain: "It was not only a habitation [but] an entire climate. The *conveniences* were natural elements by which the life of the Pearsons was nourished." The earlier scene emphasises the stark contrast between their comfort and Collis' situation as a newly arrived immigrant: "The room seemed a persistent rebuke to the rudimentary shelter which Collis had found" (136). By the end of the novel, Lamming indicates through imagery that Collis has achieved a kind of belonging in the British landscape, even though this is precarious and he is living on the edge of poverty. Nevertheless, there is little sense that those who settle in England will form a conscious community. Procter argues that the barber shop and hair salon are examples of the development of "black British communal identity and politics", as many identities became conflated under the flag black British in the 1970s (2003, 32). This is true insofar as the various characters present a united front of sullen resistance to the English mainstream's homogenising gaze and to English thoughtlessness, stereotyping, and hostility. But the scene in the barbershop is, if anything, a witness to the diversity of black identities. What is being discussed is the distinctions between West Indians and Africans. Another site could perhaps usefully be discussed in terms of emerging "communal identity and politics": Tornado's

room. This is the location of penetrating discussions on the relationship between the immigrants and Britain: the character of the colonial relationship is exposed when West Indians' fascination with Britain is framed as that between a child and a neglectful parent. Yet there is no sense of a conscious engagement with the notion of black Britain, only the commitment to the Caribbean, even though the characters are in effect trapped in England as we have seen. The kind of Caribbean immigrant community Lamming tentatively creates in *The Emigrants* and *Water With Berries* is in fact very fragile, and this is due both to his concern to be true to genuine feelings of class consciousness and island nationalism, and to the exclusions he operated more or less consciously as part of his own nationalist ideology: Simoes da Silva (2000) has usefully shown how Lamming privileges an Afro-Caribbean, male identity as normative and excludes women.

Lamming, having considered in *The Emigrants* the possibility that those who had gone to Britain might not leave again, proposes a further consideration of their situation in his 1971 novel, *Water With Berries*, through the fate of the San Cristobal painter, Teeton. His English landlady, the Old Dowager, takes him to a remote island after they discover the corpse of a suicide in his room. There, her brother-in-law, Fernando, holds him at knife-point because he does not trust Teeton, but the Old Dowager saves him (see above, pp.36, 112). Under the weight of Fernando's threat, Teeton has a psychotic episode of dissociation. The Old Dowager rejects him after saving him, and he kills her. This is significant because the confrontation with Fernando and with the Old Dowager's rejection constitutes for Teeton the demise of his illusion of security and partnership in England. Through these two characters and their murky family history, Teeton is reminded of the horrors inherent in the common history of slavery bonding England and San Cristobal/the Caribbean; he also finally sees clearly the racist foundations which cannot be eliminated from even the liberal English mind: both

Fernando and the Old Dowager, despite keeping their distance from an aggressively imperialist project, harbour a visceral hatred for Teeton and "his kind" (234). As we have seen, Lamming by the late 1960s had come to the conclusion that violence was necessary to the process of overcoming the weight of history (see Kent, 1992 and above, chapter 2.4). Teeton, through the distressing fragmentation of the self he experiences, achieves what Dickson could not. The crisis of hyper-aware paralysis he undergoes while under the menace of Fernando's knife is paradoxically a moment of renewal: experiencing dissociation leads him to a new approach and a new contact with his own physicality when he buries Fernando. The terror of confrontation has also brought Teeton to the edge of language, forcing him to reinvent ways to address the Old Dowager, so that the extreme violence of this episode allows Teeton to make a *tabula rasa*, shed his illusions and decide to break off relations with England. When she rejects him, he is able to react without succumbing to paralysis, and kill her, in conformity with Lamming's changed consideration of the situation. In the UK edition, Teeton's nationalist project of return fails, as an epilogue specifies that he is arrested and kept in Britain.[3]

The author refused to represent the further fate of West Indians in Britain, so we do not know what will befall Teeton, yet we know the episode allows Teeton to face life in Britain free and clear of the illusions of belonging that kept him in stasis. Lamming, discussing *Water With Berries*, asserted that "what [his protagonists] have to deal with [...] is the new reality in [...] the increasing world of Blacks in England" (Kent, 1992, 104). This indicates that he was aware of the process of settlement of a Caribbean community in Britain, including young people who were growing up there. But Lamming asserted a sort of separation of the ways, noting that this new generation's attitude and relationship to British

[3]Simoes da Silva (2000) has argued that Lamming did not manage to move beyond an identification with Caliban in his allegorical framework, but Lamming insists on the gift of language in his discussion of the Prospero/Caliban dialectic (2005). Isn't the fact that Teeton literally loses his language in the climactic scene of *Water With Berries* a sign that he is moving beyond the parameters of the colonial relation as defined in the *Tempest* paradigm?

society differed from his own (he returned to this subject in an interview: see Phillips, 1997). He did not attempt to tackle it imaginatively. It seems to me that the new outlook Teeton possesses at the conclusion of *Water With Berries*, bleak as it is, constitutes an imaginative acknowledgement of the emerging positioning of black youth in the 1970s, who took on a more oppositional stance toward mainstream Britain (see Gilroy, 2002; Procter, 2003). Yet Lamming's refusal to engage with the later life of the Caribbean in Britain and to focus exclusively on the Caribbean can be interpreted as a failure to envisage a diasporic mode of living, in which bonds remain between the Caribbean and communities of Caribbean people in Europe. His choice sustains the nation-based thinking which finds it difficult to acknowledge phenomena that challenge the national borders of identity.

4.4.2 A blind spot

The Maghribi writers dealing with the subject in the 1970s are even less reflective on this issue of settlement. Chraïbi presents a character who initially seems settled in France: he lives with a French woman and has fathered her child. Yet this sense of settlement is shown to be vulnerable. Not only has Waldik made frequent sojourns in jail, but the neighbours' hostility is remarked upon and he discovers to his dismay that those he thought his allies among the French, his companion and the supposedly liberal intellectual, are not to be depended on (see p.118). The ambiguity of his situation is symbolised by his son Fabrice's fragile health: it is unclear whether the boy survives meningitis. Delayre (2004) has rightly commented on the pessimism inherent in such a symbolisation, but the novel's conclusion is more hopeful. Waldik, having been rejected by Simone, meets another French woman, Isabelle, who restores his faith in the idea that fruitful encounters between the East and the West are possible. Having had difficult experiences herself in the Second World War, Isabelle encourages Waldik

to refuse the posture of victim. It is suggested, therefore, that Waldik finds an individual happy ending by forming a new couple with Isabelle. The situation of the Butts is not resolved in this way, but it is suggested they will remain in France. Their "Captain" explains they will seek a cave, indicating a fusion with the French landscape in line with their relinquishing of human society. This conclusion, such as it is, does not engage with the future of a community of Maghribi immigrants in France. Chraïbi's radical critique of Western modernity does not allow for such reflections.

The immigration novels of Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun likewise make a stark point, also curtailing their own ability to consider the notion of settlement. Boudjedra gives a nuanced account of the experience of return, but his focus on the necessity of stopping emigration and repatriating migrant workers leads him to ignore the younger generation growing up in France. In a single sentence, he dismisses this group as hopelessly alienated by the assimilationist rhetoric of French Republicanism. In this, Boudjedra's novel is aligned with official Algerian discourses on the issue of emigration, and with the Algerian nationalist discourse after independence (Stora, 2001). Other than this dismissive remark, the immigrant in his novel is the traditional rural migrant, illiterate, lonely, who left his family at home and suffers in jobs involving impossibly hard and dangerous physical work.

Ben Jelloun's *La réclusion solitaire* makes more allowances for the notion of remaining in France. Although the protagonist and his roommates are often lost in their own thoughts and preoccupations, they do support each other when necessary, as when the protagonist accompanies the blonde brown-eyed man to see a traditional healer. The peculiar strategies of narration also, shifting from "I" to "we" as noted by Gaudin (1998), are a sign that the narrator, despite his loneliness, certainly operates on the assumption that he is part of a community, for which he speaks. As we have seen, return is not envisaged in a concrete way, and

it is suggested these immigrants remain in France. But the novel presents little reflection on the conditions of the perenniality of the Maghribi presence in France. Unlike Lamming, Ben Jelloun is not reflective about this lack of engagement. His 1976 novel simply ignores the emergence of a population with an increasing proportion of women and children, which was settling in France and would not return, and of a generation of young people born in France, and expressing the wish to integrate into French society, as is apparent in some TV documentaries of the 1960s (see Mills-Affif, 2004, 235-236). The decision to remain involved more than economic logic.

Several factors may explain why Ben Jelloun and Boudjedra did not engage with the dynamics of settlement. It was an almost invisible phenomenon at the time. Sayad, in his late 1970s essays on immigration based on his research with Maghribi immigrants, showed that the settlement of whole families had begun in the 1950s, and analysed the qualitative shifts in the Algerian dynamic of migration. He showed that motivations for coming to France and staying in France had changed, as immigrants took a more individualistic attitude and tended to stay in France longer and longer (Sayad, 2004). But his work was at the cutting edge of research on this phenomenon, and did not represent the consensual view at the time. Moreover, immigration from Morocco was more recent than immigration from Algeria, and the conventional schemas of migration still operated for such immigrants: Dwyer (1982) shows that, in mid-1970s Morocco, emigration was still considered as a temporary enterprise, the function of which was for a man to accumulate capital and return to set up on a farm. This might have inflected Ben Jelloun's representation to some extent, as a Moroccan writer. Finally, the children who wanted to take their place in the (French) society they had grown up in, did not yet have a published voice. Those who had grown up during the 1950s and 1960s probably stepped in their fathers' shoes as factory and building workers before the advent of recession and rising unemployment in the 1970s,

and did not yet form a distinct group on the national scene as their younger siblings and/or children would in the 1980s. Ben Jelloun's and Boudjedra's contact with immigrant workers took place in contexts that meant they encountered the archetypal figure of the Maghribi immigrant: literacy classes and a counselling service for ailing immigrant workers (Ben Jelloun, 1997a; Boudjedra, 1975a).

The final sections of Ben Jelloun's novel do touch on a phenomenon that participated in the settlement dynamic: militancy (see Naïr, 1992; Abdallah, 2000). As we have seen, his protagonist's encounter with an activist for the Palestinian cause helps him emerge from his psychotic withdrawal, as he realises there can be a community among the oppressed. Curiously, in going from abortive attempts to militate for immigrants' rights to militancy for the Palestinian cause, Ben Jelloun's immigrant follows a precisely reversed path compared to that taken by militants on on issues of Maghribi immigration in the early 1970s. In 1971, after the bombing of Palestinian refugee camps, a support group for Palestinians was set up; it ran awareness campaigns and gathered medicines and donations. But when they attempted to liaise with North African workers, the students involved soon decided that a defence of immigrant workers in France was necessary and urgent. The Mouvement des Travailleurs Algériens (MTA) was formed in 1972 and organised actions in favour of immigrants' rights (Aissaoui, 2006). One should note that immigrant militants themselves, while they were struggling for rights, were not doing so because of plans to settle permanently. Driss El Yazami, a prominent figure in these struggles and a member of the MTA, recognised that this process of rooting and settlement was not necessarily acknowledged as such: "We were - sometimes without knowing it, let's say, without systematising it - we were in this process of rooting or integration [...]. We are here, we want to stay, and we want to have rights" (Laurentin, 2008, my translation). There was not necessarily a reflection on the long-term implications of these struggles. The realisation that one would not return might have occurred at an individual

level, when parents decided to remain for the sake of stability for their French-born children (see Benguigui, 2005). But as set out above, several constraints converged to prevent a general awakening to this reality.

The figure of the immigrant proffered by Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun, a "single" man, working in the building or heavy industry sectors, living in isolation and poverty, serves to denounce his deplorable situation. Such immigrants still formed an important proportion of the Maghribi population in France in the 1970s, and the oppression the writers condemned was real enough. Nevertheless, this image, while not untrue, completely conforms to official representations of the Maghribi immigration to France. It is not innovative, not taking into account the emerging trends that would lead to diasporic configurations highly disturbing for official discourses on all sides. In two very different ways, the writers seek to guide the reader under the surface of the stereotype, unveiling his motivations and his experience of racism. The purpose is to turn the tables on the official image of the temporary immigrant, to show that it covers inhumane conditions of oppression. In Ben Jelloun's case, this is paired with an attempt to restore an image of the immigrant worker as a sensitive human being, whereas Boudjedra, through the novel's discourse on advertising, seeks to show that everyone is alienated by modern industrial societies, not just immigrants. But in seeking to expose the injustice of the immigrant condition, both writers fall into the trap of accepting the official discourses' reduction of the reality of immigration to this single, reductive figure. They both accept the basic premise of the lone male immigrants, working, without a life outside work. In these socially and politically aware fictions, which sought to subvert literary genres and official representations of immigration, Ben Jelloun and Boudjedra missed the trends that would prove most significant and subversive. Ben Jelloun would eventually engage with the experience of the generation born in France, but by then several novels by such young people had already appeared, and they had become a strong presence on

the French public scene through demonstrations in the early 1980s.

4.4.3 Engagement

Tentativeness and foreclosure: Mengouchi and Ramdane

The 1978 novel, *L'homme qui enjamba la mer* by the two young Maghribi writers Mengouchi and Ramdane, differs markedly from the other novels considered in this study. The authors imagine that France has been torn by civil war following a left-wing victory in the elections, and that Fascists have taken power. Just five years after the assassination of President Allende in Chile, the scenario was perhaps not unimaginable, even in France. Mere observers of the civil war at first, the immigrant workers themselves become targets until at the very end of the novel, in a passage dominated by fantasy, they rebel and take over Paris, with the help of dead immigrants and the natural elements.

Some aspects of the novel might speak for an emergence of the notion of settlement in France, but they are not allowed to dominate. The first is of course the immigrants' military success at the end of the book. Another is the burial of an old immigrant, Slimane, in Paris. Ben Jelloun's novel recurrently mentions the repatriation of corpses in metal coffins, showing how far migration is considered temporary: the injunction to return is so strong that it is fulfilled in death if is not possible during the workers' lifetime. Mengouchi and Ramdane stick slightly closer to reality in picturing the actuality of burial in France; the reality of violent death is present through Y-a-tellement-de-nos-frères-qui-sont-assassinés (There's-so-many-of-our-brothers-that-are-murdered), the ghosts who help the main characters take the city. The violent deaths of many Maghribi men in France in the mid-1970s and their burials were also part of the process of rooting of North Africans in France in the 1970s, for two reasons. Burial, of course, is both a literal and a symbolic kind of rooting, but protests about the murders were

also an important part of the immigrant social struggles, alongside engagement in the workers' struggle and protests against deportation. The silent march that accompanied El Hadj Lounes' funeral near Marseilles in September 1973 was one of the first major events organised by the MTA (Abdallah, 2000). In *L'Homme qui enjamba la mer*, more than Slimane's burial, the reaction of Hassad, another old immigrant, shows an unusual attitude to return. Having made friends with the dead Slimane - another use of fantasy in the novel - he visits him in his tomb in the hostel's courtyard, and is suddenly possessed with a desire to be buried there too. Hassad has a secret memory: an attempt to return to Algeria that failed. It is suggested that he would like to die in his native Aurès mountains, but finding the sea at Algiers grey and the people like "shadows", perhaps a critique of the Boumediene regime, has sent him back into exile (171-172). Hassad is in fact reminiscent of Boudjedra's laskars, in the pride he takes in the buildings he has helped build, the modern landmarks of Paris: the Pompidou centre at Beaubourg, the skyscraper near Montparnasse train station, etc. Here, unlike in Boudjedra's novel, the implications of these feelings of pride and fascination are recognised, as the old man remains in France and will probably die there.

His story, despite being recounted, is not authorized by the narrative: Slimane rebukes "this living man with ideas of death" ("ce vivant aux idées de mort", 171), and the narrator adds that Hassad's tongue "talked nonsense" (170). Hassad himself barely allows himself to think these thoughts. His internal reminiscence of unsuccessful return is repeatedly interrupted with regrets that "the Uncle [Slimane] would have laughed", or "the Uncle would not understand" (171). So Hassad remains silent: "No, Hassad will say nothing of this return. [...] This return, he will keep it quiet." (172). He is disavowing his failure to return home, and his consequent desire to remain in France. This moment of muffled speech is representative of the treatment of return and settlement in the novel as a whole.

The couple formed by a younger worker, Zoubir, and Hassad's daughter

Zoulikha, also represents a possibility of settling in France. Zoubir does not have a country to return to. He is neither Algerian nor Moroccan, having grown up on a disputed piece of territory, with an Algerian father and a Moroccan mother. The family was expelled to Algeria when Morocco took over the land, but Algeria expelled his mother later on, and Zoubir came to France. His ambiguous situation might argue for settlement in France. Zoulikha is the only representative of a North African woman living in France in the novels I am studying.[4] Zoubir and Zoulikha's meeting and marriage in the space of emigration signals the potential durable establishment of a North African community in France. It contrasts starkly with the lives of Ben Jelloun's and Boudjedra's protagonists, whose affective life is forever absent, across the sea.

Through the figures of Hassad, Zoubir and Zoulikha, the possibility of a rooting in France is raised. Intriguingly, the narrator of *L'homme qui enjamba la mer* seems uneasy with his decision to include this significant, new element to the plot of his novel. As we have seen, Zoulikha is not an important figure, even among the multiple, relatively undeveloped characters of this choral novel (chapter 2.3.4). Over and above his cavalier treatment of this female character, the narrator of *L'homme qui enjamba la mer*, who sometimes intervenes through dialogue with the characters, expresses his unease at including the notion of a couple in exile: "I am afraid that this idyll [...] will throw its shadow too far over the preoccupations of this narrative" (77). As we have seen, the novel's main purpose, as in the case of *Réclusion* and *Topographie*, is to denounce the exploitation of immigrant workers by French and Maghribi elites, and the racist violence to which they fall victim. The narrator playfully worries that introducing a love interest might distract the attention of readers and characters alike. While racism and discrimination remain a problem to this day, the settlement of a population of Maghribi

[4]The only other examples I am aware of in the period exist in *Une femme pour mon fils* (Ghalem, 1985) and in the autobiographical novels of Taos Amrouche (1972; 1975). But Ghalem's novel focuses primarily on the experience of a young married woman in Algeria, whose husband is an émigré. His brief glimpse of a North African woman in Paris is discussed in chapter 2 above.

origin in France proved to be a significant development also. In the wake of the 1973 crisis and the ensuing shifts in the capitalist system under the influence of globalisation, industrial workers have lost their strong position in French society; unemployment and the integration of all sections of society (including disaffected working-class youths of Maghribi descent, among others) have become dominant issues in French society. This was not visible to the writers of this novel, who foreground the workers' struggle and invalidate settlement as a theme worthy of interest. The abruptness of the novel's ending further displays its refusal to entertain the notion of an established Maghribi community in France. The immigrant workers render themselves masters of the city, but immediately decide to return home across the sea: even Zoubir is part of the movement, as his friend beckons him to go and rid Maghrib of the borders between Morocco and Algeria. Alone among the Maghribi novels in envisaging agency and settlement for North African immigrants in France, *L'homme qui enjamba la mer* seems not to know how to handle this possibility once it has raised it, and immediately flees back to the idea of return.

Such insistence on a reference to the place of origin and an enduring desire to return, however impossible or imaginary that return is, is in fact an important criterion in contemporary definitions of diaspora (see Clifford, 1999; Cohen, 1997). Insofar as they sustain the importance of the notion of return, the novels on Maghribi and Caribbean immigrant workers until the 1970s can in a small way be considered as examples of an emerging diasporic consciousness among Maghribi and Caribbean populations in France and Britain. For the most part, however, these novels cannot drive, for the populations which form their subject, the appearance of the other diasporic characteristics, in particular settlement and the practices that constitute a "dwelling (differently)" in France and Britain, as they do not offer a representation of or a reflection on these practices (Clifford, 1999, 234).

Enduring interrogation: Selvon

Alone among the writers considered here, Selvon tracked the process of settlement of Caribbean immigrants and developments in the shape of the Caribbean presence in London in all his novels on the immigrant experience. All the writings he devoted to this subject exhibit the fraught nature of the process, doing justice to the tensions between community and fragmentation.

The settlement process takes the form of a gradual adaptation, in both senses of the word: the arrivants adapt to their new environment, but they also adapt it to their needs and make their mark on it. Nasta (2002) shows this process operating in *Ways of Sunlight*, in particular in "Working the Transport", where Caribbean characters introduce new dance styles to Britain (see also Woodcock, 1999). She also argues that the renaming of the city in *The Lonely Londoners* is a way of appropriating it (1995). Importantly, the presence of Tolroy's family in this novel signals the potential for a more structured "community" than the boys' drifting life will allow. The influence Tanty has on her neighbourhood, transforming her local shop into a piece of the Caribbean off the Harrow road, complete with credit books and loud gossip, has been noted before (Salick, 2001; Forbes, 2005). Thieme (2003) and López Ropero (2004) both also analyse Harris's fete as one of the main sites of cultural mixing and adaptation in the novel, as it becomes something between a raucous Caribbean fete and a staid English affair through Harris' policing. The presence of the women of the older generation at this party, despite the boys' consternation, is also significant. The boys consider that the elders' presence makes the party unsophisticated, like "Saltfish Hall", a venue for rural dances in Trinidad. Yet the mix of generations and of genders, which does not appear in any other novel in this study, is a sign that Selvon is taking into account the reality of the migration process, which, despite governments' and employers' wishes, can never be reduced to a disposable workforce, and always involves the settlement of at least some of the immigrants (Castles

and Miller, 2003). During the fete, Tanty gets in the way of Harris' womanising by dragging him onto the dance-floor to move to the tune of 'Fan Me Saga Boy Fan Me'. Rahim (2005) sees this as part of the potentially subversive (to British eyes) establishment of West Indian practices in London, as Tanty is anything but ladylike in this scene. The analysis by Forbes (2005) can help to shed a different light on this event. She has interpreted Selvon's treatment of gender and sexuality in *The Lonely Londoners* as signalling the challenges to the construction of a viable community in Britain. She notes that the Caribbean characters' gender is effaced (they are "boys", or "spades" – a term applied to Caribbean women as well), and argues that the novel associates gender roles with social structures and responsibility. Selvon's men reject this, she feels: their calling white women "birds" or "crafts" reflects the hope that the latter will not want serious relationships beyond immediate sexual gratification. In this context, Forbes suggests, Caribbean women are threatening to the men's drifting way of life - they are interpreted as having more power to impose social structures, as indeed they do: Forbes points out that Tanty influences her neighbours, but also calls Lewis to his responsibilities by encouraging his wife Agnes to bring up charges for domestic violence. This is also visible at the fete: it seems to me that Tanty's dance with Harris can be seen as a reclaiming, even taming, of the boys' carefree and non-constructive values of rampant sexuality without responsibility. She may be challenging his gentlemanly image by associating him with the figure of the womanising Saga Boy, but he is powerless to refuse her. Forbes explains that Tanty, being an older woman, is outside the realm of sexual agency, and therefore less threatening than the prostitutes whose pain is silenced and who are dismissed as "spades". But can her attitude in the fete scene not be seen as managing the fusion of Caribbean vitality, including sexually, with social structures able to establish a durable Caribbean presence in Britain? Despite the stasis and discrimination affecting the immigrants, Selvon's 1950s texts show some of the

processes that would lead to the settlement of a Caribbean community in Britain.

Female characters are also major agents of the rooting process in *The Housing Lark*, and they are the ones who voice these concerns. *The Housing Lark* represents a shift from the earlier London material in that the narrator is harsher on the boys. The earlier novel had focused, deliberately, on one particular type of immigrant. Selvon treated the single, male immigrant through the prism of the trickster figure to show resilience in the face of hardship. His second novel of immigration recognises the limits of this approach. In *The Lonely Londoners*, the boys' humorous façade could not always mask their lack of advancement. The novel had shown this stasis to be a product of the widespread discrimination in Britain. But in *The Housing Lark* the narrator mocks and berates the boys' carefree attitude from the opening line:

> But is no use dreaming. Is no use lying down there on your backside watching the wallpaper, as if you expect the wall to crack open and money come pouring out, a nice woman, a house to live in, food, cigarettes, rum. (Selvon, 1990, 7)

The stasis identified in 1956 has not been alleviated, yet *The Housing Lark* takes up the strand initiated by Tolroy's family in the earlier novel: through the female characters, the consequences of bringing children and families to Britain are drawn, and they are shown to be a force for building up a more lasting presence in Britain, in a constructive way. The women's voice is heard far more clearly than in Selvon's previous work, as Teena and Jean step in and assert the necessity to take the project of buying a house seriously.

Forbes (2005) describes the novel as gloomy because of the stronger presence of the women, and their success in imposing their views. She argues that they have lost sight of the usual humour of Caribbean life, thus losing touch with the creativity of Caribbean language. This may be so, but this subversive attitude is taken up by the narrator, who directs the humour and sarcasm to the English reader, as we have seen. The latter is, as Looker (1996) remarks, forced into a

defensive position because the narrator constantly assumes him or her to hold ignorant and stereotypical views of West Indians. Further, both women and men fully participate in the crucial scene of the Hampton Court excursion, which articulates the immigrants' ambivalent but productively creolising presence in Britain in recounting the immigrants' unabashed engagement in Caribbean practice of excursions and picnics in England's historical sites (see above, p.94).

The conflict between women as representatives of responsibility and social structure and the men's drifting, irresponsible lifestyle is presented more starkly in *The Housing Lark* than in *The Lonely Londoners*. The women are more proactive than the boys in refusing to put up with the situation that England imposes on them, and are determined to improve their lot. This is presented as somewhat emasculating, but Selvon also acknowledges the rather performative assertions of male power contained in the men's bragging about controlling women as masks, roles that the men play for each other but that do not necessarily determine their actual relationships. This comes through clearly in the story of Fitzgerald, who bragged about never letting a woman control him, only to become Teena's obedient husband. Selvon's presentation of gender relations in *The Housing Lark* can nevertheless not be considered progressive. He is to some extent reproducing the dichotomy in conceptualisations of Caribbean gender between the home and the woman as respectable and the street as a masculine realm of freedom from duties (Barrow, 1998; Antonio de Moya, 2004). As Looker (1996) observes, this follows a logic that associates the women with the home, the hearth and constitutes them as a stabilising and domesticating force. The novel "partially" avoids reasserting such stereotypes too forcefully, he argues, by showing women who seize agency and by "casting the men's 'irresponsibility' in a larger context", figuring it as a reaction to the terror of the human condition (Looker, 1996, 132). Selvon's choice to use the trickster and calypso traditions in figuring his male immigrant characters in *The Lonely Londoners* conditions the marginalisation of women in

that novel, because it entailed adopting the performance of a masculinity that objectifies women, as Rohlehr (2004) has identified in Trinidad calypso. As we will see below, Selvon was entirely capable of taking quite a different approach to the construction of female characters, which should warn critics not to underestimate the distance that can exist between Selvon's own viewpoint and his characters'. Selvon's novels on immigration show a gradual accommodation between the productive figure of the trickster in the context of the coloniser's city and starkly unequal power relations for the post/colonial immigrants, and the concerns of gender.

Selvon continued to consider the process of adaptation and settlement in his next novel on immigration. The most analysed feature of *Moses Ascending* is Moses's highly creolised narrative voice, which blends elements of the modified Trinidad dialect Selvon had been using since the 1950s with Standard English and antiquated phrases and literary devices taken from canonical English literature. This has sometimes been taken as a negative sign. Joseph (1992) analyses Moses's posture as a sign of alienation, while Nasta (1995, 2002) focuses on its signalling an incomplete belonging. Selvon's intention in mixing registers is based on the notion of the radical equality of languages and dialects, thus very much challenging Eurocentric and colonial conceptions of the relation between Caribbean and British speech (Selvon, 1969). Based on Selvon's linguistic outlook, I would follow Harney (1996) in suggesting Moses's posture is rather predicated on assertiveness in claiming a heritage for himself despite British resistance to the arrival and settlement of the Caribbean in Britain, and pertains to Selvon's affirmation of creolisation and a balance between Caribbean and British influences for the doubly attached immigrant community.

Selvon's perception of the settlement of a Caribbean community in Britain is also evident in his treatment of anglicised characters. The Hampton Court scene in *The Housing Lark*, like the fete scene in *The Lonely Londoners*, is the

occasion to deride excessive adaptation and assimilation to British ways: Charlie Victor, who is very anglicised and brought along an English girlfriend, longs to eat Caribbean food. He is the landlord's representative, and as such is something like a class traitor: he distances himself from other West Indians through speech and clothing, and lives in an English boarding house. In this he can be compared to Harris in *The Lonely Londoners*. Rahim (2005) convincingly portrays the latter's performance of Englishness as a sign, not of alienation, but of pragmatic manipulation of British and West Indian codes in order to get ahead, which also applies to Charlie. But these "assimilators" are derided by Selvon's narrators. Harris's position is emphatically criticised in the conclusion to the description of his traditional English gentleman's appearance: "Only thing, Harris face black" (111). This bald concluding sentence signals the incongruity of trying to identify with the English, as the pervasive racist ideology will never allow an English gentleman to be black. Similarly, Charlie's longing for Caribbean food shows the foolishness of abandoning Caribbean roots: English popular cultural practices are negatively portrayed as weak, bland, unsatisfying by contrast with West Indian ones. This representation partly results from the continuing precariousness of the status of Caribbean immigrants in Britain. Selvon shows the futility of pandering to English ways too much: it is suggested that this never works to the West Indian's advantage. The anecdote of Nobby's dog in *The Housing Lark* shows this well. Well aware of the precariousness of his situation, dependent on his English landlords' whim, Nobby attempts to ingratiate himself with his landlady by praising her dog. This turns against him when she gives him a puppy which he cannot afford to support. A projected play for television entitled "Brackley and the Baby" makes Selvon's position even clearer (Selvon, nd). In this play, a West Indian couple has just moved in to a house in the suburbs. The husband, Brackley, distances himself from his West Indian friends. He is nervous about his white neighbours' opinion, and is very placating when a bigoted neighbour complains,

whereas his English friend Charles matter-of-factly counters the neighbour's accusations. Brackley's wife is pregnant, and when she goes into labour, he is so afraid of English prejudice that he insists his friend Charles should claim that the baby is his when he goes to the midwife who lives nearby for help. Brackley's anxiety is shown to be excessive and unhelpful, as the midwife turns out to be an open-minded woman, and all goes well in the end. The characters of Harris, Charlie and Brackley demonstrate that Selvon does not condone excessive adoption of English culture, and shame for Caribbean practices. On the contrary, he shows the fundamental and desirable vitality of the creolisation process, as West Indians make their mark on Britain. Selvon's critique of anglicised characters does not entail advocating isolated enclaves of Caribbean life in Britain. In a speech given around 1968, he criticised the immigrant who arrived knowing nothing of the country and intending to change nothing of his way of life (Selvon, 1968a). What Selvon advocates is creolisation, and he analysed its workings and its ambiguities in his treatment of the new generation.

Selvon's three novels on the Caribbean experience in London chart increasing adaptation in the practices they depict and the language they use, focusing on a process of creolisation in Britain. They nevertheless attend to difficulties involved in the process of settlement among a hostile population and acknowledge the fragility of this settlement and sense of community. One aspect of this is the status of the immigrant characters' dwellings: *The Housing Lark* and *Moses Ascending* chart the difficult path to home ownership and the ambivalent new status of the Caribbean immigrant as home-owner. The carefree lifestyle of the men in *The Housing Lark* is a major obstacle they have to overcome if they are to accomplish their project of buying a house. The novel focuses on this as it takes for granted the bigger obstacle that is the difficult position of West Indians in England, fraught with discrimination and enduring poverty. Saving up to buy a house requires giving up the simple pleasures the boys enjoy: smoking, drinking, taking

women out to the café or to the cinema—not inordinate luxuries. The narrator in *The Londoners Londoners* had gradually shown the gravity of the aimlessness that typifies the characters' lives, whereas the more interventionist narrative voice in the 1965 novel highlights it as signifying irresponsibility and makes it an object of mockery from the opening lines (see above, p.188). Dreaming about money and women falling into one's lap with no effort is the main character Battersby's attitude to life. But there is a tension between the trickster figure he represents, as he swindles his friends and attempts to bed his sister's friend, and the project of settlement presented in the novel. Although a nice woman and a house do fall into his lap by the end of the novel, and he gets away with swindling his friends, this novel shows the damage his attitude entails. He supports the scheme of pooling savings to buy a house, but uses his friends' savings to live on, and this compromises the attempt to achieve a degree of security in a hostile social environment. Here again, we can see Selvon's keen attention to the fragility of a Caribbean community in Britain.

These concerns are taken up again in *Moses Ascending*, where Selvon depicts the diversity of the settling immigrant population through the juxtaposition of black Power activists of the old and the new generation, and the arrival of Asian immigrants. The main character, Moses, here exemplifies both the dynamic of settlement and the tensions that make it difficult to speak of a structured Caribbean community in Britain. He has achieved an ambiguous security by finally buying a house, but one that is scheduled for demolition. As Nasta (1995) notes, the group of "boys" has scattered. Moses's success (even if it is only imagined) and his consequent desire to distance himself from a community involvement in this novel is reminiscent of Lamming's Governor. Lamming saw the failure to achieve leadership and build a structured community as problematic. Moses's eventual rallying to the cause of defending Black People (analysed in Ramraj, 2003; López Ropero,

2004), and his downfall, which is according to Forbes (2005) the result of his continued refusal of responsibility, intimate that Selvon was also concerned about this. He is nonetheless wary of leadership figures, as his stringent satire of the Black Power hierarchy in the novel demonstrates.

Alone among the writers considered here, Selvon addressed the fate of those born in Britain, the specificity of their position, and the negotiations they have to make; this is a subject that interested him in his dramatic works. Selvon's radio and television drama consisted, for the most part, in adaptations of his novels and short stories set in Trinidad and London. But two plays written for BBC radio throw a different light on Selvon's treatment of the Caribbean minority in Britain. While his novels on the immigrant experience, because of the calypso aesthetic he uses, focus on the figure of the trickster, these two plays allowed Selvon to adopt a different approach and a tone perhaps closer to that of his novels on Trinidadian life. The lesser focus on linguistic mixing and the trickster figure allows him to sensitively explore the emotions of two young people as they try to work out their identities.

The first striking feature in Selvon's "You Right In the Smoke" (1968b), is its setting in a successful Caribbean-owned bakery in the Midlands. During research for a feature on immigration commissioned by the *Sunday Times* in 1959, Selvon had met several successful Caribbean immigrants in various parts of England (Selvon, 1959). He stressed this reality, balancing the general insistence on poor conditions and the colour bar, in a speech written around 1968 and seemingly given to an audience in the Caribbean (Selvon, 1968a). The play focuses on the owner of the bakery, Frank, and his family. Its plot intertwines a detective story as his brother John steals Frank's savings, and on the conflict between Frank and his British-born daughter, Eloisa. Frank is a strict man, and threatens to send Eloisa to Jamaica (which she has never seen) because he disapproves of her behaviour. He is, perhaps, worried that she will get pregnant. It is suggested that

Eloisa's behaviour, in particular her friendship with Jim, the English employee in the bakery, has nothing reprehensible from a British point of view, and that the conflict between Eloisa and her father is a result of the gap in values between an old-fashioned, conservative Caribbean man and his British-raised daughter in the late 1960s. Eloisa's decision to run away for two days, until she comes of age and her father no longer has the power to send her abroad against her will, shows her acting in self-defence in a situation where the punishment is out of proportion with the offence.

The play presents Caribbean characters well-established in Britain. Frank and Clara, a bakery employee, each in their own way represent the first generation of immigrants and the way they have maintained a Caribbean identity in Britain. He is suspicious of the police and of institutions such as banks, and keeps his savings in an old suitcase, a fact that is important for the plot. Clara speaks in a version of Selvon's signature modified dialect, distrusts doctors and recommends traditional remedies when she thinks Eloisa has a cold. The shop also caters to Caribbean women who come in and gossip. While Eloisa has probably benefited from the nurturing presence of such women, she is very lucid about the fact that her home is in Britain, where she was born. This explains her desperate flight after her father's threat of deportation. The play nevertheless pays some attention to the difficulties facing British-born children of Caribbean immigrants. Eloisa's conversation with her friend Jim reveals the common aspects of the experience of the two Caribbean generations. She draws clear parallels between her ambiguous position, not Jamaican but not accepted as English, and the hostility her father faced in the post-war period, despite his service in the British air force. Nevertheless, the play asserts the enduring presence of Caribbean people in Britain, as Eloisa considers it her home, and leaves with her English boyfriend Jim at the end.

It is significant for our understanding of Selvon's attitudes to gender that

Eloisa initially refuses to leave with Jim. Selvon's characterisation of Eloisa shows a young woman trying to negotiate not only the double cultural heritage which is hers as the British-born daughter of Jamaican immigrants, but also her gender position in a patriarchal system. The major strand of the play is her search for an *independent* identity. Her refusal to submit to her father's wishes attests to her desire to have agency outside of the excessively constraining strictures of traditional Caribbean respectability; but she is not rejecting respectability per se – her frame of reference is that of the more permissive British society of the 1960s. When Jim suggests she should join him in London, now that she has run away, Eloisa chooses to remain alone rather than stepping out from her father's authority into a relationship with Jim, although Jim is evidently a sensitive character. Her project is a search for individual identity, which does not exclude the possibility of a relationship with Jim at a later time, but requires her to discover herself, outside of any relationship with men. This provide a welcome corrective to Selvon's reductive treatment of gender in the London novels discussed above.

Using the research he had carried out with Horace Ové for the latter's feature film *Pressure* (Ové, 1975), Selvon wrote a play for the BBC focusing on the experience of a young black Briton, "Milk in the Coffee" (1975). "Milk in the Coffee" deals with a young man's encounter with his precarious status in English society through discrimination in employment and police treatment, but does not extend to the theme of political involvement emphasised in *Pressure*, although Selvon was tackling this issue in the same period, in *Moses Ascending*. Andrew has just finished school and is frustrated because he has not yet found an accountancy job, unlike his white school-friends. The different aspirations of immigrants and their children schooled in Britain emerge in arguments with his father Ralph, who reproaches his reluctance to take manual jobs. Ralph, described as embittered in the script notes, is angrily fatalistic about racism and discrimination in Britain,

and believes his son's search for clerical work to be futile. Andrew's black British friends are similarly disaffected with English society. Charlo, a young man who has moved out of his parents' house and lives in a dingy basement room, also suggests Andrew should get a manual job. This play, like "You Right In the Smoke", highlights both conflict between generations and Andrew's belonging in Britain; it also dramatises, to a small extent, Andrew's discovery of his Caribbean heritage, or at least the discovery that his life, identity and situation are not as simple as he would like. In the earlier play, Eloisa is described as a having an accent (probably a Birmingham accent), and berated by her father for being excessively anglicised. Ralph is similarly unimpressed by his son's acculturation, which is conveyed through food: he dislikes saltfish, and prefers chips to patties. But his relationship with his grandmother, who lives with the family, prompts Andrew to reflect on his position in England. The discovery of Gran's golliwog sparks an argument with Ralph, and the dawning of an awareness of racism in Andrew. Yet after Ralph destroys the doll, Andrew empathises with his grandmother and decides to find her a new one. The play shows various aspects of discrimination, especially the criminalisation of young black British men. Selvon acknowledges the fact that some of them were indeed engaged in drug dealing, but points out that blanket generalisations are misguided: Andrew refuses to smoke weed at a party, and it is his white English girlfriend Brenda who buys two joints when they leave. The policemen they encounter on the way home search Andrew and destroy the new golliwog, but leave Brenda alone. Andrew's illusions about his position in English society are further challenged when he becomes aware of this unequal treatment. The device of the golliwog seems an awkward way of introducing cultural differences that are meaningful to individuals for the formation of their identity, but through it Andrew develops a sense of the history behind the discrimination he suffers, and arrives at a more complex and realistic assessment

of his situation as a British-born man of Afro-Caribbean descent. This awareness will allow him to move away from an attitude of assimilation, which Selvon always criticises as an impoverishment and an illusion. The play finishes on a hopeful note, as Andrew does manage to find a job, and Brenda is willing to help with his official complaint to the police. What Andrew is moving towards, is what Clifford considers to be the essence of diasporic existence: a "dwelling (differently)" (Clifford, 1999, 225).

A salient point in these two plays is the way they suppose the possibility of relationships between white English and British-born Afro-Caribbean young people. At the end of "You Right In the Smoke", as we have seen, Eloisa chooses to move to London with her English friend Jim. "Milk in the Coffee" ends with a heavily symbolic scene in which Brenda and Andrew go to a reggae club they have never entered before, symbolising their entry into independent adult life, their becoming a couple, and the future of multiracial/multicultural Britain. Selvon establishes the difficulties lying in wait for this project in his tackling of issues of discrimination in the two plays, but expresses a strong hope that through open-mindedness and a willingness to encounter others, black Britons can find their place in Britain. This place is not a separate one.

The plays raise the diasporic issue of "dwelling (differently)", as Caribbean families maintain aspects of Caribbean life and complete assimilation is impossible and undesirable, while not really addressing transnational practices in this younger generation. *Moses Ascending* would return to this in the character of Brenda. As Forbes (2005) points out, Brenda might speak in an English accent, but she is also a mistress of the *picong*. She uses the resources of popular traditional Caribbean performativity to her own advantage, while situating her action firmly in Britain. She is a more powerful character than either Eloisa or Andrew, which is logical as the radio or television play does not provide as much opportunity for character development as the novel. Eloisa and Andrew almost

resemble the derided Harris and Charlie Victor, although they eventually engage with their Caribbean heritage. Brenda represents a fully developed embodiment of Selvon's vision of a positive adaptation and establishment of the Caribbean on British soil.

4.5 Conclusion

The Caribbean and Maghribi novelists who wrote about the experience of immigrant workers in Britain and France presented social and psychological destructuring as their representative experience, using this to denounce the workings of colonial alienation and postcolonial exploitation. They took into account the ambiguous status of migration, predicated on an eventual return but often concluding in unplanned settlement. Despite this, with the exception of Selvon, their approach to this issue denotes the same absent-mindedness or denial demonstrated by authorities and migrants on the issue. Lamming, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun all integrated conscious political reflections on the colonial relation (for Lamming) and migration into their novels, whereas Selvon, while his novels and plays make political points in the broad sense, favours an individualist and humanist approach to his subject, which is perhaps what allowed him to tackle concerns the others did not.

Chapter 5

Reception of West Indian and North African literature in Britain and France

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter seeks to get a sense of the reception the novels studied in this dissertation were given in Britain and France respectively. These novels put forward, in various degrees, a denunciation of the situation of Caribbean and Maghribi immigrants in Britain and France. Some of them demand of their readers a response going beyond aesthetic appreciation. They are, in some ways, attempts to convince an indifferent or even hostile French or British public that the situation of immigrants must change (Chraïbi, Boudjedra, Ben Jelloun), or to expose the intellectual context surrounding the encounter between natives and immigrants, in order that it can change (Lamming, Kateb). Along with the overwhelming majority of Caribbean and French-language Maghribi literary texts of the period, they were published in Britain or France for material reasons linked to colonial history. Consequently, their audience was situated in the European

metropolis as well as in the writers' countries of origin. It therefore seems acceptable to ask whether their denunciation of the post/colonial immigrant condition was heard by the British and French publics.

In order to answer this question, I decided to consult the reviews that appeared when the novels were first published. I could not properly assess critics' comments on the novels studied here without first getting a sense of the reception given in France and Britain to Maghribi and Caribbean literature in general, so this chapter presents an overview of the reception of Maghribi literature in France and Caribbean literature in Britain in the post-World War II period and concludes with remarks on the reception of the immigration novels. After setting out the patterns of reception of both literatures, I provide a literature review on the reception of Caribbean writing in Britain and of Maghribi writing in France. I then examine the factors affecting critics' conceptions of these literatures and interrogate the aesthetic criteria critics used in their evaluations. Finally, I look at the political implications of critics' attitudes before assessing whether the reception of immigration novels differed from the general reception of Caribbean and Maghribi writing.

5.2 Patterns of reception

Wanting to get as close as possible to what an ordinary member of the public would think, I decided to avoid studying the reception of Caribbean and Maghribi novels in literary reviews and journals. I also avoided reviews and journals that focused on the colonies, concentrating instead on the mainstream press. The sample selection process is described in the Appendix. Reviews published in the mainstream press seemed a good way of accessing non-specialist opinions, and to get a sense of the reactions of people who might not have a keen interest in the Caribbean, the Maghrib or their respective literatures. Some of these reviews were written by writers who had an interest in Caribbean and Maghribi

literature, as we will see, but they were not in the majority, and the articles they wrote addressed a wide audience of non-specialist readers.

Caribbean and Maghribi novels were promptly reviewed in the serious newspapers and weekly magazines, because after World War II they were published by well-known publishing houses in Paris and London. Novels by colonised Algerian writers had appeared before the war but, not having been published in Paris, they had been ignored in French newspapers (Miliani, 1990). Pre-World War II novels by Caribbean writers such as Claude McKay and C. L. R. James had been published in New York and London, and had received attention from the *Times Literary Supplement* at the very least. The English newspapers and magazines and the French magazines reviewed all of these novels in the sections devoted to new fiction. The main weekly literary rubrics in *Le Figaro littéraire* and *Le Monde* were usually devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American literature, with some secondary rubrics for new fiction. It is notable that the first Algerian novels published in Paris, along with major experimental novels in later years, were evaluated in these main reviews rather than in the shorter pieces. Some of the French papers I looked at had very few reviews of Maghribi writing. This is partly because they addressed a lower-class audience and had fewer book reviews in absolute terms but political attitudes also explain this. Bellanger et al. (1975) show that the French press was polarised along political lines after World War II; this division was exacerbated during the divisive Algerian independence struggle. The popular right-wing papers *L'Aurore* and *Rivarol* rejected the cause of Algerian independence, and seem to have published very few reviews of Maghribi novels (although Chraïbi's *Le Passé simple* received a positive review, see Harrison, 2003, 96). *L'Humanité*, a paper with close links to the French Communist Party, published some reviews of Maghribi novels in its literary columns, which was usually devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century European classics, but sometimes the choice of novels reviewed was unexpected.[1]

[1]For the year 1955, I only found a review for Albert Memmi's novel about a mixed marriage,

Finally, bibliographies of reviews of Chraïbi's work and the Kateb papers at the Institut Mémoires de l'Edition Contemporaine (Caen, France) indicate that Maghribi novels were routinely reviewed in the major regional newspapers in France as well. This section of the French press saw a rapid development in the period, so this interest is not surprising (Guillauma, 1988). By contrast, the local press in Britain is not as developed, and very few local papers include regular book reviews.

5.3 A reductive approach?

The existing literature on the reception of Maghribi literature in France and of Caribbean literature in the English press suggests it was broadly reductive. Scholars identify an excessive focus on the texts as social documents rather than as novels in France, and an excessive influence of stereotypes in English reviews. Although a number of reviews exhibit such approaches, this accusation cannot be extended to the overall pattern of reception of these literatures in France and Britain.

5.3.1 Literature review

Existing papers on the reception of Maghribi literature in France tend to analyse the reception of Maghribi literature in the widest sense, considering it in editorial, institutional and academic contexts (Bennaïr, 1994, 1999; Bonn, 1983, 1995; Déjeux, 1987, 1993a), or to focus on the reception of a single work (Déjeux, 1988, 1993b; Lotodé, 2003; Legras, 2004). Déjeux (1993a) and Bonn (1995) argue

Agar (Boussinot, 1955), but none for Chraïbi's *Les Boucs*, even though it made a sensation in Parisian literary circles. This absence is surprising, as *L'Humanité* regularly denounced the handling of anti-colonial uprisings in Morocco in that year (the 24 August 1955 issue was seized by the authorities for reporting "acts of war" by colonial authorities in Morocco), and had also published features on the living conditions of immigrants in the shantytowns of Gennevilliers in 1954. Chraïbi's previous novel, *Le passé simple*, had denounced Moroccan traditional society, and thus did not fall in line with anti-colonial discourses; it would not be surprising for it not to have been reviewed in *L'Humanité*. But *Les Boucs*'s discourse broadly corresponded with the newspaper's approach of the issue of immigrants.

that until the 1980s Maghribi literature was often treated as a mere reflection of Maghribi society and its literary qualities insufficiently recognised, discussed and analysed. Bonn (2001b) further suggests, and he is followed in this by his student Bennaïr (1999) and by Lotodé (2003), that the reception of Maghribi literature was shaped by the geopolitical events of the day, and by pre-existing political interests and preconceptions. He argues that interest in the 1950s followed the emergence of anti-colonial agitation in North Africa, and renewed interest in the 1960s coincided with periods of unrest caused by disappointment in the post-colonial regimes.[2]

Articles on the reception of Caribbean writing also suggest that English reviewers were reductive in their approach. Allis (1982) considers that reviews of Caribbean novels were in the majority "patronising and simplistic", focusing on stereotypical aspects such as the tropical landscape and the characters' passions, and Lawson Welsh (1996) argues that many reviews focus on characteristics deemed West Indian, rather than giving a properly literary assessment. Both Allis and Lawson Welsh also suggest the late 1950s saw a rise in casually racist remarks in reviews of Caribbean novels, related to immigration fears in England and the tense climate that gave rise to the race riots of 1958 in London and Nottingham. Lawson Welsh further contends that certain reviews draw on colonial stereotypes of "natives" as child-like.

[2]Bonn (2001b) considers that the enduring attention given since then to certain novels on the issues of patriarchy and the oppression of women results from preconceptions about the retrograde nature of North African societies. He contends that only novels which gave critics what they wanted to know about traditional life, the influence of religion and patriarchy, or the situation of immigrants, were reviewed widely, while novels that either did not address these themes directly or were too experimental were ignored (1983). The nature of my research, deliberately based on the study of a reasoned sample of newspaper reviews, and further limited by time constraints, does not allow me to confirm or infirm this last statement. Nonetheless, the period of relative lack of interest in the 1960s could be seen as resulting from the evolution of Maghribi literature itself rather than as a sign of the infringement of an external referent on critics' judgements. While the renewal of interest in the late 1960s did follow episodes of unrest in Morocco and Algeria in 1965, several critics of North African literature agree that the period 1962-1969 was not a very fertile one, being marked by very conventional accounts of the war (Khatibi, 1968; Déjeux, 1993a), whereas the late 1960s saw a renewed dynamism in North African literature driven by an emerging generation of young writers.

5.3.2 Evidence for a reductive approach

The study of French and English reviews of Maghribi and Caribbean writing yields examples of such a reductive approach. It is undeniable that the growing unrest and nationalist demands in North Africa strongly coloured the reception of Maghribi literature in France in the 1950s, and several French reviewers approached novels by colonised North Africans as of documentary value. Kateb's *Nedjma* and Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer* were reviewed alongside other texts on the Algerian independence struggle (Henriot, 1956; Simon, 1962; Stil, 1962), and some reviewers turned to North African novels for information on the colonised. Minor novels were often viewed as windows on an unknown world, as evidenced in the review of Malek Ouary's novel of vendetta in traditional Kabylian society, which praises it for showing the internal workings of a society (Blanzat, 1956). Bonn's studies on this phenomenon focused on readers with leftwing and anti-colonial convictions (Bonn, 1983, 1995, 2001b), but some critics who favoured the French colonial enterprise also sought information in these novels. The main reviewer for *Le Monde* praised Mammeri's *La colline oubliée* for describing rural life in Kabylia, ignoring the European presence in Algeria and eluding the theme of the torn identity of the educated colonial (Henriot, 1952). Other reviewers attended to this very theme, which is foregrounded in Memmi's *La statue de sel* or Chraïbi's *Le passé simple*, in the same information-seeking manner. Blanzat (1953) saw the latter novel as "exemplary", while Rousseaux (1952) told readers these writers were "witnesses we should at least hear out".[3] Again, such interest was not necessarily governed by an anti-colonialist outlook: Rousseaux criticised the Algerian nationalist viewpoint expressed in Dib's first novel. The vehement narrative voice and emotional violence depicted in *Le passé simple* surprised reviewers, who foregrounded its thematic value as information for the French reader. The *Figaro* critic found the novel so flawed as to dismiss its

[3]All quotations from French reviews in this chapter are my translations.

literary qualities but found it worth reviewing because he felt it brought "light on the psychology of a generation of young Muslims cut off from its roots" (Ollivier, 1955). He concluded that France's policy in Morocco should become more thoroughly and sincerely assimilationist, or this class of disaffected young men would feed the growing ranks of nationalists. In this, the French critique of Maghribi literature can be accused of a patronising approach that treats the Maghribi text as "subordinate to a European problematic through which [it] will be deciphered" (Bonn, 1987, 10). The prominence and violence of the independence struggles in France in the 1950s and their traumatising character for the French establishment explain, without justifying it, such a state of affairs.

Some English reviews bear out the accusation of stereotyping but they represent a minority in my sample. A small number of reviews make landscape and traditional social events like markets or the carnival seem more important than the plot (Cronin, 1965; New fiction, 963b) and two reviewers stressed what they felt was the exotic character of Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, referring to the "riot of tropical creativeness" of the novel or emphasising the distance between the world depicted and the English reader (New fiction, 961b; Cruttwell, 1961). Only one article in addition to the small number cited by Lawson Welsh revealed the intrusion of a concern about immigration in the analysis of a Caribbean novel: this was understandable in a review of *Ways of Sunlight*, which contains stories set in Trinidad and London (Cockburn, 1958). A handful of reviews in my sample nevertheless followed colonialist prejudice in suggesting the novels' characters were primitive or child-like. Pritchett (1953) referred to the "sudden, unreasonable passions" of the villagers in Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*; the *Times* reviewer emphasised the simplicity and the "emotional and excitable" nature of the characters in Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* (New fiction, 1957); and the *TLS* reviewer calls the community in Hearne's *Land of the Living* "lazy, gossipy, cheerful [and] self-important" (Roberts, 1961). Other reviews labelled some

characters as lazy, but it is significant that these remarks related to the Trinidad novels of V. S. Naipaul and Selvon. Both writers engaged in the satire of certain character types in their societies, so a review would require the critic to mention this, without implying inordinate interest in such aspects. Tylden-Wright (1957), reviewing *The Mystic Masseur* in the *TLS*, was even careful to show that the narrator himself insists on the main character's laziness.

English critics' appreciation or otherwise of novels by Caribbean writers was not always driven by stereotypes of the Caribbean. Beyond the specific examples provided above, references to landscape, Caribbean life or eccentric characters in reviews seem justified by the novels' plot and content rather than indicating stereotyping. Some novels contained plot elements making easy targets for a sensational reading: violence, obeah or Pocomania rituals. Certain critics were only too happy to focus on this - the account of *A Quality of Violence* by Keir (1959) is an example - but others described these elements only to convey the novel's plot. Duchene (1959) focused entirely on the literary aspects of this novel, without reference to any "exotic" content. Mentions of violence in reviews of Mais's *The Hills Were Joyful Together* seem to arise from the novel's own focus on this theme rather than from prejudice: all the reviewers recognise the author's moral outlook (Allen, 1953; Bloomfield, 1953; Calder-Marshall, 953b; Paul, 1953b). Reviewers in the *TLS*, the *Times* and the *New Statesman* referred to electoral corruption and superstition in recounting the plot of *The Suffrage of Elvira* but did not dwell on them, and also commended Naipaul's gift for comedy and dialogue (New fiction, 958d; Johnson, 1958; Richardson, 1958). Although remarks indicating a stereotypical approach or racial or colonial prejudice do occur in reviews of Caribbean novels, they form a minority in the sample I have gathered. Most reviews give information on setting, characters, and detail with which critics were unfamiliar, that is in keeping with the contents of the novels.

5.3.3 Literary approach predominant

Despite the presence of a number of reductive reviews, for the most part, English and French reviewers of Caribbean and Maghribi novels fulfilled their role of critical literary evaluation. The reception of Caribbean writing in English newspapers was diverse. Certain reviews betray a prejudiced or reductive approach to Caribbean writing, but others treated Caribbean novels the same way as any new novel without undue focus on "exotic" aspects. A few reviews were descriptive and concentrated on the novels' plot but most were also evaluative, commenting on the style or the quality of the writing. Some critics, in particular Duchene in the *Guardian*, focused solely on the novels' literary qualities without insisting on their Caribbean settings and characters (Duchene, 1958, 1959). Few novels received homogeneous praise or criticism, especially in comments on literary technique or style, but these aspects were usually considered.[4]

Similarly, despite a discernible tendency towards a documentary approach, major reviewers in French newspapers did not lose sight of their role as literary critics, and commented on the literary qualities of the Maghribi novels they evaluated. Ollivier is exceptional in refusing to discuss *Le passé simple*'s literary merits altogether. Only a minority of reviews in my sample focus solely on plot and societal interest, neglecting to consider a novel's literary aspects. They concern "novels of alienation" such as *La statue de sel* and *Le passé simple*; lesser-known novels by well-known writers (Dib's *L'incendie*, *L'opium et le bâton* by Mammeri, *Un ami viendra vous voir* by Chraïbi); and novels by minor Algerian writers (Ouary, Tlili). Significantly, all of the reviews of novels by women in the sample belong to this group, treating the novels as documents rather than literary works; this lends support to Bonn's argument that preconceptions about the oppression of women in North African countries sometimes drove reviewers'

[4]The exception is Mittelholzer's *Latticed Echoes* which used a technique inspired by Wagner, the leitmotiv: specific phrases were assigned to characters and places, and the novel was partly built on their combination. This baffled and irritated all its reviewers (Variations on theme of superstition, 960b; New fiction, 960a; Bryden, 960a; Calder-Marshall, 1960).

interest in these books. The majority of the reviews, however, whether positive or negative, adopt either a mixed approach in which both topical and literary elements are considered, or a purely literary approach. Henriot (1952), who concentrated on the description of rural life in *La colline oubliée*, also comments on the novel's style. His praise of Mammeri's "prettily and finely written" novel is rather backhanded: the story is an "ersatz" for Barrès's nationalism, his realism more "restful" than Gide's. The reference to French writers nonetheless indicates that he is engaging in a critical evaluation of the novel's literary merits. Like any young writer's book, it is compared with what has come before. It seems Henriot's disparaging comments stem from disappointment: he sees no reason not to expect good literary quality from a young North African writer.

French and English critics did not hesitate to refer to the canon of modern European and American literature in order to provide readers with points of comparison when praising Caribbean or Maghribi novels. Cockburn (1958) evoked J. M. Synge in commenting on Selvon's use of popular language in *Ways of Sunlight*; Powell (1950) qualified Mittelholzer's meticulous description of colour prejudice in Trinidad as "almost Proustian"; the humour in *A House for Mr Biswas* and the description of a struggle against poverty bordering on the tragic elicited a comparison to Dickens (New fiction, 961b). Hearne also attracted favourable comparisons. *The Faces of Love* reminded critics of Hemingway and Conrad (Coleman, 1959) or Graham Greene (New fiction, 959d), while Roberts (1961) found that Hearne had as much ability to create a convincing fictional world as Gaskell, Trollope or Proust. The *L'Express* critic compared Chraïbi's *Le passé simple*, which features a strong conflict between a young man and his father, with Hervé Bazin's *Vipère au poing* (1948) because the latter, a well-known novel published only a few years before, featured similarly violent hatred between a child and his parent (in this case, the mother). Caussat (1969) discussed Memmi's *Le Scorpion* with reference to Proust and Rousseau. The more experimental

novels were considered in the context of twentieth-century Modernist and experimental writing. Paul (1958) conjured up Conrad, Musil and Sartre in his review of *Of Age and Innocence*; and *Season of Adventure* reminded Wall (1969) of Faulkner. Comparisons of Kateb's *Nedjma* and Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer* with Faulkner and Picasso respectively had been suggested in each novel's paratext, but reviewers also associated both novels with other important figures of contemporary European literature, such as Kafka, Camus, Robbe-Grillet or Michaux (Sénac, 1956; Stil, 1962; Simon, 1962). Miquel (1978) compared the peculiar form of Ben Jelloun's *Moha le fou, Moha le sage* to the films of Godard, but also evoked Joyce because Moha is a figure for the memory and the voice of a whole people. Similarly, two critics, obscurely sensing that Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* constituted the first representation of a particular people in literature, compared it to the vision of Joyce (Calder-Marshall, 953a) and to the language of *Huckleberry Finn* (Pritchett, 1953). The implications of these parallels will be examined in section C below.

English critics were attentive to the genre of the Caribbean novels they were confronted with, and treated Caribbean writing according to the hierarchies of European and American literature. The most serious and gifted Caribbean writers were compared to important European writers, while others were discussed on their own, individual terms or in the context of Western popular literature. In the same way, not all British writers elicit comparison with the great works of the literary canon, but might be appreciated for their individual gifts and interesting stories or characters. Comic novels such as Naipaul's early works or Selvon's London novels were compared to the work of Damon Runyon, a writer known for his comic and somewhat romanticized depictions of shady characters and misfits (New Fiction 1958c; Naipaul, 1958; Shrapnel, 1950; see Grant, 1982). A similar dichotomy obtains in the reception of Maghribi literature: minor novels were often treated as documents, whereas novels belonging to the highly experimental

strand in Maghribi writing forced critics to engage with them in literary terms and were considered in the context of the great works of Western literature.

The use of such Western referents in discussing Maghribi and Caribbean literature indicates that French and English critics took the novels in question seriously as literature. It was an acknowledgement of the importance of the works. This practice might, however, lead to a neglect of the specifically Maghribi or Caribbean aspects of the novels reviewed. The next section will therefore examine the framework of interpretation that guided the critics' approach to these new literatures and its implications.

5.4 Conceptions of Caribbean and Maghribi writing

Caribbean and Maghribi literatures in the 1950s can be qualified as emergent in that English and French critics were not aware of a tradition of writing in those regions: they seemed to be new phenomena from the point of view of the central institutions of the study of English and French literature (Grassin, n d). The colonial situation made the status of these corpuses of writing highly ambiguous. The novelists had all been educated in the British and French traditions respectively and were being published in the metropolitan centres: they might consequently be considered as part of the English or French literary tradition; but critics were also aware of the difference of these novelists and their writing. Their opinions on empire might inflect the way they situated them. This section will examine the paradigms that governed how critics approached these new literatures, especially in literary terms. What criteria shaped critics' conceptions of Maghribi or Caribbean literature? What form did the critics' literary approach take?

5.4.1 Shaping influences

Situation

In the 1950s, there was some tension in newspapers between regarding Caribbean or Maghribi writing as distinct categories or treating the writers as individuals. Certain factors encouraged the conception of these novels by writers from specific regions as groups or literary movements. The *Caribbean Voices* radio programme played an important role in supporting and shaping Caribbean literature in the 1940s and 1950s. It was for several years the only paying publishing outlet for Caribbean writing in English (Cobham, 1986; Nanton, 1998), and allowed writers from different islands to become aware of each other's work (Griffiths, 2001). It also provided contacts with publishers in London through the English literary critics that Henry Swanzy, producer from 1945 to 1954, invited on the programme (Low, 2002). Together, Swanzy and the critics aimed to develop the literary standards of a regional literature without a long-standing literary tradition of its own (Calder-Marshall, 1948). Calder-Marshall, a participant in *Caribbean Voices*, consciously laid the groundwork for others to consider Caribbean literature as an entity with its own formative influences. His essays in the *TLS* set out the material, economic and cultural conditions of West Indian writing, including forced expatriation in search of economically viable outlets for writing and a more supportive literary and critical environment (Calder-Marshall, 1952, 1955).

Although there was no equivalent in France to *Caribbean Voices* as a locale for the development of a notion of Maghribi literature as a coherent body of work, certain factors worked to separate Maghribi writers from their critics and to foster a view of them as a group, including the cultural and religious difference of Muslim North Africans, their administrative status as "natives" and the nexus of representations of the Oriental. Moreover, unlike the Caribbean, North Africa was prominent in current affairs in the 1950s because of the violent struggles for

independence; as we have seen, this shaped critics' reactions to an extent. (Bonn, 2001b) argues that until the mid-1980s French-language Maghribi literature was perceived as a movement as a whole, in an anti-colonial light, as a committed literature ("littérature engagée"). In the 1950s Maghribi novels were often taken as representative of wider social realities that shed light on unfolding events. This did not, however, translate into a conception of Maghribi writers as a school. Very few critics reviewed Maghribi writers together, the only example in my sample being Rousseaux's review of the earliest post-war novels by Dib and Mammeri in 1952. Only a handful of critics discussed them with reference to each other, while most considered the writers individually.

This was also the case in the English reception of Caribbean writing. Low argues that reviewers in English newspapers saw West Indian novels in the 1950s as a "distinctive cluster" (2002, 32). This seems to be supported by Calder-Marshall's explicitly linking Lamming with Mittelholzer and Selvon in 1953. But few critics followed his lead until 1958, when several critics reviewed Lamming's *Of Age and Innocence*, Selvon's *Turn Again Tiger* and Carew's *The Wild Coast* together (Naipaul, 1958; Paul, 1958; New fiction, 958g; African childhood, 959a; Calder-Marshall, 958e; Nicholson, 1958b). This impulse was short-lived: only three more grouped reviews appear in my sample (Variations on theme of superstition, 960b; Trodd, 1967; Storm-tossed, 1972), which indicates that the joint reviews of 1958 were prompted by the tense climate surrounding the race riots in England that year. Other critics rejected the notion of Caribbean writing as a distinct category. Amis (1958) and Burns-Singer (1962) both insisted in review articles on the individuality of Caribbean writers and refused a totalising view of Caribbean writing as a movement or a school. Similarly, reviewers of Salkey's 1960 anthology of Caribbean short stories insisted on the heterogeneous character of the collection, highlighting variations in quality and subject-matter even though the book invited critics to consider Caribbean writing as a distinct

field (Bergonzi, 1960; Davenport, 1960; Williams, 1960). Even Swanzy argued in an essay in *Caribbean Quarterly* that Caribbean writing was not yet distinctive enough to be considered an independent literature (Swanzy, 1962).

The majority of critics treated the writers individually, perhaps referring to a writer's previous novels in order to give a sense of the development of a career, but rarely mentioning the Caribbean as a site for literary belonging. Similarly, French reviews did not always signal novels as being specifically Maghribi, even though a significant number referred to their setting. There was not a conception of Maghribi writing as a school or a movement. In my sample, the norm was for the critic to situate a novel in relation to the writer's previous works if there were any, and perhaps to compare it to works from the Western canon where relevant.

Content

Reviewers developed a conception of Maghribi and Caribbean writing through the characteristics they encountered in the novels. On both sides of the channel, critics appreciated the "authentic", in-depth, knowledgeable representation of North African and Caribbean societies, the "insider's view" provided by Maghribi and Caribbean writers (Jenkins, 1950, 1952; Wyndham, 1950; Blanzat, 1953, 1956; A la devanture du libraire, 1954a; Ross, 1957). Several English critics established a clear opposition between exotic or picturesque representations of the Caribbean and the representations found in Selvon, Mittelholzer or Lamming, thus showing a sensitive rather than exoticising interest in the novels (Powell, 1950; Hale, 1952; Paul, 1953a; Calder-Marshall, 953c). Several critics of *A Brighter Sun* and *In the Castle of My Skin* explained that these novels presented a more accurate picture of Caribbean society than had previously been available, a judgment also made by some French critics on Maghribi writing (Pritchett, 1953; Paul, 1953a; Ollivier, 1955). Critics in French newspapers with differing political leanings (*Figaro*, *Figaro littéraire* and *L'Express*) took this approach with realist works presenting

the difficult life of Algerian urban working classes and mountain peasants, or traditional life in Moroccan towns, such as Dib's *La grande maison* and *L'incendie*, and Sefrioui's short stories (Rousseaux, 1952; A la devanture du libraire, 1954b,a). This comment stemmed from the view that literature can be a better terrain than academic works on social and political problems in the Caribbean or North Africa, including the emerging insurgency, because it incorporates the dimension of human emotions.

Henriot's attitude to the first post-war novels shows that critics expected Maghribi novels written in a realist mode to describe the Muslim society of North Africa, which they conceived of as traditional and non-modern. In some cases this taste for "authenticity" was constraining, but most reviewers accepted the contents of novels that deviated from this expectation without claiming they were inauthentic. Of the two Algerian novels published in 1952, Henriot only attended to the text that showed a rural population untouched by industrial modernity, whereas Rousseaux also reviewed Dib's novel about the urban poor. Despite his mild surprise, Rousseaux accepted the "Western" aspects of the society described in Dib's novel and saw the problems of modernisation as an important theme in these novels. Both Rousseaux (1953) and Blanzat (1953) accepted the additional theme of the educated colonial as significant in their reviews of Memmi's *La statue de sel*. In the wake of the first novels by Memmi, Chraïbi and Kateb, French reviewers' perception of North African literature expanded to include political and anti-colonial themes, so that in 1958 Chraïbi's *De tous les horizons* elicited comments indicating its distinctiveness in not being openly "ideological" (Rousseaux, 1958). In the 1950s then, French literary critics developed an understanding of Maghribi literature as providing background to the independence struggles, giving authentic representations of native North African society, and as engaging in a critique of colonialism and its workings—in terms either of actively propounding

a view of Algeria as a nation (Dib, Kateb), or condemning the hypocrisy of colonial propaganda through their representation of colonised intellectuals (Memmi, Chraïbi). It did not follow from this recognition that critics would support the view that the countries of the Maghrib should become independent (p.205).

French and English critics were in some ways less prescriptive in judging Maghribi and Caribbean writing than those who had a stake in defining these two literatures. Unlike Maghribi critics, French reviewers had no objection when North African writers made forays into representing Western societies. This is apparent in reactions to the two novels by Chraïbi set in Western societies and presenting European characters, *Un ami viendra vous voir* (1967) and *Mort au Canada* (1975). Estang (1967) was content to give the former novel prominence because of its analysis of the role of television and psychiatry in Western society, and to mock the predictability of its plot; a reviewer in a Moroccan magazine meanwhile announced Chraïbi's death as a writer because of this change of setting (Jay, 1967). In 1975, Ben Jelloun felt compelled to remind the reader of Chraïbi's Moroccan origins and seemed to resent his desire to be considered as a writer rather than a North African writer, whereas Stil only referenced Chraïbi's previous work in terms of style. In the same way, unlike the *Caribbean Voices* producer, English reviewers had no objections to novels by Caribbean writers set outside the Caribbean. Mittelholzer's *The Weather in Middenshot*, set in England, was criticised because of its themes of sex and perversity, unpalatable to the critic (Scott, 1952). The fact that a Guyanese writer should present English characters living in England did not pose a problem. Similarly, Naipaul's *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, which satirises English suburban life, was well received with little comment about Naipaul's Trinidadian origin (Hinde, 1963; New fiction, 963c).

The violent struggles for independence in North Africa, along with the stark linguistic, cultural and religious differences between colonisers and natives, led

French critics to consider novels by Maghribi writers as part of a particular category and sometimes analyse them in this light, although the general practice was to treat writers as individuals. In Britain, despite efforts by certain critics, reviewers for the most part also approached writers individually. Critics felt that novels by writers originating from these little-known societies were more informative than sociological works. They appreciated representations of societies that they did not know well and perceived to be authentic but also accepted departures from this expected content as long as literary quality was not compromised. These societies nonetheless remained minor, seen as subordinate within the sphere of French or English civilisation; novels about them were still considered of specialist interest.

5.4.2 Aesthetics: convergent or separate?

Bias to universalism

In the 1950s, novels by Caribbean and Maghribi writers began to be published by large publishing houses in London and Paris. This made them de facto part of the French and British literary scenes, and therefore part of the reviewers' remit. French and English critics for the most part took a literary approach to new Maghribi and Caribbean novels, yet were aware that the Caribbean, like North Africa, had not traditionally been considered a "culture-producing" region (Bonn, 1995, 49). Bryden expressed this situation in terms of historical centres. The problem of colonial writers was that they "wrote on the margins of history, trying to visualise [themselves] from history's centre" (Bryden, 1965, 163). English and French critics knew themselves to be located in centres of history, and for all their benevolence, some of them had a sense that writing from the margins could never be interesting in and of itself, but would only acquire a proper stature, or true greatness, if it managed to reach beyond its unimportant location and

parochial concerns into an undefined universal realm characterised by supposedly unchanging human experiences based on the Western one.

This "bias to universalism" applied also in terms of literary technique. The role of literary studies as part of the apparatus of imperial hegemony rested on the construction of a certain tradition of European literature as superior and setting the standards for civilisation. The French and British versions of this tradition, which informed French and English critics' approach to all new writing, included the nineteenth-century European and American realist novel and its modernist or avant-garde developments. It also incorporated hierarchies of "high" and "low" culture and a view of comedy as an inferior form.

Critics viewed the emerging corpuses of writing as literatures in their infancy that had the potential to converge with the standards of European writing. Henriot's condescending comments on Mammeri quoted above suggested that Maghribi writing should improve in literary standards until it could be as sophisticated as French writing. Similarly, the *Caribbean Voices* critics saw it as their mission to encourage such convergence through promoting high literary standards. The critical segments in the *Caribbean Voices* programmes played out tensions between on the one hand the necessity of preserving characteristics peculiar to Caribbean writing and avoiding a derivative tendency in relation to English literature and on the other hand the necessity of developing the craft of writing to a standard such that Caribbean writing would become of interest to those beyond the Caribbean, reaching a universal status. As we will see, the reception of Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* shows that newspaper reviewers took a similar view. French and English newspaper critics tended to elevate a universal theme as a criterion for quality in a novel. Caribbean and Maghribi novels set in the West were seen in this light.

Caribbean and Maghribi novelists were conversant with the European high cultural tradition through their colonial education. Whether it was politically or

artistically motivated or both, they used and subverted the European tradition of novel writing, using both techniques close to those of Modernism and the rich traditions of the Maghrib and the Caribbean. How did critics react to this? Did they see the resulting writing as inferior? Did they accept literary experimentation, and did they recognise the non-European components of these emerging literatures?

Dib and Naipaul

The reception of the works of Dib and Naipaul shows the influence of the universalist bias in French and English criticism. Early Algerian novels followed the strictures of the realist form and were viewed somewhat condescendingly, as we have seen. There were also strong trends in Maghribi writing that challenged the conventions of realist fiction. For the most part, French critics engaged with these currents. This may have been a result from the literary context in the 1950s and the early 1960s, which saw the success of highly experimental trends in French literature not only in the Nouveau Roman but also in the writers published by Le Seuil (Simonin, 1998). The reception of Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer* is interesting in this context. It was praised for its innovative approach to the subject of the Algerian independence struggle. Dib chose to veer away from realism; his novel does not deal explicitly with the struggle, but instead presents a nightmarish atmosphere of oppression in an undefined setting. Reviewers remarked on the novel's power and its distinctiveness compared to other novels about the war. Simon (1962) included it among other novels on the conflict as a demonstration of the poetic treatment of war, which he distinguished from thematic and symbolic approaches. Stil (1962) quoted from the afterword in which Dib explained his project, that is a search for a writing of terror that would not succumb to trivialisation (Dib, 1962). He found Dib's project useful, in that it remedies the lack of temporal distance from the horrific events (necessary for a literary treatment)

through the use of poetic distance. Finally, he asserted the legitimate place of such a non-realist novel in Dib's realist work, signalling his acceptance of literary experimentation in Maghribi writing. The critics' appreciation for the literary qualities of Dib's novel emerges also in the parallels they drew with the work of Kafka. This association shows that Simon and Stil found no elements in the novel that linked it with the Maghrib on a formal level. Such freedom from the Maghribi context was implicitly praised, through the parallels with Picasso and Kafka, as an attainment of the universal in literature. In downplaying the ethnic and cultural elements of his novel and aiming for abstraction, Dib's work resembled the experimental currents in European fiction and was therefore accepted by the critics.

The situation was different in Britain, where several English critics considered close attention to a specific society as a pathway, once the literary skill was sufficient, to touching on general human problems and achieving universal significance. A number of critics highlighted this treatment of universal concerns within a specific Caribbean setting, such as the ambition of young men in Selvon and Naipaul (Duchene, 1955; Jacobson, 1961) or gender relations in Hearne and Naipaul (Ross, 1957; Burns-Singer, 1961). This approach is particularly visible in the reception of Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*. Cruttwell (1961) decreed Naipaul's entry into the ranks of true novelists through his ability to create a convincing world in his tragic-comic novel. Burns-Singer (1961) saw Naipaul as a contender for "the Great West Indian Novel", praising his "encyclopedic" (sic) treatment of the Indian community in Trinidad. He felt the novel failed to attain a tragic dimension only because of Biswas's ordinariness, but sensed that the tension between the unworthy subject and the high literary approach of close psychological observation might be deliberate. MacInnes (1961) praised Naipaul's "feeling for place" as well as the subtlety of his authorial voice and considered this novel as marking the elevation of West Indian literature beyond a merely regional

or minor status. Naipaul's subsequent novels, although they might experiment formally in their treatment of chronology like *The Mimic Men*, were welcomed by the critics because they were situated firmly within the tradition of European and American fiction in their focus on psychological explorations and lucid modes of narration. Tellingly, Green (1967) predicted that Naipaul would only be successful if he stopped writing about the Caribbean and engaged with the wider world. Naipaul continued to address the consequences of colonialism in his fiction, but never again after *Biswas* did he plunge into the close observation of a society on its own terms. English critics appreciated his cosmopolitan viewpoint and emphasis on "placelessness" (Hamilton, 1971). French and English critics privileged writers who treated "universal" themes and whose writing conformed with European literary conventions.

Dismissal of Harris and Lamming for obscurity

The reception of other prominent Caribbean writers is a further indication of this bias to universalism. Lamming and Harris, both highly experimental writers, focused on Caribbean issues and traditions and disdained making concessions to the aesthetics of the European novel. Harris's novels explore British Guiana/Guyana, its landscapes and its varied cultural heritage over and over, using techniques that strongly challenge the realist tradition, which he has criticised (Harris, 1999). Lamming mixed literary media in his novels and engaged in a quasi-collective narration, focusing on numerous characters in turn to convey the workings of Caribbean society, whether at home or in England. Both received negative criticism for their writing styles, for various reasons. Low (2002) pinpoints one aspect of this in a 1962 article by Burns-Singer that disallows the possibility of literary experimentation in Caribbean literature, despite being well-informed about its historical and material circumstances, and eventually reduces it to a charming representation of tropical landscape and folklore. Burns-Singer's outrage that

non-English writers such as Lamming and Mittelholzer should presume to experiment with the English language - experiments he did not welcome even when they emanated from British writers - betrays colonial prejudice (Burns-Singer, 1962). Yet not all critics who rejected the formal challenges in Caribbean fiction did so because of prejudice about the inferior level of civilisation of colonials. Most other critics who disliked the literary experiments of Lamming and Harris focused on formal issues. The *Times* reviewer complained that, in *Of Age and Innocence*, Lamming "refused to make any concessions to his readers" (Saady, 1958); the *Spectator* critic dismissed *A Season of Adventure* as "a hot fuddle of sententious and sensational verbosity" (Grigson, 1960), and most reviewers rejected the denseness and obscurity of Harris's writing (Bryden, 960c; New fiction, 1963; Sutcliffe, 1964; Taubman, 1961; Patterson, 1965).[5] These critics were not consigning Caribbean literature to the folk, nor assuming that colonial writers could not or should not engage in serious, experimental literature. Their criticism, commonly levelled at modernist or experimental literature, stems from a conception not of what a Caribbean novel ought to be, but about what the novel, in general, ought to do. Lamming's novels are realistic, in that they offer themselves up as reflections of a world outside themselves, and provide representations of a society and some individual consciousnesses. The reviewers, however, also demand a certain degree of transparency, which is to say that the mediation between the reader and the world of the novel must be carried out with the utmost discretion on the part of the author and the narrator, elements that are challenged in Lamming's and Harris's novels. This resistance to techniques questioning the notion of transparency, derived from the nineteenth-century realist novel, is unlikely to concern only Caribbean work, but emerges from the critics' views on literature as a craft. In this case the bias to universalism arises from

[5]The fact that two of these critics (Bryden and Patterson) were West Indians, and one (Patterson) was a Caribbean novelist participating in the interrogations and debates on West Indian literature at the time, suggests that one should blame the literary opinions, not the nationality of the critic or colonial prejudice, for the critic's attitude to the novels.

the normative application of the norms of the Euro-American realist novel.

Dismissal of popular influences in Caribbean writing

The charge of obscurity levelled at Lamming and Harris indicates that critics were engaging with their work as serious writing. Other Caribbean writers were not treated as seriously. The criticism that Caribbean novels were collections of sketches or portraits rather than proper novels arose recurrently. It most often concerned Selvon, but was also directed at some novels by Mittelholzer and the early works of Naipaul (Scott, 1953; Tylden-Wright, 1957; Nicholson, 1958a). In some instances this weakness was ascribed to the (correctible) weakness of a young writer, but the criticism lasted throughout Selvon's career (Huth, 1975). This persistence indicates a blind spot on the part of English critics regarding specifically Caribbean aesthetics. Selvon's anecdotal type of storytelling is deliberate and rests on his use of an aesthetic inspired by calypso music (Fabre, 1977). In this instance, specifically Caribbean aspects of the novels' aesthetics were indeed "discounted" by English critics (Allis, 1982, 2). This did not necessarily result in the dismissal of the novels in question (the reviews cited here were mostly positive) but indicates blindness from members of the dominant establishment to challenges to literary conventions rooted in a cultural tradition not only non-European but also oral and popular.

Another, connected target for disparagement was the naturalistic use of Caribbean popular speech. MacInnes (1961) is almost alone in considering that the use of this non-standard oral element in Caribbean writing constituted an enrichment of the English language and was "by no means a 'broken' language". Comments in other reviews show an awareness that readers might not react well to this unconventional language, as the "picturesque" nature of the exercise might annoy them (Ross, 1952; Keir, 1959). One critic found the language in *A Quality of Violence* affected and "'hard-hard' to read" (New fiction, 959c). Another, while giving it

a positive gloss, was nevertheless patronising in qualifying Selvon's as a "pidgin style" (New fiction, 958a). Ross (1952) compared Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* to Ronald Firbank's *The Prancing Nigger*. This novel by a little-known yet influential modernist writer depicted the adaptation of a rural family to city living in Haiti, and contained approximations of the popular speech of the Caribbean (see Arthur Annesley Ronald Firbank, 2003). Ross's comparison is a way of indirectly praising Firbank for an authentic depiction of black characters; it all but cancels out his praise of Selvon, as it denotes a superficial appreciation for the latter's achievement in reducing it to the quaint and the exotic. Other critics were more neutral in their judgement of the literary adaptation of Caribbean popular speech, but the reactions listed here suggest that the reason English reviewers were not receptive to the loose narrative structure and the dialectal flavour of Caribbean writing pertains to the popular, low-cultural character of these Caribbean aesthetics. The dismissal of Lamming's novel for excessive obscurity might have been applied to any young writer (even though it ignores Lamming's project), whereas the condescension shown in appraisals of novels using Caribbean speech and calypso structures proceeds from the ideology placing European high culture, and English culture in particular, at the summit of world civilisation. Overall, reviews of Caribbean writing were characterised by a mix of approaches, in which stereotyped judgements were not necessarily dominant. Nevertheless a reductive tendency exists that on the one hand disallows the right for Caribbean writers to experiment with the English language and the conventions of the realist novel, and on the other hand discounts the contributions from popular tradition.

The storyteller paradigm in French criticism

Despite French critics' interest in the dynamism and experimental drive of Maghribi literature, a reductive tendency towards the emergent literature of North Africa also survived in France throughout the period. I have argued that few critics

appealed to the notion of Maghribi literature as a field in its own right. Further, very few critics treated Maghribi experimental literature unproblematically on the same plane as European avant-garde literature, even though they acknowledged its specific socio-political positioning. Several critics saw Maghribi novels as belonging to the Arab cultural nexus, which resulted in reductive readings.

When Kateb's *Nedjma* came out in 1956 it was acclaimed as an innovative novel, and was a contender for the annual literary prizes (Vers un renouveau, 1956). Critics compared *Nedjma* to the writings of Faulkner and its literary qualities and poetic power were widely praised. The comparison with Faulkner, as Déjeux (1993b) reminds us, was sparked by the publisher's preface, which aimed to prepare readers for the novel's disconcerting structure. Based on contemporary Orientalist and anthropological wisdom, the preface also presented the structure of the novel as an example of Arab thought and its supposed circular perception of time, as opposed to a linear tendency in Western thought. Déjeux compares this to Kateb's own comments on the book's genesis and finds this interpretation to be inexact: the novel's repetitious structure is related to Kateb's writing practice and to the unstable circumstances of his life at the time. Nevertheless, he notes, most of the critics made use of the preface to explain the novel to their readers. The enthusiastic *L'Humanité* critic was the only skeptic, noting that *Nedjma* is more disorienting than other foreign novels, so that its alienness cannot, therefore, be ascribed to an essential character of Arab thought (Faux, 1956). In this the reviewer followed the anti-racist ideology of the Communist Party, which backed the newspaper.

Something further is at work in two other reviews of *Nedjma* in my sample. Rousseaux (1956) considers it a brilliant example of the fusion of French and Arab cultures: an expression of Arab thought through dazzling use of the French language. While he repeatedly refers to Kateb's art and skill, the interpretive framework Rousseaux provides for this novel's form is in fact reductive. After

shying away from the comparison with Faulkner, with its implications of a conflict between two communities ("Algeria [...] is our Louisiana, or our Texas. But let us not go too fast, nor too far."), the critic relays the notion of the circularity of Arab thought provided in the publisher's preface, rather than treating the novel's form as a literary experiment in the same way as Western avant-garde literature. Then, in a further attempt to attenuate the novel's alienness for French readers, he conjures up the figure of a popular storyteller on an Arab street.

> To overcome our surprise, it is perhaps enough not to take this book for a novel like the others, and to restore it to its natural setting. Kateb Yacine, a French writer who has behind him a tribe of lettered Arabs, is simply an Arab storyteller: that is, a man who does not retrace a logical and chronological narrative, but who tells stories by winding around his subject. Rousseaux (1956)

This final reduction contradicts Rousseaux's affirmations of Kateb's skill, as it denies his work the status of high culture, placing it in the context of popular, oral culture. Henriot in *Le Monde* acknowledges that the novel's complexity is not a flaw but the result of Kateb's design and choice, yet views *Nedjma* as proof that the Arab mind is forever "impenetrable" to the European mind. He also appropriates Rousseaux's "storyteller" interpretation. In both reviews, this overrides the editor's preface as a framework of interpretation of the novel's alienness.

Unfortunately, this reductive way of qualifying novels by North African writers endured well into the 1980s, though it was not used systematically. It sometimes appears in reviews of minor novels (S., 1964). More significantly, both reviews of Chraïbi's *De tous les horizons* use this trope even though the book's universal theme is duly noted (Rousseaux, 1958; M., 1958). Here the focus on a supposed specific, non-Western literary tradition results in ghettoization. Chraïbi has always resisted being categorized as a regional or Maghribi writer; he has always claimed the position of a writer in the realm of world literature (see Al Achgar, 1966; Boubia, 1995). The use of the storyteller trope for a novel that does not

foreground the Maghrib defeats this drive to be considered simply as a writer. In 1987, the prestigious Goncourt prize awarded to Ben Jelloun for *La nuit sacrée* was a sign that Maghribi literature in French had gained legitimacy in the eyes of the French mainstream. Yet, once again, the figure of the Arab storyteller dominated the reception of this experimental novel (Lefevre-Sory, 1987). Unlike the rejection of Caribbean novels challenging European conventions, this approach recognises the quality of the work discussed: the storyteller paradigm is usually associated with a positive reception. Yet this interpretation is also patronising, and serves to avoid discussing the works in question on their own terms. By always referring to a tradition that is considered exotic and folkloric, it subtly denies the books an equal treatment with Euro-American literature on the stage of world literature, resulting in the ghettoization of Maghribi literature. By suggesting a quasi-atavistic reliance on traditional frameworks, the storyteller paradigm denies the agency of the sophisticated writer who uses the parameters of Western and non-Western literatures for a purpose.

5.5 Acknowledgement of political aspects

We have seen that for the most part newspaper critics did not refer to notions of Caribbean or Maghribi literature as a paradigm from which to consider the novels they were reviewing, but on the contrary examined them from the point of view of the writer's career. The tendency to consider writers as individuals and to use the canon of Western literature as an evaluative framework signals a proper literary appraisal. The examination of the critics' aesthetic criteria reveals, however, a dominant inability or unwillingness to consider aesthetic projects that did not conform to the parameters of European and American literature. Many critics seem blind to the possibility of deliberate and challenging literary experimentation by colonised writers, preferring to condemn the results as imperfect, a sign of weak literary skill, or to ascribe them to a supposed atavism.

Such an attitude has broad political implications. The emergent literatures of colonised countries were linked to the developing nationalism and resistance to colonialism, whether the writers believed political projects have a place in literature or not. As Gellner (1983) has shown, nationalism demands the adequacy of the political unit with the boundaries of the ethnic or national group, which might be constructed and conceived partly through its depiction in fiction (Anderson, 2003). The self-description of a people on its own terms in literature is a challenge to imperial ideology: it can reinforce political demands for independence by constructing a national or ethnic group, undermine the construction of colonised peoples as belonging to the French or British empire, and challenge the superiority of European cultures and cultural norms. Kateb and Lamming consciously intended their writings to contribute to the struggle for independence, from the Marxist perspective of an alliance between culture and politics towards the liberation of the people from colonialism and exploitation by the elites. Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun explicitly criticised postcolonial regimes and the consequences of colonialism in their novels. Both consider that the novelist must analyse personal and social problems and, in Ben Jelloun's case, give a voice to the oppressed and voiceless. Selvon and Chraïbi, by contrast, claimed the privilege of being considered as writers contributing to world culture. While their works were usually rooted in their sensibilities as a Trinidadian and a Moroccan, they criticised the constraints that a nationalist perspective imposed on the writer.[6] Whether the novels were politically motivated or not, their setting in Caribbean or Maghribi societies necessarily meant addressing issues that could not be separated from European domination. Consequently, considering the emergent regional literatures not as branches of the tree of European literature, but as entities in themselves, had implications in the context of the decolonisation process. Likewise, the response to the explicit or implicit political and social messages of the novels, which

[6]Chraïbi did write two novels set entirely in the West and making no reference to the Maghrib, in line with his positions on the freedom of the writer.

often amounted to a critique of colonialism, was also significant.

Wynter (1968), writing from a Marxist perspective, explained that a good literary critic is not defined by nationality but by approach: the critic who enables a progressive reading rather than proposing one that reinforces the status quo, is the best critic. It seems to me that, most of all, a critic should consider a literary work on its own terms. Acknowledging the social and political messages of the novels, even in order to criticise these messages, is the sign of such a critic. The aesthetic and political choices of the writer should be acknowledged for what they are and their coherence and congruence considered. If the critic disagrees, or if the result is not to his or her taste, it is of course his or her right, even duty, to express this. But the critic who conveys the deliberation of a work's literary form and its politics, even if it is only to criticise them, is a better critic than the one who ignores or dismisses such aspects of a literary work. This section will briefly consider the critics who did discuss Maghribi and Caribbean literature as distinct entities, then examine reviewers' attitudes to the social and political content of the novels.

5.5.1 Autonomous traditions?

As we have seen, the vast majority of critics discussed the novels they encountered from an individual point of view, without interrogating categorisations of regional or national literatures. This individual approach might serve to foreclose or ignore any claims to regional identity and specificity accompanying demands for independence. In the early years of the emergence of Maghribi and Caribbean writing, critics, when they interrogated the position of these works, considered them as subsidiary traditions in French and English literature. Low explains that "The transnational and neocolonial networks that make London central [lay] unquestioned" by English literary critics faced with the emergence of Commonwealth literature "because the governing paradigm of the social mission

of English still underpinned much thinking" at the time (2001, 79), and this was also the case in France. Early French and English newspaper critics, except for the *Caribbean Voices* producer and participant critics, had nothing to say about the fact that the novels were being published in Paris or London rather than Algiers, Rabat, Kingston or Port-of-Spain. Two high-profile reviewers explicitly applied imperial ideology in their reviews. Henriot (1952) reviewed an Algerian native, Mammeri, alongside a Haitian and an Egyptian writing in French and called them "three new French writers". Rousseaux (1952) reviewed Mammeri and Dib with Emmanuel Roblès, a French Algerian writer, and rebuked the nationalist elements in *La grande maison* by reminding the reader that Dib had learnt French in French schools and therefore belonged to the sphere of French culture, despite being also fed by "other flames". "If we are led to have a dialogue [...] in this language that came to him from my country" he exclaims, "I marvel that he, child of Tlemcen [...], does not think on all things as I do, who am a Parisian of Paris". The starkness with which Rousseaux restates official ideology weakens his argument. His single-minded setting up of an equivalence between the people of Tlemcen and Paris stirs up a feeling of incongruity in the reader, reinforced by his inadvertent use of the phrase "my country", which undermines his point in implying that he and Dib in fact belong to separate countries. In Britain, Low (2002) has shown that literary critics used organic metaphors such as that of branches of a tree to present emergent Commonwealth literatures, including Caribbean writing, as subordinate to English literature. This is evident in the articles of Calder-Marshall. Although he referred to a "distinct Caribbean flavour" that "marks [the writers] out" from the rest of English literature (1955), he situated Caribbean writing firmly as regional and subordinate "within the tradition of English literature" (953a). He was aware of the attractions of London for Caribbean writers and their material causes, but did not interrogate their source in the colonial relation. Critics on both sides of the channel saw the difference

from French and English writing embodied in the novels' use of language and often, initially, appropriated it for English or French literature. Four critics argued somewhat reductively that the challenging styles of Lamming, Chraïbi and others energised French and English literature (Pritchett, 1953; Lettres: Romans, 1954; Sombre fureur, 1955; Amis, 1960). French critics in general stressed the union of the French language and an Arab mindset in Maghribi writing in the 1950s: this view governed Rousseaux's reception of *Nedjma* (1956) and *De tous les horizons* (1958). The dominant approaches to Maghribi and Caribbean writing, then, foreclosed a conception of them as national or regional bodies of work by treating writers individually or operating an appropriation into the French or the English tradition.

A minority of reviews reflect an increasing acceptance of the autonomy of Maghribi literature on the part of French critics. In envisaging new writing from the Maghrib, French critics were dimly aware of the high cultural tradition of the Islamic world, symbolised in the minds of Europeans by the collection of stories gathered from many regions, the *1001 Nights*. We have seen that, although a few critics recognised and praised literary experiments in North African novels, this recognition was tempered by some through the use of a stereotype that suggested atavism. The notion that Maghribi literature operated partly on codes that were different from those of European literatures was seen somewhat condescendingly but it allowed French critics to begin conceiving of it as separate from French culture and literature. For instance, Blanzat indicated that Ouary's treatment of the experience of a man forced to give up his identity and take the place of the man he has killed in his Kabyle mountain home differed from that which a Western or Christian writer would have given. Sénac (1956), a French Algerian supporting independence, discussed *Nedjma* both as part of French writing and in relation to other Maghribi writing. Unlike Rousseaux, he accepted the novel's experimentation for what it was, uncomplicatedly comparing it to the

French experimental Nouveau Roman school of writing, yet remarking on its political content, which distinguished it from that movement. He also noted that it differed from the writings of Dib and Memmi. Gorin insisted in 1966 on the uniqueness of Kateb's *Le polygone étoilé*, whether considered in a European or a Maghribi context, though he recognised its concern with the Algerian nation. By contrast, Estang in 1962, reviewing Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer*, associated him with Kateb as inaugurating a national literature separate from French literature. He fell back on the publisher's notion of the circularity of Arab thought in his review of *Le polygone étoilé*, although this might be seen as a further argument for the autonomy of Algerian literature 1966. His review of *La Répudiation* three years later discussed the violence of Boudjedra's writing without an external referent, perhaps because he felt that by then, with Algerian independence already seven years old, the case for Algerian writing as autonomous no longer needed to be made explicitly. But in 1965, the critic in *Le Monde* had detailed the complexities of defining the boundaries of a Maghribi literature in reviewing Memmi's anthology (L., 1965) and French critics showed no particular awareness of the late 1960s emergence of a strikingly literarily violent younger generation of Maghribi writers in Algeria and Morocco, discussing them individually like Sorin (1967) in his review of Khaïr-Eddine's *Agadir*. Nevertheless, in 1976, Dedet accepted the notion of a national Algerian literature when reviewing Merad's literary study of it. Discussions of Maghribi literature as a distinct literary realm remained a minority trend in the reception of this body of writing in French newspapers. Where there was a recognition of its autonomy, it followed national lines.

Few English critics reviewed Caribbean novels in the context of Caribbean writing. A minor trend seeing Caribbean writers as a group emerged early and persisted into the early 1960s, but no critic explicitly considered this corpus of writing as an autonomous tradition. Lewis (1953) reviewed Lamming's first novel in relation to the emergence of West Indian poetry and the novels of Mittelholzer

and Reid. Unlike Calder-Marshall, she felt no need to assert their place within the English tradition, but she was not concerned to ask where this field of writing should be placed. Her consideration of Caribbean writing as a field is isolated. 1958 saw a number of grouped reviews as we have seen, but few critics gave reasons beyond regional origins for this. Only the *Times* critic or critics explicated similarities in theme or relied on stereotypes to group Mittelholzer, Carew and Selvon and finally treated Caribbean writers as a "school" (New fiction, 958g; African childhood, 959a; Variations on theme of superstition, 960b). Burns-Singer challenged this view in 1962. The main exception to this absence of reflection on Caribbean literature as a group is Ronald Bryden. A noted theatre critic (see Billington, 2004), the Trinidadian-born Bryden also wrote a few reviews of Caribbean novels for the *Spectator*. He reviewed *Palace of the Peacock* with the precedent of Lamming in mind, thus renewing with Lewis's and Calder-Marshall's discussions of Lamming's first novel in relation to other Caribbean writers (Lewis, 1953; Calder-Marshall, 953c). More significantly, Bryden's review of Dawes's *The Last Enchantment* presented a cogent characterisation of West Indian writing. He identified its root feature as the situation of its writers: educated colonials situated both inside and outside British society. He also argued in 1965 that West Indian writing should centre on the Caribbean experience without taking the British point of view into account. Only by "accept[ing] that one may be provincial yet central to one's world" could it achieve depth and become tragic (Bryden, 1965). The notion that Maghribi and Caribbean writing were autonomous fields of writing, then, emerged only with difficulty in French and English newspaper reviews and was seldom discussed explicitly.

Contextualisation with other literatures of decolonising regions

The issue of emerging nationalisms and anti-colonial thought was also prominent in other countries. French and English newspapers reviewed novels by writers

from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia as well as from the Caribbean and the Maghrib, but links were seldom drawn between all these writers. The only examples in my sample of joint reviews in French newspapers are two articles by Henriot (1952, 1958). He grouped colonised writers such as Mammeri and Djebar, with writers from independent countries, Chedid (Egypt) and Saint-Amand (Haiti), and with immigrants writing in French, Arnothy and Prassinos.[7] Henriot's interest in writers not born in France but with a sufficient command of the French language to produce good literature can be interpreted as pride in France's civilising mission and the universal aspirations of its culture. Blanzat (1956) similarly included Ouary in the group of new writers who were non-native speakers of French but educated in French and writing in this language but, by contrast, asserted the importance of paying attention to their work, hinting at the movement of decolonisation that was under way in the mid-1950s. Although it is discreetly presented, Blanzat demonstrates an awareness of the common condition of the colonised. Relatively few English critics in my sample drew parallels with other postcolonial literatures, but they did so more explicitly than the French. This was part of an emerging recognition of "Commonwealth" literature from the 1950s onwards (see Low, 2002). In my sample, a few critics drew links between Caribbean novels and "Negro" novels dealing with race relations in America (Quigly, 1954; New fiction, 958c, 961a). Paul (1953a) placed Lamming's first novel in the context of "that stream of books autobiographical or otherwise, which steadily flows from South Africa, the colonies and from any place where the problems of colour and of political freedom have brought conflicts for which no real solution is in sight." He was the only reviewer to explicitly situate Lamming's novel in this way. Some of those who saw links between Caribbean and other Commonwealth writers nevertheless avoided pursuing this thinking to its conclusion. Calder-Marshall's review

[7] Arnothy was a refugee from Hungary who managed with her family to reach Paris as a teenager at the end of World War II (Christine Arnothy, 2001). Prassinos was the daughter of a Greek immigrant and had arrived in Paris at the age of two (Perrier, 2003).

of Selvon's *Turn Again Tiger* alongside work by Jan Carew and Mongo Beti explicates a kinship between African and Caribbean writers based on a common experience: the exacerbation of the split between the worlds of childhood and adulthood by expatriation and a change of language. Despite pinpointing what is an important aspect of the colonial experience, Calder-Marshall is careful to avoid all mention of the colonial relation and to present this plight as a particular aspect of a universal experience, which limits his appreciation of the novels. In 1967, Jones argued that Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* gave dignity to the concept of a Commonwealth novel and associated its depiction of the colonial intellectual with the work of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, while other reviewers multiplied references to European classics and genres, such as the confessional novel.

French and English critics in general avoided the complexities of interrogating the categorisation of Caribbean and Maghribi writing by treating all writers as individuals. Several of those who considered the status of these emerging literary traditions, especially in the 1950s, did so in order to reassert imperial ideologies, but a minority saw the implications of these emerging literatures, situating them within the general movement towards decolonisation. How did critics react to the political messages contained in the novels?

5.5.2 The socio-political messages of the novels

We have seen that Maghribi writing soon came to be seen as ideological writing by French critics. Comments by Playfair (1962) and Cronin (1965), warning readers that social themes are absent from Harris's *The Whole Armour* and Anthony's *The Year in San Fernando* respectively, indicate that by the 1960s political and social themes, including race relations, were considered as a normal component of Caribbean writing, but Cronin's relieved remark that Anthony's novel is "refreshingly free from race relations" suggests that English critics might have found this

explicitness distasteful. They usually mentioned the theme of race relations in Caribbean writing but focused on other aspects of the novels. For instance, Ross (1955, 1956) acknowledged Hearne's treatment of race relations in his novels but insisted on the character of his first novel as a *bildungsroman* and a novel about war and discussed the second one in terms of the interaction of race relations with questions of personal and patriotic loyalty. This holds true for other socio-political themes: many reviewers did not dwell on them, preferring to concentrate on literary or universal aspects. Brooks (1960), alert to the density of Lamming's writing, saw the flaws of *Season of Adventure* as constitutive of its power and mentioned its critique of postcolonial elites. Paul (1958), alone among critics of this novel, conveyed Lamming's reflections on the relationship between the leader and the people after independence in *Of Age and Innocence* and appreciated its lack of neatness. A small number of critics sidelined the novels' political themes completely, often because they, like Duchene, focused exclusively on the literary merits of the novels. The *Times* critic couched Lamming's political reflections in *Of Age and Innocence* in terms of "the mysteries of the human heart" (New fiction, 958f), while Shrapnel (1972a,b) complained about the obscuring effect of Lamming's mannerisms and symbolism in his last two novels. Thwaite (1972), while voicing a similar opinion on the distanced narration of *Natives of My Person*, at least mentioned the history of slavery.

Few English reviewers were prepared to acknowledge discussions or critiques of the colonial situation in Caribbean novels. Powell (1950) highlighted Mittelholzer's analysis of race relations in *A Morning at the Office*, but silenced its characters' explicit critique of the presence and privileged position of the British in Trinidad. Bryden (960b) is exceptional in addressing explicitly the issue of colonialism in a review of a Caribbean novel; his willingness and his analysis of the "merciless radicalism" of West Indian writers in respect of British society in terms of their position both inside and outside its system, can be explained

by his own origin in the Caribbean. Strikingly, those reviewers who were best-informed about Caribbean writing seem to have been most reluctant to address the anti-colonial undercurrents in this body of work. Calder-Marshall is a striking example of this attitude. He had travelled to Trinidad in the 1930s to support the union movement there, but his commitment to the cause of labour does not seem to have been accompanied by an anti-colonial stance. In fact, his reviews of Caribbean novels for *TLS* systematically foreclosed their political or anti-colonial content. Calder-Marshall (958e) found *Turn Again Tiger* weaker than Selvon's first novel, and singled out the protagonist's affair with a white woman as "implausible". Naipaul (1958), himself a Trinidadian, also felt this incident was based on an outdated view of society. Such comments disregard the racial politics characteristic of a colonial society, especially one with a history of slavery (see Fanon, 1986). They are surprising for a critic who argued that delving into history was an important mission in Caribbean writing (Calder-Marshall, 1948, 958a). The rhetoric of the sexual possession of the white woman as a political weapon, used by certain advocates of black power in the United States of America in the 1960s and 1970s, shows the enduring relevance of these sexual politics (see Cleaver, 1969). While such explicit rhetoric only emerged later on, 1958 saw troubles related to desegregation in the Southern United States and racially motivated violence in Britain, in contradiction with the dominant perception at that time that the British were "colour-blind". These issues were far from outdated, and Selvon himself later commented on the meaning and significance of this episode in the novel (Dance, 1992). The dismissal of these concerns by Calder-Marshall and Naipaul seems disingenuous. In view of Calder-Marshall's other comments analysed above, it seems motivated in his case by a refusal to acknowledge the theme of colonial relations in a literary work.

Race relations did not form an explicit theme in Maghribi literature but colonialism was criticised implicitly in Dib's first novel and explicitly as of 1953 in

novels by Memmi and Kateb among others. In general, French critics were less reluctant than English reviewers to acknowledge and discuss the broadly political issues raised by Maghribi novels, including that of colonialism. This is easily explained by the difference in context and literary tradition between the two countries. The Caribbean, unlike Britain's African colonies, was not the site of any struggle; the decolonisation process was carried out through the parliamentary route, whereas the decolonisation of the Maghrib was characterised by violence. It was difficult for writers and reviewers to escape this context. Moreover, the post-war literary scene in France was dominated by the trauma of World War II and the paradigm of committed literature, in contrast with the English attachment to the traditions of Arnold, Eliot and Leavis in English literary criticism, which viewed culture as an autonomous field. As we have seen, in some cases the attention to socio-political themes in Maghribi writing was a consequence of the documentary or information-seeking approach critics took (Blanzat, 1953; Rousseaux, 1953; A la devanture du libraire, 1954b; Blanzat, 1956). The 1952 article by Henriot mentioned above, which forecloses the issue of colonialism altogether, constitutes a counter-example, as does Rousseaux's review of *Nedjma*, which obscures its anti-colonial politics by implicitly praising French colonisation in proclaiming the fusion of Arab and French in the novel. In his review of the same novel, Henriot (1956) could no longer ignore the question of anti-colonialism, but criticised the Algerian's novel for giving too one-sided a view of the conflict. Certain other reviews convey the unease of the colonised intellectual, cut off from traditional society and disappointed by the broken promise of the West, or the claim to independence, but either reject claims to independence outright (Rousseaux, 1952) or use this analysis to argue for a reform of colonial rule, not its abolition (Ollivier, 1955). A number of critics nonetheless conveyed the socio-political themes of Maghribi writing neutrally or even favourably. Writing in the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, Boussinot (1955) analysed the doomed

love affair between a Tunisian and a Frenchwoman in Memmi's *Agar* as a critique of the colonial system. The *Figaro Littéraire* critic fully acknowledged Chraïbi's critique of the colonial process in *De tous les horizons* when he described "these uprooted people who refuse to integrate into a civilisation that oppresses them" (M., 1958). Sénac (1956) not only considered Kateb's *Nedjma* with reference to the Nouveau Roman and the novels of Dib and Memmi, but also clearly showed how its energy arises from Kateb's solidarity with the cause of Algerian independence. French critics in the 1960s continued to convey the political and social themes of Maghribi novels, which concerned oppressive patriarchal structures or the post-independence regimes. Only a few critics insisted on these aspects, perhaps as a way of exonerating French colonialism (Duranteau, 1969). Others praised the literary qualities of the novels and the seriousness of their analyses (Revel, 1969; Sorin, 1967; Estang, 1969). Critics also found it easier to recognise Kateb's project of representing the Algerian nation in *Le polygone étoilé*, published after independence, than when reviewing *Nedjma* during the war Estang (1966); Gorin (1966).

Purpose of the literary form

The reviews of *Le polygone étoilé* by Estang and Gorin raise a further issue in the response to the political implications of Maghribi and Caribbean novels. Both reviews associate the novel's attempt to represent Algeria with its peculiar form. The purposeful use of experimental literary forms to express social or political aspirations represents a union between the realms of culture and politics that might not be recognised by critics, who were for the most part unresponsive to experimentation in Caribbean literature and sometimes misinterpreted formal experiments within Maghribi literature, as we have seen.

A sizeable minority of critics nonetheless recognised the links between the writers' aesthetic projects and their social or political vision. In other words, they

acknowledged the deliberation of the literary experiments in which Caribbean and Maghribi writers engaged. Gorin (1966) related the mix of "history and legend, chronicle and myth" in *Le polygone étoilé* to Kateb's need to renew and build up a necessarily contradictory and painful relation to his fatherland after the rupture of colonisation and showed that this corresponds to the need of all Algerians. He interpreted the book's fragmentary form as both reaching through the ages of Algerian history and representing all the different figures that make up the nation. Estang (1966), meanwhile, associated the undefined form of the novel with Kateb's freedom in retelling the epic of Algerian history. Many English reviewers criticised the form of Lamming's *Of Age and Innocence* but Nicholson (1958a) showed how its subplots serve to reinforce its main argument, although he did not dwell on its political points. He was also practically the only English reviewer to recognise that Selvon's work is deceptively simple, and only "apparently artless" (Nicholson, 1958a). Wilson Harris was criticised for his dense writing, as we have seen, but certain critics were more accepting of his project. West (1960) and Barker (1960) explained and justified the symbolism of *Palace of the Peacock*, although West insisted on the novel's difficulty. Barker took both an affirmative and a defensive position by giving a definition of mysticism as the ability to "see *more* [...] in the concrete, not less". Scott (1963) dedicated his review of *The Secret Ladder* to a general discussion of Wilson's first four novels grouped in a quartet. Sceptical about this qualification, he did see *The Secret Ladder* as "a restatement and a clarification" of *Palace of the Peacock* and acknowledged the intervening novels' usefulness in "conditioning the mind" to understand the significance of the fourth. Along with Barker and Playfair, he was willing to accept Harris's in-depth exploration of a single region as reaching out to the universal. He commented on the blend of biblical and local mythical references, while recognising that the engagement with landscape is a driving force in the novels, and concluded that although Harris's work is rooted in the West Indies, it should

not be situated restrictively within a regional conception of Caribbean literature: Harris should be considered a writer of talent in the realm of universal literature. This constitutes recognition of the autonomy of Caribbean literature, both formally and thematically while recognising its worth for the universal experience. Barker (1960) placed *Palace of the Peacock* alongside Western literature by making a favourable comparison with Rimbaud's *Le bateau ivre*. Playfair (1962) conveyed the novelist's intention of representing a specific region and its "legend" but also related *The Whole Armour* to its Western cultural influences, including the Bible, Gerald Manley Hopkins and William Blake. Again, these critics recognised the non-European and the European strands of Harris's work and the intimate links between its experimental form and its content. Most critics avoided discussing the political content and implications of the Maghribi and Caribbean works they encountered, and few recognised their specific Maghribi and Caribbean formal strands. There were, however, some critics who gave the novels a considered reading and were open to taking them on their own terms, while remaining attentive to literary quality.

5.6 Reception of the immigration novels

Reviews of the sub-group of novels about immigration reflect the trends identified in the reception of Maghribi and Caribbean literature in general. These novels received a varied reception, characterised in some cases by a documentary approach, but in others by a focus on literature which once again favours high-cultural criteria over the influence of popular culture. By and large, the critics were receptive to the novels' denunciation of the immigrant condition.

5.6.1 Influence of European conventions on the critics' approach

The reception of immigration novels reflects the tendency to an implicit demand for convergence with European conventions identified above. The opposition between the reception of the works of Naipaul and Lamming holds true for their novels about immigration. Having won the badge of "true novelist" with *Biswas* and successfully set a novel in Britain in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, Naipaul was by the mid-1960s accepted as an excellent writer, not merely a promising Caribbean writer. Jones (1967) appreciated the "dissolving technique" used in *The Mimic Men* for presenting memories and the description of characters. Green (1967) in the *Guardian* compared the novel to Chekhov for its sensibility, to Conrad for its politics and to Nabokov for its depiction of alienation. Not all reviews, however, were completely positive. The *Times* article noted the novel's engagement with the theme of writing but regretted its cold and distant tone (Caribbean and Aegean, 1967). Wilson (1967), who praised Naipaul as "a writer of exceptional accomplishment", thought the novel's bleak depiction of politicians who lacked belief resulted in the absence of a centre that would organise its ironies. All of the reviews engaged with *The Mimic Men*'s discussion of the colonial relation, noting its description of the feeling that everything real is to be found elsewhere, although Green denied that this alienation was specific to the colonial situation, citing Mark Twain as an example. The analysis of the colonial relation in Lamming's novels was not so readily accepted or commented on. Perhaps this is because Lamming's novel was published before the main period of decolonisation, unlike Naipaul's, or because Lamming's interrogations in *The Emigrants* are couched in discussions among uneducated characters using Caribbean popular speech, rather than in the voice of a university-educated politician like *The Mimic Men*'s Ralph Singh. In terms of literary form, Muir (1954) found fault with Lamming's shifts in narrative technique in *The Emigrants*, which he

felt came "at the expense of the reader", showing another instance of the demand for transparency in fiction. He did not connect the book's form with its theme. Other critics, as we will see, took a different view. The allegorical form of *Water With Berries* is somewhat easier to follow than the fragmented *The Emigrants*. Critics responded to this and commented on the beauty of its writing, although Shrapnel in the *Guardian* considered that it was too distanced to touch the reader. The *Times* critic conveyed the theme of exile in his review but felt that the still dense writing made the novel too elusive (Shrapnel, 1972a,b). The *TLS* critic situated the novel within Lamming's career and commented on its form in passing, but felt that it only offered a "simplistic formulation" of colonial relations.

The reception of the immigration novels by Chraïbi and Boudjedra can be interpreted in a similar way. Unlike Selvon or Lamming, these writers remained at a distance from their characters' rural pasts and used standard French: Chraïbi's narrator is eager to impress on the French reader that he is fluent in the idiom of civilisation, while Boudjedra's narrator compensates for his protagonist's illiteracy by parodying the most abstract literary style in recent French literary history as we have seen (p.84). Rather than obviously introducing Arabic and Maghribi words, concepts or proverbs into their writing, both writers engaged in high literary techniques related to Western avant-garde or modernist literature (Faulkner, the Nouveau Roman). According to Bonn, this literary strategy may be the reason why their novels received attention from French critics. He signals that, by contrast, novels by Farès and Bourboune dealing with the immigrant experience received little attention because they did not demonstrate "allegiance" to European literary conventions. Their brand of literary experimentation, like Lamming's or Harris's, paid little attention to European strictures. Bonn also argues that *L'Homme qui enjamba la mer* was neglected by French critics because of its truculence and its appropriation of the metropolis. I have already

noted the difference in attitude between this novel, which incorporates the movements asserting immigrant rights in 1970s France, and those of Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun, which ignore these developments and conform to the miserabilist, compassionate standard representations of immigrants (chapter 4.4). Considering the bias in favour of European literary forms and a prescriptive attitude to the theme of immigration which I discuss below, it is probable that Bonn's analysis is correct.

Selvon's choice to use Caribbean popular speech and Caribbean popular forms as tools for his own literary experimentation had consequences for his reception. English reviewers almost always remained somewhat condescending about Selvon's novels, even when they gave positive reviews. Hopkinson (1956) entirely overlooked the subtle treatment of laughter and promiscuity in *The Lonely Londoners* as flimsy protections from the hardship of the immigrant condition, taking the narration at face value and suggesting the "lonely Londoners" were just like tourists, and "far from lonely". Although Hopkinson also noted the "engaging oddity" and "poetic undertones" of Selvon's language, he called it "Basic English" reminiscent of Uncle Remus and found the book too loosely-structured to qualify as a novel. Few reviewers recognised Selvon's experimentation for what it was.[8] In the 1950s Nicholson qualified *Turn Again Tiger* as "apparently artless but beautifully formed" (Nicholson, 1958b). Freeman (1956) was puzzled by the form of *The Lonely Londoners* but felt it conveyed "a rich, comic humanity" and,

[8]Ironically, while most reviewers failed to recognise the constructed nature of the "dialect" Selvon used from *Lonely Londoners* on, the *Spectator*'s reviewer complained it was "a trick rather than the author's authentic voice" (New novels, 1956). In this case, the reviewer's framework of interpretation, based on the lyrical notion of personal expression, does not allow him to recognise the performative quality of the narration. It is exactly right that the narrator's voice in *The Lonely Londoners* is not Selvon's. He has admitted in interviews that *An Island is a World* is the novel that most closely approaches his personal attitude (Thieme and Dotti, 2003). Selvon used calypso as a formal framework for *The Lonely Londoners* (see Fabre, 1977); this form relies heavily, as Rohlehr (2004) has shown, on the importance of masking and performativity. The *Lonely Londoners* narrator's focus on anecdotes and humour corresponds to the posture of one who refuses to acknowledge or be overwhelmed by the hardship of immigrant life. A lyrically expressive and reflective voice would not be appropriate for such an exploration of the immigrant experience.

although her description of its language as "curious" denotes typical condescension and misrecognition of Selvon's linguistic prowess, she recognised the novel's convergence with modernist techniques, citing resemblances with Joyce's *Ulysses* in the passage praising Spring. Even in the 1970s, only one critic took his work seriously: Cunningham (1975) forcefully asserted Selvon's value as a comic writer, but her insistence on his use of "one of the most civilised of literary weapons", irony, makes her sound defensive. Huth (1975), meanwhile, lazily recounted incidents from *Moses Ascending* and called its language "easy on the ear". In a number of cases, then, critics' conceptions about literature and their inability to recognise challenging non-European aesthetics as interesting prevented them from properly engaging with the themes of the immigration novels or even with their literary experimentation.

Aversion for political themes

A few more reviews also reflect the strand, especially in English criticism, that downplayed socio-political content and concentrated on literary aspects. Calder-Marshall, as in his other reviews of Caribbean writing, neutralised the reflection on Caribbean identity in *The Emigrants*. His comments concerned the deadening effects of excessive philosophising, in which he saw the influence of the French existentialists, and which he felt ruined what should have been an interesting book because it sought to represent a subject that was new in literature (Calder-Marshall, 1954). Several critics chose to link the novels' themes to "universal" concerns, with the result of downplaying their specific accusations. Mauriac (1975), while he recognised the imperative for an intellectual to speak for his people at the time, and concluded on the significance of the theme of racism, nevertheless situated Boudjedra's literary quest, including his critique of racism, within experimental literature's search for ways to "materialise [...] this invisible, this unspeakable [aspect] that lines, as if by a shadow or an echo more real

than it is, the so-called real world." Jennings (1954) felt that *The Emigrants* had "a wider significance" to do with "the deepest human sympathies" rather than the nationalist drive. In France, the tone of Poirot-Delpech's review suggested that he sympathised with Boudjedra's denunciation of racism but he minimized the notion of an Algerian pleading the cause of oppressed Algerians. Instead, he highlighted Boudjedra's Western cultural baggage and the novel's critique of Western industrial society, a warning to its French citizens as much as to its Algerian denizens (Poirot-Delpech, 1975). Jennings and Poirot-Delpech seem to have felt that immigration was not a worthy enough subject to hold European readers' attention and that another point of attraction had to be found. This can be contrasted to a group of reviews, discussed below, which also took such a literature-centred approach, but did not ignore the novels' politics.

5.6.2 Focus on authenticity and prescriptiveness

Other critics took the opposite view, opining that immigration commanded interest in its own right. Some, whether they considered immigration a pressing issue or not, approached novels on this topic with a demand for authenticity. As in the case of Maghribi and Caribbean writing in general, reviewers considered that novels on immigrants by writers belonging to the same ethnic or regional group could offer a view "from the inside". Even those who acknowledged that the writers did not belong to the same class as the immigrants they depicted insisted on this aspect. Rousseaux, for instance, asserts that an "Arab and Muslim solidarity" drove Chraïbi to write his novel even though he had a university education (Rousseaux, 1955; see also Prasteau, 1955). Associated with the notion that literature can be a better approach to human and social problems than sociological or political works because it incorporates emotion, this approach resulted in praise for the various novels (Jennings, 1954; Richardson, 1956; Cunningham, 1975). In this vein, some reviewers were sensitive to the way Selvon and Ben

Jelloun used language and considered that it enhanced the emotional and human content of the novels (Freeman, 1956; Stil, 1976; Mauriac, 1976; Bott, 1976).

The reviewers' insistence on authenticity also betrays some preconceived ideas about immigrants. Critics were more prescriptive about the representation of immigrants than about the content of novels set in the Caribbean or the Maghrib. In Britain, the perception of the figure of the immigrant shifted from students to workers then back. In 1956 a reviewer of *The Lonely Londoners* felt that the novel's representation of "the adaptable poor" gave a more accurate depiction than previous novels focusing on students (New novels, 1956). Five years later, another reviewer welcomed the shift in *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* back from workers to a middle-class, student figure (Shrapnel, 1960). Nevertheless, the reception of Salkey's novel demonstrates a normative view of immigration. Most critics disliked Salkey's attempt to shift the question of identity from ethnic or political aspects to a more personal interrogation relating to sexual orientation (New fiction, 960c; Amis, 1960; Coleman, 1960). Only one critic welcomed this shift from the "colour bar" to a "human problem" (Waterhouse, 1960). In France, the novels for the most part fulfilled the expected image of the immigrant as an isolated, illiterate, single, male factory or construction worker. Deviations were not easily accepted: Chraïbi's inclusion of an educated character, a writer, displeased Coiplet in *Le Monde*, who complained that he couldn't "interest himself in the plight of the unadapted intellectual, Yalann Waldik. [...] The true subject was the misery of the Arab workers" (Coiplet, 1955).

Encroachment of preconceptions about immigration

The encroachment of extra-literary issues on the work of literary critics is revealed in this prescriptive attitude. Several critics made clear their opinion that immigration was an important issue and for some of them this concern superseded the literary aspects of the novel, whether they viewed those literary aspects

positively or negatively. Dabydeen (2000) has shown how the *Times* review of *The Lonely Londoners* demonstrated the critic's view that, immigration being an important social issue, Selvon had a duty to give a positive representation of immigrants (New fiction, 956b). Richardson's complaint that the novel shows "hustlers" rather than immigrants in the workplace and the *Guardian* reviewer's praise of the novel for not being depressing might be seen in the same light. (Richardson, 1956; New fiction, 956a). Some reviewers of Chraïbi's *Les Boucs* also took the view that this novel did not do justice to the important subject it broached: the *Express* reviewer felt he was flippant, jumping on a bandwagon. More benevolently, Byatt (1965) also suggested Selvon was jumping on a bandwagon and "exploit[ing] West Indian charm for an alien audience" in *The Housing Lark*. Coiplet, as we have seen, thought Chraïbi's literary experimentation and focus on an educated character were counterproductive and obscured the theme of the misery of Algerian workers (Sombre fureur, 1955; Coiplet, 1955). (Kadra-Hadjadji, 1986, 83) quotes reviews from literary journals voicing similar opinions in her overview of the reception of *Les Boucs*. In a similar vein, the *TLS* critic situated *Water With Berries* within Lamming's career and conceded that the Barbadian author "writes very well" but complained that he was rehashing old ideas and that discussions of the colonial experience should progress beyond the "simplistic formulation" that "colonialism was not nice" (Storm-tossed, 1972). The theme of immigration might also be seen to compensate for a novel's faults. Borg (1969) found Salkey's *Catullus Kelly* confused but redeemed by its subject's worthiness, and went on to relay the novel's interrogations about the ambiguous and blocked position of Caribbean immigrants in Britain.

This assessment in terms of a moral judgment on the appropriateness of the novels' treatment of a social situation outside the literary world seems to have been more widespread in France, where the novels were immediately viewed in this light. In the 1970s, by contrast, the reception of Lamming and Selvon was less

influenced by social considerations on the condition of immigrants. This reflects the differences between the novels and between the French and British contexts. Boudjedra's and Ben Jelloun's pleas for compassion for the solitary, uneducated worker in the building industry corresponded with contemporary agitation for immigrants' rights that made it an issue for compassionate interest in France, even though the novels excluded both this agitation and the emerging phenomena associated with immigration, such as settlement and the formation of diasporic communities (see chapter 4). On the contrary, Lamming and Selvon were moving away from conventional representations of immigrants: Lamming, by focusing on artists and an allegorical interpretation of the colonial relation; Selvon, by exploring the settlement process, which (as in France) had not yet become a publicly discussed issue.

5.6.3 Well-rounded reviews

It is difficult to reproach a focus on non-literary issues when the novels in question addressed an obviously topical theme. The purpose of this chapter has been to identify the audience's response to the novels' intention to affect French and British responses to immigrants and combat prejudice and discrimination. With the exception of Selvon, who always denied political intent in his literary work, the novelists I study intended, at least in part, to touch their European audience. To some extent, their novels were not just artistic endeavours but also attempts to ameliorate the widespread racism and discrimination facing immigrants. As we have seen, a number of critics responded in those terms, but their well-defined, normative views on immigration prevented them from judging the novels on their own terms, as novels. Another group of critics considered the novels' themes in relation to their literary form.

Richardson (1954) noted the interrogation of identity in Lamming's *The Emigrants* but did not analyse it. Hodgart went further in identifying the nationalist

aspects of Lamming's novel: "the total effect is of a people in turmoil" the plight of the West Indian people in their struggle to become a nation" (Hodgart, 1954). She began her review by recognising that the confusion in the novel deliberately reflected the "central experience" of immigrants; it showed the disappointed expectations and the confinement of immigrants in a "sordid half-world". Similarly, Jennings (1954) praised Lamming's ability to transfer *The Emigrants*' experience to readers through his writing: to do this "without [...] arousing disgust" showed his "extraordinary hypnotic power", she argued, although this did not preclude criticism of the density and melodrama of the novel's second half. Rousseaux (1955), unlike Coiplet and the *Express* critic who rejected Chraïbi's experimental fiction, argued that the nonlinear narration in *Les Boucs* served the novelist's intention of "project[ing] into our sensibility [...] the whole horror of an inhuman state [...] in the total intensity of the instant and the memory". Leonardini, writing in the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, drove home Boudjedra's critique of the exploitation of Maghribi immigrants and linked it to colonialism, praising the purposeful adequacy of the writing for its subject in a revolt against the coloniser.

5.7 Conclusion

Reviews of immigration novels reflected all the tendencies of the wider reception in France and Britain of Maghribi and Caribbean writing respectively. Some critics avoided discussing the novels' socio-political themes and focused on literary aspects. This attitude sometimes limited critics in their analysis as they refused or were unable to see outside the norms of European literature. Among those critics who did recognised the novels' accusations regarding racism, poor living conditions and the influence of the colonial relation, some took a reductive approach whereby the socially important subject took precedence over all

other aspects of the novels, to the detriment of a recognition of the writers' freedom. Only a handful of critics took a balanced approach, examining the novels' themes in light of their form and seeing how form and content informed each other to achieve the author's purpose of touching the European audience. Still fewer conveyed the novelists' comments on the colonial relation when these were present.

Conclusion

Caribbean and Maghribi writers took a variety of approaches to the theme of the colonial and post-colonial immigrant worker to the metropolis in the post-World War II period. Differences among Maghribi writers and among Caribbean writers are as great as differences between Caribbean and Maghribi writing in this respect. Lamming, Kateb and Chraïbi focus on the colonial relation in a serious tone, but the former two associate this with a vision of the role of the artist in the development of the independent nation, whereas no project of anti-colonial cultural nationalism is discernible in Chraïbi's novel. Moreover, the works of the three authors deploy fragmentation and a complex structure to quite different ends: Chraïbi uses flashbacks to emphasise the hardship his protagonist endures and the dashing of his hopes, and to debunk the myth of the colonial civilising mission (see 1.1.2); in *Le polygone étoilé*, Kateb accumulates fragments of different genres, from poetry to history textbooks and newspaper cuttings, to build up a representation of the facets of the independent Algerian nation; and Lamming seeks through abrupt transitions between different scenes to evoke in the reader the disorientation of the life of the immigrant. Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun both situate colonialism as part of the wider oppressive structure of industrial capitalism but Ben Jelloun's emphasis on sensibility and feeling contrasts with Boudjedra's abstract musings on technology and the city. Selvon is alone in choosing comedy as the main mode in which he addresses the subject, while Mengouchi and Ramdane delve into speculative fiction and fantasy.

Some broad similarities in approach can nevertheless be identified among all

the writers studied here. All denounce the poor living conditions and the mistreatment, discrimination and racial violence targeting the colonial and post-colonial immigrant in the imperial metropolis. It is not the excitement and richness of cultural mixing which is foregrounded in Caribbean and Maghribi novels depicting immigration to the metropolis before the 1980s. The hardship suffered through poverty and racism are, for the most part, the overriding impression the novels convey. Overwhelmingly, the act of migration is figured as equivalent to walking into a trap, sometimes a deadly one. This is partly a consequence of the novelists' analysis of the colonial relation: the promises of migration and civilisation are, for the most part, exposed as illusions. Not only will the immigrants never be allowed to fully participate in the prosperity of the metropolis or be accepted as equals, but for the Maghribi novelists the experience of the metropolis gives the lie even to the aspirations involved in the migration impulse: the metropolis created by the system of industrial capitalism cannot be desirable; it can only be an evil environment where exploitation governs human relations and all are crushed by the unnatural demands of the system of production and consumption. This focus on power relations in the experience of the immigrant takes into account the history of the relationships between the sending and receiving countries: the writers place migration from the Caribbean to Britain and from North Africa to France in the context of colonial history, although not all foreground it to the same degree. Lamming and Chraïbi, writing in the years immediately preceding the historical moment of decolonisation, focus on the imposition of the coloniser's cultural norms, leading to a fascination with the centre of empire, as the primary causes of the migration movement and present this as damaging and incompatible with the values and cultural forms of the colonised populations of the Caribbean and Maghrib. Kateb and Selvon take a more nuanced view: the former refuses exclusionary definitions of personal, cultural and national identity,

refusing to discount the similarities between coloniser and colonised, between Algeria and France. The latter acknowledges his characters' excitement at living in the metropolis as something more than mere alienation and recognises their cultural agency in changing the environment they find themselves in, in however small ways. The novelists do not focus on hardship for its own sake but in order to respond to discourses influenced by the colonial condition through literary techniques.

Distinctions in the approach of Caribbean and Maghribi novels about colonial and post-colonial immigrants become starker in the 1970s. Lamming, in 1971, restated and refined his analysis of the influence of colonialism on relations between Caribbean immigrants and the British. He and Selvon approach the subject in very different tones but from the point of view of race relations. By contrast, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun, while denouncing racism and racial violence, analyse the situation of immigrants as part of an economic system. Lamming, through his re-visiting of the story of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in *Water With Berries* and Selvon, revisiting *Robinson Crusoe* through the relationship between Moses and his illiterate white tenant Bob in *Moses Ascending*, engage with Western narratives of the European conquest of the Caribbean. They use these narratives of how European 'civilisation' deals with the 'savages' it encounters to frame the relationship between Caribbean immigrants and British natives in London. Relations are reversed over and over, as the Afro-Caribbean Moses teaches Bob to read but is displaced from his top floor apartment and returns to a basement room in *Moses Ascending*, and the initiators of violent aggression in *Water With Berries* are alternatively Englishmen then African slaves in the Caribbean in the story Teeton hears on Hampstead Heath, and Englishmen and Caribbean immigrants in Britain. Such reversals point to the continued influence of the psychological and cultural relationship between coloniser and colonised in the 1970s and its impact on the situation of immigrants. Ben Jelloun and Boudjedra are, instead,

concerned with French society as an industrial society and situate racism and colonialism within the broader structures of exploitation involved in the system of industrial capitalism. For Boudjedra, the rhythms of city life and the society of consumption, symbolised by omnipresent advertising campaigns, oppress all of the city's inhabitants. The French, harassed by this life which allows them no freedom and the hyper-rational urban environment symbolised by the metro, which bans spontaneity, turn on the immigrants to vent their frustration. This reaction is enabled by the history of colonialism, but continues because of the socioeconomic system in post-war France. In Ben Jelloun's novel, the logic of profit and exploitation contained in industrial capitalism is the foundation for the stripping of immigrants' dignity and the denial of their emotional dimension, which allow the French to treat them as disposable machines. The different focus is not simply a consequence of the passing of time into a post-independence period in which neocolonial patterns of economic domination emerged as enduring, but also perhaps pertains to the different patterns of employment of Caribbean and Maghribi immigrants. The latter were, and had traditionally been, predominantly employed in building work and heavy industries such as mining, steel and metallurgy, or automobile construction (Simon, 2000, 2002). Moreover, in the period after the events of 1968 in France, the domination of Marxist and French-Maoist intellectual discourses and the large number of industrial disputes in the early 1970s focused the attention on the workers' struggle and may have encouraged such a frame of reference. The contrast in approaches in the 1970s nevertheless reflects the split identified by Castles et al. (1984) in the early 1980s. They observed that in Britain, social sciences discourses on immigrants focused on the theme of race relations, whereas in Europe the notion of "guest workers" dominated, which translated into an economic approach to studies on migration. Their book, *Here For Good*, argued that this split in approaches concealed similarities in the issues raised by the settlement of immigrants in Britain and in continental

Europe, in that the British economy, no less than continental economies, became dependent on immigrant labour and that the rise in problems of race relations affected France and Germany no less than Britain.

We have seen that despite such differences, similarities in theme and technique unite the Maghribi and Caribbean novels of immigration. The novels relate the impulse to migrate to the situation created in colonial territories by the structures of dependency characteristic of colonialism and neocolonialism and to the psychological and cultural influence of the dominance of the coloniser. They also share an interest in the theme of mental breakdown and some use it to comment on the immigrant condition: for the protagonists of Lamming and Chraïbi, the process of becoming aware of the alienation inherent in trusting that their condition as colonised brings belonging in the French or English cultural sphere leads to psychotic episodes. For Ben Jelloun, psychic dissolution is a means of making clear the unbearable, inhuman costs of post-war French prosperity, which is based on the exploitation of immigrant workers. Caribbean and Maghribi novelists of immigration also share an ambivalent attitude to the notion of immigrant communities. Privileging return to the country of origin, neither Lamming nor Ben Jelloun succeeds in representing it, whereas Boudjedra and Selvon show the contradictions involved in the notion of return and the process of repatriation. In their different ways, Lamming, Ben Jelloun and Boudjedra refuse to engage with a process of settlement in France and Britain, whereas Selvon explores some of its difficulties. Finally, all of the novels examined in this dissertation take a male perspective that marginalises the experience of female immigrants or excludes it altogether.

The congruence of the novels' representation of immigrants with dominant discourses in contemporary social sciences brings us to interrogate the figure of the immigrant put forward in Caribbean and Maghribi novels of immigration. The

focus on poverty and racism, their roots in colonial history and in the exploitation inherent in the capitalist system, as well as the writers' recorded statements about their views on literature and their novels, indicate that the latter critique the situation of colonial and post-colonial immigrants. The intent to give a voice to the immigrants responds not only to colonial discourses on the colonised, as we have seen, but also to the negative construction of immigrants in French and British discourse as primitive, diseased, poor, and a danger to the national makeup (see Hinds, 2001; Gilroy, 2002; Noiriel, 2007; Wadia, 1999). The novels show the processes that maintain immigrant workers in poverty and deflate the exaltation of the European population in colonial discourse. By showing the violence targeting immigrants, by foregrounding the psychological damages resulting from the condition of colonial and post-colonial immigrants in Britain and France and, most importantly, by putting forward the immigrants' voice and their point of view on the environment surrounding them and the condition that is theirs, the novels challenge certain aspects of mainstream French and British views on non-European immigrant workers. They thus present the immigrants' sarcastic or annoyed responses to racism and ignorance, and succeed in restoring the dimensions of intelligence and emotional life that are absent from documentary accounts of immigration.

The immigrant in these novels still emerges, however, as a solitary and powerless figure, part of dysfunctional communities, whose project of bettering his life is not accomplished except in rare cases. Moreover, the majority of the writers seem unable or unwilling to consciously challenge the construction of the immigrant's presence as temporary and the continued presence of Caribbean and Maghribi immigrants in Britain and France in the 1970s is presented as an entrapment. To a large extent, the immigrant in these novels is denied agency. Selvon is an exception here, as are Mengouchi and Ramdane: using the figure of the trickster, their novels present provocative characters who refuse to conform

to European social norms. But the successes and agency of their characters are ambiguous. The humour of Selvon's characters does not relieve the stasis of their lives and the narrator's critique of the dreamer's attitude in *The Housing Lark*, as well as Moses's discomfiture at the end of *Moses Ascending*, call attention to the inefficacy of the trickster paradigm in ensuring real advancement in Britain. Mengouchi and Ramdane, meanwhile, must resort to speculative fiction in order to present a positive ending to the immigrants' sojourn in France. The characters' immediate flight across the sea undoes their newly gained power, and the exaggeration of the fantasy in fact highlights the novelists' disenchantment with the reality in France.

This prevalence of a negative figure of the immigrant as defeated brings us back to the issue of representation. As we have seen, the writers' political convictions and views on literature, as well as their statements about the novels studied here, demonstrate that they intend to intervene in the public debate on immigration through their novels, and that they intend to do so on the side of the immigrants. This means that their representations both "speak about" and "speak for" colonial and postcolonial immigrants (see above, p.16). As Spivak's analysis of this nuance reminds us, there are ethical implications to this choice (Spivak, 1988; Spivak, 1999, 258-264). Do these postcolonial intellectuals and writers render themselves transparent, ignoring the power relationships that may exist between the immigrants and them? In appropriating their voices, do they substitute themselves to the immigrants? If so, what is the effect of the way they inflect the representations they offer according to their own concerns and agendas?

Kateb, Lamming and Selvon were relatively close, in terms of class and lifestyle, to the characters they depict, but they also had access to alternative networks of socialisation through their literary connections. Chraïbi, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun, on the other hand, were educated members of the middle classes

of their respective countries; their contacts with immigrant workers, which provided material for their novels, took place in the particular, somewhat artificial contexts of interviews (Prasteau, 1955), literacy classes (Boudjedra, 1975b) and psycho-sexual counselling (Ben Jelloun, 1997a). The techniques of response to the coloniser's discourses analysed in chapter 2 include quite a literal use of the voice of the immigrant by writers who were not "ordinary immigrants". In this, the writers studied here do appropriate this voice. Yet this does not put them in the same situation as the Indian elites who advocated the practice of widow-burning in nineteenth-century India (Spivak, 1988, 297-98). The novelists stand to profit from their use of the theme in their literary careers but cannot be said to oppress the immigrants. Nevertheless, Chraïbi, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun have all been accused of substituting the concerns of the intellectual to those of the working-class immigrant in their novels, thus betraying those they claimed to represent (Coiplet, 1955; Benarab, 1994, 96-100; Bonn, 1994, 50; Ibrahim, 1997, 11). Seen from the perspective of the notion of appropriating the voice, however, the gestures of Chraïbi and Boudjedra begin to make more sense. In *Les Boucs* and *Topographie*, the voice calling out to the reader is that of the educated immigrant, present in the novel as a foil for the author. This insertion serves to situate Chraïbi and Boudjedra as the in-between intellectuals, aware of but somewhat separate from the non-modern and traditional aspects of the Maghrib, and conversant with modernity and Western culture. In this, they avoid rendering themselves transparent. That the immigrant worker himself is hardly heard in these two novels also means that Chraïbi and Boudjedra precisely do not operate an appropriation: recognising the opacity of the rural or illiterate or non-Francophone Maghribi immigrant, they let his presence stand in their novels but do not explain him away (on opacity, see Glissant, 1990, 204; and discussion by Britton, 1999, 18-25).

So far my discussion is implicitly based on the notion of subaltern, which

is the foundation for Spivak's framing of the issue of representation. Moore-Gilbert shows the aporias involved in Spivak's definition of that figure, who is supposedly outside the economic structures of modernity, which may compromise the notion of the subaltern as oppressed: in this definition, "the subaltern seems at times not to be part of the global economy at all and, to a considerable degree, escapes its determinations" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, 101). It is clear that the Maghribi immigrants are not subalterns in this sense, as the economic structures of modernity cause immigration in the first place. They originate, however, from the margins of such structures and the inability to speak French, or read and write at all, is widespread among them. They are treated as subaltern figures in the novels because of the supposition that, as a consequence of this, they are likely to face difficulties in gaining representation (in the political sense) in the French public realm. The Caribbean migrants are not exactly in the same situation: all of them are in-between figures in that the Caribbean does not have a fully-fledged alternative culture or society that can be construed as remaining outside modernity, and all West Indian immigrants to Britain would understand, and the vast majority speak, read and write, English. Nevertheless, Lamming and Selvon also introduce foils for themselves the characters of aspiring writers who feel somewhat separate from the other immigrants: Collis (*The Emigrants*) and Moses (*The Lonely Londoners* and, especially, *Moses Ascending*). Having established their situation in relation to their subjects (something that Ben Jelloun does not achieve to the same extent: the figure of the student in his novel is not prominent enough to serve this role), to what uses do the novelists proceed to put immigrant voice they have claimed? For, if Boudjedra and Chraïbi do not speak about or assimilate the immigrant worker, they still claim to speak for him.

The novelists use their position in-between their own culture and that of the coloniser to "write back" to colonial discourse and mainstream discourses on immigration (Ashcroft et al., 1989). They use the European form of the novel but

modify it to their own ends, refusing to restrict its use to realist prose (Lamming, Kateb and Ben Jelloun); using an apolitical modernist style in order to make socially and politically significant statements (Boudjedra); or forcing standard English onto an equal plane with other forms of English (Selvon). They also oppose their own gaze and their own voice to those of the coloniser, submitting the metropolis to a critical scrutiny that deflates the latter's superior position. They do not, however, conceal the fact that this situation of textual empowerment does not equate with true amelioration for real immigrants. The writers' focus on depicting material difficulties and constraining power relations is a useful reminder that the processes of settlement and cultural mixing are fraught and ambivalent. Maghribi and Caribbean novelists of colonial and post-colonial immigration to the metropolis seek to contribute to the representation of the point of view of immigrants in the debates constructing immigration as problematic. Their representation of a voice of the immigrant serves to introduce certain themes they felt were overlooked in existing discourses on immigrants. Lamming, Chraïbi and Selvon, in their own ways, seek to remind British and French readers of the unacknowledged colonial roots of their "way of seeing" (Lamming, 2005, 56); Kateb, Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun put forward an analysis of the deep and pervasive roots of exploitation in the social system and Ben Jelloun and Mengouchi and Ramdane highlight the emotional dimension of the situation. The writers' representations, then, challenged important aspects of the figure of the immigrant constructed by French and British discourses. But in doing so, they elided certain important dimensions of the immigrant experience, including the forms of agency that did exist (see Hinds, 2001, 125-155; Abdallah, 2000). Ben Jelloun, as we have seen, is a prime example, in that he raises the possibility of political action but forecloses it by inverting in his novels the developments in militancy that occurred in France (see above, p.180). It is possible that Ben Jelloun, who consciously had a French audience in mind for his novel (El Kortobi

and Abdallah, 1979), felt that representing political activism by immigrants in France might risk provoking a negative reaction in his readers, and was therefore counter-productive. Similarly, Lamming, concentrating wholly on the project of cultural renewal in the Caribbean, neglects the many ways in which Caribbean immigrants were asserting their place in Britain through campaigns and other organisations. Again, Selvon is the exception in this respect, though his representations of house-buying alliances and the Black Power movement are ambiguous. Despite the possible purposes for such elisions, the dominance of a figure of the immigrant as defeated in these novels is troubling.

The novelists also reproduced other aspects of existing representations of immigrants. The dismissal or blindness to processes of settlement is one; the silencing of women, related to the refusal to engage with settlement, is another. If the immigrant worker is treated as a subaltern in these novels, then the female immigrant is truly the subaltern in that the writers do not even think it necessary to address her concerns. Later novels on this subject would take these additional perspectives of female experience and settlement. In the 1980s writers emerged who had been born in Britain and France of Caribbean or Maghribi parents respectively, or had moved there as children. They wrote about this distinct experience of the children of immigrants, characterised by a theoretical double belonging sometimes revealed as more ambiguous than actualised, as in Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985; see also Begag, 1986; Belghoul, 1986; Charef, 1983). Their novels focused on the complicated issue of cultural identity for members of minorities. These might identify with aspects of both their parents' culture and of the mainstream society in the country they grew up in. They might perhaps also realise that identification with the mainstream was unworkable because of racism and that they also had to negotiate the ambiguities of identification with a "land of origin" they might not know. These writers also depict the communities into which the immigrants integrate: Begag's evocation of the life of the

shantytown near Lyons where he grew up gives an image of family life that was missing from the novels by earlier writers on North African immigrants in France. Women have also been better represented in later novels about the experience of immigration both as characters and as writers: some of the earliest novels about the children of immigrants were written by women (Riley, Belghoul), and male writers attempted to explore this aspect of the experience as well: Ben Jelloun's third foray into the immigration experience, *Les Yeux baissés* (1991), would have as its main character a young girl growing up in France but with links to her parents' village in Morocco. Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985) and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004), meanwhile, return to the period of the 1950s to imaginatively explore the lives of women immigrants from the Caribbean. Finally, Beryl Gilroy, who had published an autobiography in the 1970s, spans these various categories in that her novels focus on families, the experience of female immigrants, and multiple generations. The comparison I have attempted in this dissertation could usefully be extended to cover these novels addressing the moment of settlement.

It is also possible to extend the study beyond the figure of the working-class immigrant. Other novels of the period were excluded from this study for reasons of space, balance and manageability. Their concerns in representing an immigrant experience in the country of the coloniser or former coloniser may in fact be similar to those of the novels studied here, though the inflections they give could bring enlightening contrasts to the novels studied here. Naipaul, in his concern for the particular cultural subject-position of the Caribbean immigrant in relation to Britain, makes an important statement about the consequences of the civilising mission but his perspective is quite different from that given by Lamming and Chraïbi. Similarly, the novels of Farès and Bourboune may counterbalance the binary oppositions offered by Ben Jelloun and Boudjedra, as the

former explores friendships between Algerian and French characters and the commitment to the liberation struggle, while the latter stresses the main characters' intimate, if conflictual, relationship with Paris and criticises what he sees as the failure of the revolution at home. Finally, the novels of Taos Amrouche represent a Maghribi woman in a relationship with a French man, quite an exceptional case in a climate in which the opposite configuration was more common. More importantly, both of her novels explore the heroines' sense of exile and their desire for unity in the face of fragmentation born of knowing two cultures. In this, her novels might present a valuable counterpoint to those of Chraïbi, Lamming, and Naipaul.

A number of studies have explored the theme of immigration in French-language Maghribi fiction, or in English-language Caribbean fiction, usually taking into account the two moments of arrival and settlement (Benarab, 1994). They often examine these bodies of work in relation to works by members of other immigrant groups, within either Britain or France, but usually the analysis is restricted to the national boundaries of the destination country and to the language sphere of one former colonising power (Innes, 2002; Procter, 2003; Stein, 2004; Albert, 2005). This dissertation has suggested some fruitful parallels in examining the writing of colonial and postcolonial immigration on both sides of the Channel. The comparative focus on Caribbean and Maghribi writing about immigration allows the assessment of similarities in insider-outsider views of two European countries and former colonising powers. In the changing context of globalisation where formal political imperialism is no longer the order of the day, and in which new powers take their stand in the networks of economic, financial and military modes of global dominance, these bodies of work provide insight into the enduring legacy of European colonialism in the contemporary world. They root the situation of non-European immigrants and their descendants, in a Europe whose societies become increasingly focused on an ethnicised vision of the

nation in the context of globalisation, in the particular relationships constructed under the ideology of colonialism. The scrutiny of the insider-outsider as sardonic trickster circulating the city and deflating high discourses also provides an entry into a project of decolonisation of the metropolis.

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L'illusoire 'meilleure chance' : Le travailleur immigré dans la fiction maghrébine en langue française et la fiction caribbéenne en langue anglaise, 1948-1979

6.1 Introduction

Durant la période de reconstruction qui suit la seconde guerre mondiale, la France et la Grande-Bretagne recrutent des travailleurs immigrés en grand nombre. La majorité d'entre eux vient du Sud et de l'Est de l'Europe, mais un nombre non négligeable vient aussi des empires coloniaux. Pour la première fois, un contact entre les colonisateurs et les colonisés se produit à grande échelle hors du territoire des colonies, bien que de petites populations provenant des empires résident déjà en métropole avant le milieu du vingtième siècle. L'immigration n'est nouvelle dans aucun des deux pays. Mais l'une des caractéristiques des discours publics sur l'immigration est l'effacement de l'histoire : périodiquement,

elle est constituée en problème social apparemment sans conscience que des discours similaires ont été tenus sur des vagues d'immigration précédentes (Noiriel, 1988; Fryer, 1989). En France, cette amnésie sur l'immigration se combine à une amnésie à propos de l'empire à partir des années 1970s (Lemaire, 2005; Mills-Affif, 2004). Dans les deux pays, le discours sur l'immigration s'ethnicise ; celle-ci est présentée comme une menace pour le caractère culturel et les valeurs de la nation. Ceci conduit à un vide symbolique et idéologique concernant la place en France et en Grande-Bretagne des enfants des immigrés coloniaux et post-coloniaux arrivées entre les années 1950 et 1970, qui sont au contraire toujours suspectés de déloyauté envers leur pays de résidence (Bertrand et al., 2007; Gilroy, 2002; Lapeyronnie, 1993).

Cette période d'accélération de l'immigration après la seconde guerre mondiale est correspond à une période d'effervescence littéraire dans de nombreux territoires colonisés par les puissances européennes. Dans les années 1950, les écrivains des renaissances littéraires au Maghreb et dans les Caraïbes britanniques cherchent pour la plupart à donner une représentation littéraire de leurs sociétés de l'intérieur. L'émigration, phénomène économique et social majeur dans ces sociétés, a logiquement une place dans leurs œuvre, d'autant plus que beaucoup d'entre eux sont au nombre des migrants.

Cette thèse examine les romans traitant de l'immigration des Caraïbes vers la Grande-Bretagne et du Maghreb vers la France écrits et dont l'action se situe entre 1948 et 1979. Cette période correspond à une accélération dramatique de ces deux mouvements migratoires et à la stabilisation sur les sols français et britannique de populations d'origine maghrébine et antillaise respectivement. Elle se termine juste avant l'émergence sur la scène publique aussi bien au Royaume-Uni qu'en France de la présence de descendants d'immigrés antillais ou maghrébins. Les romans choisis pour cette étude ont les travailleurs immigrés pour principal sujet. Ces critères demandent certaines exclusions et inclusions. Certains romans

maghrébins comportent des sections importante sur l'immigration mais n'en font pas leur objet principal, ou bien ils traitent entièrement de l'immigration mais s'intéressent à des personnages n'appartenant pas à la classe ouvrière. Dans le cas où un auteur a écrit plusieurs œuvres sur l'immigration, ses autres œuvres sont prises en compte même si elles ne traitent pas de l'immigration ouvrière, pour évaluer l'évolution de la pensée de l'auteur. Peu de femmes publient à l'époque et celles qui le font ne parlent pas d'immigration ouvrière. Cependant, les attitudes des auteurs étudiés envers le vécu des femmes dans l'immigration seront examinées. La distinction opérée entre romans sur l'immigration ouvrière et romans traitant de l'expérience d'étudiants ou de membres des classes moyennes est quelque peu artificielle et n'est pertinente que dans la mesure où elle permet de délimiter un corpus équilibré et de taille raisonnable. Les principales œuvres étudiées sont les suivantes : *The Emigrants* (1954) et *Water With Berries* (1971), de George Lamming, et *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *The Housing Lark* (1965) et *Moses Ascending* (1975), de Samuel Selvon pour les romans antillais ; *Les Boucs* (1955) de Driss Chraïbi, *Le polygone étoilé* (1966) de Kateb Yacine, *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (1975) de Rachid Boudjedra, *La réclusion solitaire* (1976) de Tahar Ben Jelloun et *L'homme qui enjamba la mer* (1978) de Mengouchi and Ramdane du côté maghrébin.

Le point de départ de cette étude comparative est fondé sur la supposition qu'il existed des équivalences substantielles entre les phénomènes migratoires qui sont le sujet des romans, notamment à cause de la relation coloniale, mais aussi pour la place que prennent les immigrés de chaque groupe dans la société d'accueil (voir Castles et al., 1984; Lapeyronnie, 1993), et ce malgré les différences historiques, culturelles et dans le mode de colonisation et de décolonisation des Caraïbes et du Maghreb. Le travail comparatif ne porte donc pas sur la recherche d'influences croisées entre les écrivains mais cherche à déterminer si les similitudes entre les sujets des romans ont donné lieu à des similitudes dans le traitement

de ces sujets. Par conséquent, il était important de porter une grande attention aux différences qui existaient autant qu'aux similarités, et une approche fondée sur une lecture rapprochée des textes a été privilégiée. Les interprétations présentées dans cette thèse sont influencées par l'approche critique postcoloniale, qui s'intéresse aux conséquences du colonialisme européen discernables dans les processus économiques et culturels contemporains. Sur le plan littéraire, ceci inclut l'étude des discours colonialistes dans la littérature européenne ainsi que des contres-discours dans les littératures des pays anciennement colonisés (voir entre autres Ashcroft et al., 1989; Williams and Chrisman, 1994; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Bardolph, 2002; **?**). Les concepts utiles émergeant de l'ensemble des théories postcoloniales sont utilisés pour éclairer les romans, sans pour autant constituer le but de l'exercice.

Ces romans sur l'immigration ne représentent bien sûr pas l'expression des immigrants eux-mêmes. Ceux-ci, par leur engagement dans des associations et des actions politiques, ont su se faire entendre depuis les années 1960 et 1970. Mais, à l'exception de Selvon, les affirmations des écrivains indiquent qu'ils souhaitent intervenir dans le débat public sur l'immigration par ces œuvres, malgré la distinction qu'ils opèrent entre le monde politique et le monde littéraire. Ils mélangent ainsi les deux aspects de la représentation, artistique et politique. En représentant (dépeignant) les immigrés, ils entendent représenter (parler pour) les immigrés en s'adressant au public français et britannique (Spivak, 1988). Les lectures rapprochées présentées dans cette thèse se font donc dans le contexte des informations sociologiques et historiques disponibles à propos de ces mouvements migratoires, qui permettent d'appréhender la façon dont les auteurs modulent leurs représentations de l'immigration et d'interroger le sens des changements qu'ils effectuent. Quelles représentations les écrivains antillais et maghrébins offrent-ils des travailleurs immigrés dans l'après-guerre ? Dans quelle mesure ces représentations intègrent-elles la relation coloniale ? Existe-t-il des similitudes dans leurs

stratégies de représentation ? Et, s'ils se substituent à la parole des immigrés, quel effet cela a-t-il ?

Le premier chapitre s'intéresse aux moments de départs et d'arrivées dans les romans étudiés. Ceux-ci permettent de discerner les schémas d'intepretation du phénomène migratoire qui prévalent pour ces romanciers maghrébins et antillais, et notamment celui de la relation de domination, qui à l'époque coloniale est aussi bien culturelle qu'économique. L'arrivée marque une séparation nette entre le lieu d'origine et la métropole ; ils sont mis en une opposition que les auteurs maghrébins utilisent pour se positionner en-dehors du monde occidental et monter une critique radicale de la modernité européenne. Le deuxième chapitre s'intéresse à la mise en scène de la marginalisation des immigrés et son détournement pour répondre aux discours du colonisateur sur la civilisation européenne et la supériorité de la métropole à travers le point de vue narratif et la voix des narrateurs. Cependant, les femmes n'ont pas accès à ces techniques de réponse au colonisateur. De plus, la représentation de relations entre les immigrés maghrébins ou antillais et des femmes européennes blanches montre que les configurations tant sociales que psychologiques établies par le colonialisme ne sont pas aisément dépassées. Le troisième chapitre analyse l'utilisation qui est faite de la folie par Ben Jelloun, Lamming et Chraïbi pour présenter leurs analyses de la relation de domination entre immigrés et autochtones. Le quatrième chapitre s'intéresse non plus à la représentation des immigrés mais à la conception de l'immigration qui ressort de ces romans. Ils se conforment à la vision officielle de l'immigration comme temporaire et, à l'exception de Selvon, ont du mal à envisager l'installation des immigrés. Enfin, le cinquième chapitre étudie la réception des romans maghrébins en France et des romans antillais au Royaume-Uni.

6.2 Chapitre 1. Départs, voyages, arrivées

En évoquant le départ de leurs personnages pour la vie d'immigré, Lamming, Chraïbi, Selvon, Kateb, Boudjedra et Ben Jelloun donnent les raisons de cet acte. Les sciences sociales ont montré que divers facteurs déterminent la décision de migrer. Les « push factors », répulsifs et négatifs, encouragent le départ du pays d'origine ; les « pull factors »sont des facteurs positifs d'attraction vers le pays de destination. Ils peuvent être d'ordre économique, politique, culturel ou psychologique. Les romanciers dont on étudie les œuvres ici mettent tous en avant un sentiment de désespoir émanant de l'absence d'opportunités de progression économique ou de mobilité sociale aux Caraïbes ou au Maghreb, ce qui fonctionne comme un push factor, ainsi qu'une certaine fascination pour l'influence et le prestige de la destination choisie qui agit comme un pull factor en sus des perspectives économiques que cette destination est censée présenter. Les relations mises en place par la colonisation, en termes culturels aussi bien qu'économiques, sont à la racine des causes d'émigration présentées dans ces romans.

6.2.1 Départs

Désespoir

Sayad (1999) et Simon (2000) montrent que les politiques économiques menées en Algérie pendant la période coloniale ont conduit à l'émigration. L'absence de programme d'industrialisation conduisit à un défaut de croissance du marché de l'emploi alors même que la population « indigène »augmentait et perdait ses terres au profit des colons. La monétisation des circuits économiques et le chômage rendirent les villages de plus en plus dépendants de l'émigration. A intervalles d'environ une décennie, les protagonistes des romans de Chraïbi, Kateb, Ben Jelloun et Boudjedra quittent tous le Maghreb à cause de cette pauvreté omniprésente (voir par exemple : Kateb, 1997, 40, 57-58 ; Chraïbi, 1989, 181-182 ; Ben Jelloun, 1995,

78). De son côté, Lamming évoque la structure de dépendance économique à travers les exclamations de ses personnages, découvrant à leur arrivée à Londres les usines d'où proviennent les produits qu'ils achètent dans les îles (Lamming, 1980, 120-121). De plus, Lamming utilise les scènes de la traversée de l'Atlantique pour suggérer le sentiment de vide et de désespoir qui incitent à l'émigration. Les personnages cherchent tous une « meilleure chance »en allant en Grande-Bretagne, mais l'un d'eux révèle les raisons pour laquelle cette meilleure chance ne peut pas se trouver aux Caraïbes. Sa description d'une situation où « on finit là où on a commencé, nulle part », que l'on soit pauvre ou bien riche et éduqué, est une référence voilée au système colonial qui restreint la mobilité sociale (Lamming, 1980, 63-64).[9]

Les romans écrits dans les années 1970 prennent en compte les changements survenus du fait de l'indépendance, mais montrent la continuité existant entre les périodes coloniale et post-coloniale. Kateb comme Ben Jelloun montrent l'alliance entre les élites maghrébines et françaises qui fait durer l'exploitation des immigrés (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 13; 53 ; Kateb, 1999, 264-268). Les romans de Lamming et Selvon publiés dans les années 1970 ne s'interrogent plus sur les raisons du départ, mais Lamming rejoint tout de même Ben Jelloun en indiquant que les tendances répressives du régime indépendant sont une cause d'expatriation.

Attraits de la métropole

Bien que certains des écrivains mentionnent les perspectives d'emploi qui attirent les émigrés vers la métropole, les attraits de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne sont tout autres. Les puissances coloniales avaient utilisé l'idéologie de la mission civilisatrice non seulement pour justifier leur domination dans les esprits de certains critiques en métropole mais aussi pour convaincre les colonisés des

[9]Toutes les traductions de l'anglais sont de mon fait.

bienfaits de l'entreprise coloniale. En plus des progrès technologiques, les colonisateurs présentaient leurs réussites scientifiques, politiques et artistiques comme un sommet des accomplissements de l'humanité auquel tous devraient aspirer (Chafer and Sackur, 2002, 7-8). La relation coloniale se caractérisait donc par l'aliénation du colonisé à travers le dénigrement systématique de sa culture et de ses pratiques et l'éducation d'une élite colonisée, avec pour conséquence que cette dernière dédaignait les productions culturelles « indigènes », particulièrement aux Caraïbes (Lamming, 2005, 27). Ce sommet de civilisation restait néanmoins inaccessible aux colonisés, en partie par le fonctionnement des théories de la hiérarchie des races établies au dix-neuvième siècle (Young, 2001, 39-40). Les romans étudiés ici critiquent l'idéologie coloniale qui produit une fascination pour la métropole, en faisant une destination privilégiée pour les émigrés. Lamming et Chraïbi, chacun à leur façon, dépeignent l'internalisation de cette idéologie par les colonisés ayant reçu une éducation coloniale. Ils en montrent le fonctionnement pour provoquer une prise de conscience permettant de se libérer de l'illusion selon laquelle le colonisé appartient au monde culturel du colonisateur.

Par sa structure temporelle complexe et ironique, le roman de Chraïbi, *Les Boucs*, condamne la supercherie cachée dans la notion de mission civilisatrice. La scène finale montre un prêtre convaincant un jeune Algérien des meilleures perspectives d'éducation en France et se réjouissant de le voir projeter son départ vers la métropole. Les péripéties du roman ont pourtant montré que l'arrogance du prêtre, basée sur une conception française de la culture universelle, est précisément ce qui empêche que le jeune émigré puisse accéder à la protection qui est ainsi offerte, puisqu'elle est à la source du racisme qui frappe les immigrés et est le fait même de ceux qui se prétendent leurs protecteurs. La notion de mission civilisatrice est ainsi invalidée par la violence et les dures conditions de vie mises en avant par le roman.

Lamming, comme Chraïbi, analyse les conséquences terribles de l'illusion, produite par l'idéologie de la mission civilisatrice, qui mène le colonisé à partir pour la métropole dans l'illusion qu'il y a sa place. Ceci est présenté de façon allégorique à travers la relation entre le peintre antillais Teeton et sa logeuse dans *Water With Berries*. En effet, Teeton, même s'il décrit l'« instinct d'autorité »et l'« habitude de commandement »de la « Vieille Douairière »ne se rend pas compte que ces caractéristiques s'applique à leur relation : il croit que son sentiment d'appartenance à la maison est le résultat d'un « partenariat »sans voir que sa chambre, qu'il considère comme « une province indépendante de la maison », ne cesse d'être « rude et froide »que lorsque la Vieille Douairière « la prend en main »(Lamming, 1971, 14). Le roman établit un contraste entre cette femme, son défunt mari et son beau-frère, qui représentent tous deux la haine explicite et la violence de la relation coloniale, en particulier dans le contexte de l'esclavage. Cependant, la bienveillance de la logeuse est tout aussi dommageable, puisqu'elle empêche Teeton de retourner dans son île natale. Lamming explique que la Vieille Douairière représente la version contemporaine de l'impérialisme : une version affaiblie puisque non explicitement militaire et violente. Cependant, on peut y voir aussi une continuité entre les aspects *simultanément* brutaux et bienveillants du colonialisme, car l'attitude de la vieille femme reproduit le paternalisme du « fardeau de l'homme blanc »célébré par Kipling (Kipling, 2005).

Les romans maghrébins en langue française et les romans antillais en langue anglaise dépeignant une migration vers la métropole établissent donc clairement l'importance de la relation coloniale dans ce phénomène, et principalement les effets psychologiques des concepts idéologiques soutenant l'entreprise coloniale.

6.2.2 Traversées chez Lamming et Kateb

La migration vers la métropole participe aussi du processus de décolonisation. *The Emigrants* de Lamming et *Le polygone étoilé* de Kateb sont les seuls romans

du corpus à présenter la traversée de l'Atlantique et de la Méditerranée, et tous deux utilisent ces passages pour analyser l'aliénation du colonisé : le voyage en bateau est l'occasion de suggérer des divisions parmi les Algériens et les Antillais. Lamming met en exergue les rivalités entre différentes îles et les différences de classe, montrant le désir des personnages de classe moyenne de fréquenter les Anglais, tandis que Kateb suggère que l'accès au système d'éducation coloniale crée des divisions en séparant les hommes par la langue.

Le choix du bateau pour présenter ces divisions est symbolique, car celui-ci suggère une unité des migrants malgré les divisions, unité qui se situe au niveau de la nation. Lamming en présente une vision pan-caribéenne en attirant l'attention sur les motivations et les destins similaires des migrants de toutes conditions sociales (Lamming, 1980, 37). L'expérience de la migration vers la métropole est un creuset pour le développement de cette conscience nationale à travers l'observation de cette similarité (Phillips, 1997, 14). Kateb, pour sa part, s'élève contre les définitions de la nation algérienne émergeant dans le discours nationaliste car celles-ci opèrent des exclusions. Il critique notamment l'utilisation politique de l'Islam, qui entrave le progrès social, et la politique d'arabisation, qui désavantage les populations non-arabophones tels que les Imazighen de Kabylie (Kateb, 1997, 97, 140).

Mais le thème de la langue dans le roman de Kateb est aussi lié à la notion de culture populaire. Les dernières pages du roman montrent sa séparation d'avec la langue et les traditions orales incarnées par sa mère après la rencontre avec la langue et la culture françaises, séductrices. Kateb nomme ce mouvement une chute « dans la gueule du loup », ce qui fait écho au roman de Lamming, qui considère les aspirations d'intégration de ses personnages comme une aliénation. Dans les deux romans, les divisions internes présentées dans les scènes de traversée sont aussi le fait de la séparation entre l'intellectuel colonisé et les traditions du peuple : l'éducation coloniale conduit à un manque d'intérêt pour les traditions et

la culture du peuple colonisé. Pour les deux romanciers, l'artiste doit, au contraire, se rapprocher de ces traditions et les utiliser, plutôt que s'intégrer dans la tradition littéraire du colonisateur. Ceci s'inscrit dans leurs visions anti-coloniales respectives et dans leur engagement politique. En effet, Lamming et Kateb sont de convictions marxistes, tout en maintenant leur indépendance vis-à-vis des partis politiques (Prasteau, 1967; Amina and Duflot, 1967; Meeks, 2007) ; tous deux considèrent que l'artiste a un rôle important à jouer dans le développement d'une société plus juste et plus libre (voir Godard, 1975; Negrez, 1975; Djaider and Nekkouri, 1975; Djeghloul, 1992 ; dans le cas de Lamming, voir : Munro and Sander, 1972, 12-13). Les deux écrivains ont résolu les contradictions entre ces convictions et la pratique d'une littérature hors d'atteinte de leur public cible en abandonnant l'activité de romancier. En effet, pour bien des Maghrébins et des Antillais, les livres sont un luxe hors d'atteinte, et le français n'est pas une langue majoritaire au Maghreb. Pour se rapprocher du peuple, à partir des années 1970, Lamming devient un orateur et Kateb conçoit des pièces de théâtre en arabe dialectal avec le Théâtre de la Mer. Les sources de ces évolutions de carrière sont présentes dans leurs représentations du moment de la migration.

6.2.3 Arrivées

Tous les écrivains utilisent l'opposition traditionnelle entre la campagne, lieu sécurisant de relations humaines rapprochées, qui correspond au pays d'origine, et l'environnement anonyme de la ville, tout en suggérant un danger additionnel pour les immigrés des colonies : la violence raciale. Celle-ci est peu présente dans les romans des années 1950, puis gagne en importance dans les années 1970. Les romanciers maghrébins la montrent cependant avec plus d'insistance que les auteurs antillais. L'isolement de la vie en ville est effrayant, et traité par Lamming comme signifiant la destruction des structures sociales. Selvon et Boudjedra montrent néanmoins son aspect libérateur, dont les immigrés profitent à plein.

Dans le roman de Boudjedra, l'appropriation de l'espace urbain acquiert une dimension supplémentaire puisqu'elle est liée à la lutte de libération nationale.

Critique de la modernité industrielle

Chraïbi, Boudjedra et Ben Jelloun établissent un contraste très fort entre un Maghreb naturel et une métropole artificielle, industrielle et stérile. Kateb admet plus facilement les similitudes entre la métropole et la colonie. La présentation des conditions de travail dans *Le polygone étoilé* et *Topographie idéale...* met l'accent, à travers le lexique et une syntaxe haletante, sur la dangerosité du milieu industriel et montre des travailleurs immigrés à la merci des machines (Kateb, 1997, 68 ; Boudjedra, 1986, 117). L'extension de cette dangerosité à une brouette dans le roman de Kateb, ainsi que l'attention portée aux horloges, indique que la critique de la France s'étend en fait à tout le projet de la modernité industrielle occidentale : la pensée rationnelle est à la racine de l'organisation oppressive de l'usine contemporaine. Elle est symbolisée par le temps moyen que donnent les montres et horloges, un temps rationnel obtenu par calcul plutôt que par la mesure du jour solaire, variable. Boudjedra le montre aussi à travers ses descriptions de l'espace du métro, dont la « pathétique symétrie »et le « faux désordre »produisent un « harcèlement linéaire »pour le protagoniste fraîchement arrivé des montagnes algériennes et rappellent « un instrument de torture »qui préfigure son meurtre (Boudjedra, 1986, 8-9, 23). Ben Jelloun exprime ceci en recourant à la notion d'Abstrait, faisant écho à la comparaison que Memmi établit entre la condition des travailleurs immigrés et un esclavage impersonnel, « anonyme »(Memmi, 1973, 135). Ben Jelloun affirme : « Quand, sur un chantier, un immigré fait une chute libre, ce n'est pas un accident du travail, c'est quelque chose comme un meurtre prémédité par l'Abstrait » (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 54). Cette tendance pulvérisatrice, comme dirait Memmi, traverse tout le roman de Boudjedra par le rappel constant de la figure du plan du métro, aux cercles

concentriques étouffants, associée tour à tour à la technologie qui entretient la ville monstrueuse, au sang de l'immigré assassiné, puis enfin, à nouveau, à la montre et l'horloge, scellant l'accusation des effets fatals du système économique et social Européen et de ses fondements (Boudjedra, 1986, 34-35, 165, 205).

Cette critique est rendue possible par l'opposition entre nature et technologie, qui ressort de la suppression de tout aspect moderne dans les évocations du Maghreb : ceci permet aux écrivains d'envisager un extérieur de la modernité industrielle occidentale d'où ils pourraient se positionner pour la critiquer. *Les Boucs* de Chraïbi présente un cas extrême, son narrateur occidentalisé affirmant que le fait de « bro[yer] des concepts européens » a rendu son cerveau, « arabe et pensant en arabe », « malade » (Chraïbi, 1989, 54). Ce point de vue se rapproche dangereusement des théories racistes selon lesquelles les peuples non-Européens ne pourraient jamais s'adapter au mode de vie moderne. La façon dont le roman présente les Boucs, un groupe de travailleurs immigrés au chômage végétant sur des terrains vagues, renforce à première vue cette idée car ils sont animalisés et dépersonnalisés par les formules impersonnelles de la narration. Cependant leur inadaptation devient une critique de l'arrogance que la France met à assimiler les immigrés et les colonisés : ils ont

> « la connaissance que de tout temps, en tout lieu, toujours il y [a] eu un lot d'hommes [...] inadaptés à une civilisation, quelle qu'elle fût, comme pour prouver qu'aucune création de l'homme n'a jamais été générale ou parfaite » (Chraïbi, 1989, 177)

Dans le cas des Boucs, la retraite vers le monde naturel est une forme de résistance réussie à l'assimilation par le monde moderne ; par leur opacité, ils présentent un miroir révélant les failles et les contradictions du supposé progrès occidental.

Ce fantasme d'une sortie de la modernité est problématique pour des écrivains scolarisés dans le système colonial français ; il ne correspond pourtant pas à un

retour simpliste à la culture pré-coloniale, impossible (voir Fanon, 1991, 268-270), ni aux traditions de l'Islam dont ils critiquent tous les aspects sclérosés. L'opposition radicale qu'ils mettent en avant les conduit dans une impasse où le mal est dénoncé sans qu'une solution ne puisse être entrevue. Le protagoniste de Chraïbi rencontre l'amour mais son destin est isolé : la situation des Boucs ne change pas. Les romans ultérieurs de Chraïbi, qui appellent au dialogue, offrent une vision plus optimiste.

Les auteurs antillais n'ont pas recours à ce fantasme car ils reconnaissent que les Antilles, dont les populations indigènes ont été décimées, à l'inverse du Maghreb, n'ont pas accès à une structure sociale complète à opposer à celle du colonisateur. La Caraïbe fait partie intégrante du monde moderne de par le déracinement de ses populations et son intégration économique au développement de l'Europe depuis le dix-huitième siècle. Cela ne les empêche pas de critiquer les habitudes mentales héritées du colonialisme, comme nous le verrons.

La réflexion sur la migration dans les romans d'auteurs maghrébins et antillais qui représentent le moment du départ et de l'arrivée va bien plus loin que la simple notion de déménager dans un autre pays. Ces romans sont l'occasion d'explorer et d'analyser le développement de la civilisation européenne moderne et l'histoire coloniale ayant créé les liens entre les Antilles et la Grande-Bretagne, le Maghreb et la France. Les écrivains nous présentent un voyage depuis les attentes et les illusions, nées d'un développement économique inégal et de la projection d'une image de l'Ouest comme seule source de connaissances et de progrès, vers la désillusion quand la ville séductrice se révèle un lieu d'isolement, de peur et de danger.

6.3 Chapitre 2. Rencontres

Nous avons vu que le voyage vers la métropole impériale est déterminé par la présentation de cette dernière dans le discours colonial et par l'influence de

l'idéologie de la supériorité de la culture du colonisateur. L'arrivée marque la confrontation avec une réalité en désaccord avec l'image séduisante projetée par le colonisateur. La marginalisation et la violence qui sont le lot des immigrés, exprimées dans les romans à travers les espaces auxquels ils ont accès, discréditent le mythe selon lequel la prospérité est accessible en métropole. Les romanciers scrutent aussi le colonisateur et ses accomplissements. Les points de vue narratifs et les voix des narrateurs permettent de répondre au regard du colonisateur et au discours colonial. Mais tous les renversements ne sont pas efficaces, comme le montre l'analyse des relations entre les immigrés et les femmes blanches dans les romans. Ces relations sont inévitablement influencées par la notion de la femme blanche présente dans certains contextes coloniaux. Elle fonctionne comme un symbole du groupe dominant, et est un des lieux du prestige et de la respectabilité du colonisateur. Les frontières entre colonisés et colonisateurs étaient maintenues, comme c'est le cas dans maints groupes sociaux, en partie par le contrôle de l'accès à la femme blanche, et par le contrôle de son comportement (Stoler, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1998). Le fait que les personnages immigrés aient des relations sexuelles avec des femmes blanches constitue un renversement des pratiques existant dans la colonie, mais nous verrons que ceci ne parvient pas à aller à l'encontre des relations entre Français et Maghrébins ou entre Anglais et Antillais de couleur ; ces relations continuent d'être gouvernées par l'influence de la relation coloniale.

6.3.1 Marginalité

Les logements sont un élément important par lequel les romanciers mettent en évidence la marginalisation des immigrés. Le foyer pour immigrés est un lieu caractéristique dans les romans de Selvon, Lamming et Ben Jelloun. Ces foyers ont à première vue une fonction différente : l'un abrite des étudiants coloniaux (Selvon, 1985; Lamming, 1980) tandis que l'autre héberge des travailleurs immigrés pauvres (Ben Jelloun, 1995). Cependant, les romans de Lamming et Ben Jelloun

montrent que dans les deux cas la fonction du foyer est d'opérer une ségrégation et de séparer les immigrés de la population française et britannique. Dans la plupart des romans du corpus étudié, le lieu de travail est peu présent bien que le travail soit une importante justification de la migration. Les images utilisées pour décrire les lieux d'habitation, en revanche, indiquent que les immigrés sont confinés dans des espaces de type carcéral (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 12-16 ; Lamming, 1980, 134). Le lieu même de ces espaces est marginal, soit par rapport au bâtiment dans lequel ils se trouvent (chambres au sous-sol chez Chraïbi, Lamming et Selvon), soit par rapport à la ville (bidonvilles chez Chraïbi et Boudjedra). Cette marginalité touche aussi les espaces de socialisation : chez Lamming, celle-ci s'effectue au salon de coiffure ou chez le barbier, traditionnellement des lieux de préparation à la socialisation. Chez Chraïbi le mineur immigré est exclu des activités du soir. On note un contraste entre le traitement de ces logements « de l'intérieur » chez Lamming et Selvon, où les défauts du logement émergent à travers l'expérience des personnages principaux, et celui de Chraïbi et Boudjedra qui en donnent une idée plus extérieure en accumulant les descriptions de taudis plus choquants les uns que les autres, ce qui semble une approche presque misérabiliste du sujet.

Malgré la ségrégation officieuse imposée aux immigrés, certains des personnages circulent dans la ville, mais non sans danger. Les incursions dans l'espace des Français ou des Britanniques provoquent l'incompréhension ou le rejet (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 37,40 ; sur Lamming, voir Paquet, 1982, 40). L'exemple le plus flagrant de la violence raciale dont les immigrés sont la cible est bien sûr le protagoniste de Boudjedra, assassiné après avoir passé sa première journée en France perdu dans le métro, mais d'autres exemples existent. Le personnage de Brackley dans la nouvelle de Selvon « Waiting for Aunty to Cough », doit se protéger de femmes agressives pendant ses promenades de nuit. Le renversement des stéréotypes concernant les rôles masculins et féminins renforce le sentiment de la vulnérabilité de l'immigré de couleur. Les romanciers maghrébins établissent

des liens entre les actes de violence et la société française en général, dont les institutions et le public autorisent le mépris des immigrés (Kateb, 1999, 290-294, 356-360 ; Ben Jelloun, 1995, 97, 99, 126 ; Boudjedra, 1986, 69, 231). La violence raciale est plus discrète chez Selvon et Lamming, malgré le contexte politique des émeutes raciales de 1958 à Londres et Nottingham, mais néanmoins présente. Le premier y prête une attention croissante dans ses romans des années 1960 et 1970 (Selvon, 1990, 1989b). Chez Lamming, comme chez Chraïbi, les actes de violence sont du fait des personnages immigrés eux-mêmes. Chez Chraïbi il s'agit en fait de montrer l'aveuglement des immigrés, qui se trompent de cible ; chez Lamming la violence est liée à l'histoire coloniale, comme nous le verrons.

On peut rapprocher cette moindre présence de la violence raciale dans les romans antillais aux climats distincts qui régnait sur les scènes littéraires maghrébine et antillaise. Le contexte politique a aussi son importance : un processus parlementaire suivait son cours aux Antilles à la fin des années 1950 alors que de violents incidents avaient provoqué des négociations pour l'indépendance des protectorats du Maroc et de la Tunisie en 1955 et que la guerre d'indépendance algérienne faisait rage. Du point de vue littéraire, les écrivains maghrébins aussi bien qu'antillais pratiquaient une littérature expérimentale, mais les premiers le faisaient sur un mode de défi et d'appropriation violente qui peut être résumé par la phrase de Kateb : « Une langue appartient à celui qui la viole, pas à celui qui la caresse » (Amina and Duflot, 1967, 30).

L'analyse que propose Lamming de la relation entre les Antillais et la Grande-Bretagne au moment de la décolonisation est ici éclairante. Il rappelle le contraste entre les demandes d'indépendance des Antillais et des Africains : les Antillais sont plus proches du système culturel et institutionnel du colonisateur, si proches que leurs velléités d'indépendance en sont émoussées (Lamming, 2005, 34-35). Le système culturel et scolaire colonial, fondé sur une hiérarchie sociale corrélée à la couleur de la peau, produit un phénomène d'identification avec les blancs, plus

prestigieux (Hinds, 2001, 10-12 ; Lamming, 2005, 35-36). Ceci conduit les antillais à mépriser ce qui est produit dans les îles, en particulier la culture (Lamming, 2005, 40). De plus, le système colonial inculque des valeurs héritées de l'époque victorienne, dont la figure du gentleman (Edmondson, 1999, chap. 2). Ceci implique une certaine notion de décorum et peut poser des limites aux sujets de conversation. Lamming et Selvon montrent néanmoins le racisme à travers bien des incidents mineurs dont la violence est absente (Lamming, 1980, 111, 152-153, 158 ; Selvon, 1985, 40, 46 ; Selvon, 1990, 128). La séquence des romans et essais de Lamming indique la sortie graduelle de cet état d'esprit privilégiant la Grande-Bretagne, depuis l'observation de la focalisation sur le centre de l'empire, aussi incongrue soit-elle, dans son premier roman (Lamming, 1991), en passant par la perte des illusions sur la « mère patrie » dans l'émigration (le deuxième roman, Lamming, 1980), jusqu'à la concentration sur le développement politique et culturel des Antilles dans la période de l'indépendance (troisième et quatrième romans: Lamming, 1981, 1960), l'analyse des relations politiques, économiques et surtout culturelles avec la nation colonisatrice (Lamming, 2005, les essais,), pour enfin arriver, à l'instar de Fanon, à la conclusion que la violence est nécessaire à la résolution de l'histoire coloniale et de l'esclavage (Lamming, 1971; Kent, 1992; Tarrieu, 1988 ; voir Fanon, 1991, chap. 1).

Dans le cas maghrébin comme dans le cas antillais, les romanciers utilisent la langue du colonisateur pour exprimer et mettre en action leur résistance à la colonisation. Ils utilisent leurs romans sur l'immigration, qui présentent une image de la métropole non médiatisée par la présentation de soi du colonisateur, pour répondre au discours colonial de diverses façons.

6.3.2 Regards rendus, réponses

Points de vue

A l'inverse des récits de voyage d'Européens en Afrique suivant la méthode naturaliste, qui présentent de vastes perspectives de paysages vidés de leurs habitants (voir Pratt, 1992), les romans de l'immigration donnent peu de représentations de la ville. Ils se concentrent sur les espaces fermés et liminaux où sont confinés les immigrés. Même les romans dans lesquels les immigrés circulent dans la ville ne la montrent pas. Chez Selvon, elle n'est pas décrite malgré la tendance du narrateur et des personnages à rebaptiser des monuments et quartiers connus de Londres (Selvon, 1985) ; chez Boudjedra le protagoniste traverse la ville mais reste dans l'univers aux horizons fermé du métropolitain ; chez Ben Jelloun l'état mental instable du protagoniste rend la ville abstraite, presque immatérielle (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 36; 69).

Djebar, après avoir montré l'enfermement de la femme maghrébine, soutient que la prison mobile que constitue le voile, en permettant à la femme de circuler, lui rend un regard sur la ville, regard qui peut être subversif pour l'homme maghrébin. L'immigré est une autre figure dominée qui soudain peut circuler dans l'espace jusque là réservé au dominant. Son point de vue dans ces romans est à ras de terre, voire sous terre, ce qui lui donne une perspective nouvelle sur la métropole. Wright, en évoquant cette perspective d'en bas, de ceux qui sont relégués socialement, en indique le caractère ambivalent, car le relégué a une relation d'amour-haine avec le dominant (cité dans Gilroy, 1993a, 16). Dans les romans d'immigration, cette perspective est utilisée, au contraire, pour mettre un terme à cette ambivalence et à l'envie de s'identifier au dominant.

Les quelques descriptions de Londres dans *Lonely Londoners* s'attachent à examiner les relations entre ceux qui peuplent la ville et en cela, met en évidence les inégalités sociales sociales et la débauche qui y règnent. Ceci contredit l'image

du colonisateur, construite sur les principes d'une masculinité hégémonique fondée sur la responsabilité, la moralité et l'hétérosexualité. Le regard que Boudjedra pose sur la métropole opère, lui aussi, une démystification. Il répond au discours du colonisateur, non en inversant les stratégies de représentation du paysage, comme Selvon, mais en s'appropriant les techniques du Nouveau Roman pour leur donner une fonction politique que les Nouveaux Romanciers récusaient (Ibrahim-Ouali, 1995). Il manipule aussi le discours publicitaire : la compréhension que le mystérieux Voyeur a de ce discours montre, par contraste, la crédulité de la foule française. Les Français sont opprimés eux aussi par le système capitaliste. Le décryptage que le Voyeur fait de l'occultation du contenu déplaisant effectué par le discours lisse des publicités établit un parallèle avec la politesse de la société française qui masque le racisme et l'exploitation des travailleurs immigrés.

Voix

Ce regard que les romans de l'immigration posent sur la métropole est accompagné d'une voix répondant au colonisateur. Les opinions des immigrés s'offusquant des simplifications excessives dont ils font l'objet sont d'abord entendues de l'extérieur dans le roman de Lamming et celui de Selvon (Lamming, 1980, 104, 157-158 ; Selvon, 1985, 40). Cependant, les romans s'adressent aussi parfois directement au lecteur français ou britannique : le narrateur peut parler au lecteur, pour lui reprocher son étroitesse d'esprit, adoptant ainsi la posture du fou ou du trickster, qui peut se permettre de dire son fait aux puissants (Selvon, 1990, 24), ou pour donner les raisons de sa présence et affirmer sa dimension émotionelle (Ben Jelloun, 1995, 49).[10] Parfois, la parole du personnage semble s'adresser au lecteur parce que l'auteur n'utilise pas la ponctuation habituelle

[10]Le trickster est une figure des contes populaires et du folklore, dérivée des mythologies Amérindiennes et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. C'est un personnage changeant et fripon qui utilise l'humour.

pour les dialogues (Boudjedra, 1986, 228). Dans tous les cas, la parole du personnage immigré sert à dénoncer les préjugés simplificateurs et le racisme de la population métropolitaine, et l'arbitraire qui en résulte.

Un regard sexué

Ces réponses au colonisateur sont, cependant, quasi-exclusivement celles des hommes. Les romanciers maghrébins négligent la présence de la femme maghrébine en France. Obéissant à l'injonction faite, dans les sociétés maghrébines, de cacher les femmes pour préserver leur respectabilité, les romanciers cachent la femme maghrébine de l'immigration sous un voile textuel (voir en particulier Mengouchi and Ramdane, 1978, 126-131). Les femmes sont plus présentes chez Lamming et Selvon mais, chez le premier, ne sont pas impliquées dans l'analyse des relations avec le colonisateur. Selvon les considère comme des objets mais reconnaît, plus que Lamming, que leurs motivations sont les mêmes que celles des hommes. Dans *The Housing Lark*, elles participent à la scène du pique-nique à Hampton Court, qui explore les relations de pouvoir établies par l'histoire et la narration de l'histoire (Selvon, 1990, 118-125). En général, les romanciers ayant choisi de représenter la migration vers le centre de l'empire reproduisent une perspective qui marginalise celle de la femme.

6.3.3 Relations blanches

La représentation de relations amoureuses et sexuelles entre les immigrés coloniaux et post-coloniaux et des femmes blanches est un défi particulier posé à l'histoire coloniale. En effet, dans les colonies, la femme blanche est un symbole du prestige et du pouvoir du colonisateur, et est pour cette raison aussi désirable qu'inaccessible pour le colonisé. Dépeindre de telles relations entre un immigré et une femme blanche constitue donc une réponse aux restrictions instaurées par le colonialisme : posséder la femme blanche, c'est s'emparer de ce qui est interdit.

hooks (1991) indique que cette attitude envers la femme provient d'une logique sexiste partagée par l'homme noir et l'homme blanc : sous le régime de l'esclavage, le blanc affirmait sa domination sur l'esclave en violant les femmes noires. Il s'ensuit qu'il devait en retour protéger la femme blanche d'attaques similaires. Dans cette logique patriarcale, les femmes ne sont pas considérées pour elles-mêmes mais comme attributs et extensions de l'homme : « les deux groupes [hommes blancs et hommes noirs] ont donc assimilé la liberté à la virilité, et la virilité au droit pour les hommes à un accès illimité aux corps des femmes » (hooks, 1991, 59).

Cependant, dans les romans de l'immigration, la possession sexuelle des femmes blanches ne conduit pas à la liberté. De plus, elle n'est pas associée à une posture anti-coloniale mais à un projet plus ou moins conscient d'assimilation . Tous les personnages des romans des années 1950 veulent avoir des relations à égalité avec les femmes blanches, mais celles-ci les renvoient au stéréotypes de sauvagerie et de puissance sexuelle frappant l'homme colonisé, ce qui les conduit à la violence (Selvon, 1985, 107, 109 ; Chraïbi, 1989, 19 ; Lamming, 1980, 256). Ce thème de la violence est particulièrement fort dans *Water With Berries* de Lamming, où l'acteur antillais Derek viole une actrice blanche sur scène après avoir pris conscience du racisme qu'il avait réussi à ignorer jusque là. Ceci rejoint la logique du viol « politique » de femmes blanches par Eldridge Cleaver en rébellion face à l'histoire de l'esclavage et la domination durable des noirs par les blancs aux Etats-Unis (Cleaver, 1969, 14, 160). De même, Teeton, qui était comme nous l'avons vu très attaché à sa logeuse, la tue quand il se rend compte qu'elle aussi le voit comme un sauvage. *Water With Berries* est l'expression de la conviction de Lamming selon laquelle les britanniques aussi bien que les antillais doivent se confronter aux horreurs de l'histoire de l'esclavage avant de pouvoir envisager un futur, ce qui ne peut se faire sans violence (Kent, 1992; Tarrieu, 1988). Mais l'expression de cette nécessité se fait aux dépends des femmes, utilisées à nouveau

comme territoire du conflit. La possession de la femme blanche consolide donc la logique patriarcale du colonisateur. De plus, par leurs agissements voraces ou violents, les immigrés se conforment aux stéréotypes utilisés dans les contexte colonial pour criminaliser et contrôler l'homme colonisé (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 16 ; Ben Jelloun, 1995, 97).

Comme le montre Stoler (1996), la frontière entre le colonisateur et le colonisé est maintenue dans la colonie en partie par le contrôle de la sexualité de la femme blanche. Dans la métropole, de la même façon, la frontière entre communauté nationale et nouveaux arrivants est maintenue en excluant les immigrés du domaine du respectable. Ces derniers n'ont donc de relations qu'avec des femmes qui ne le sont pas, qu'elles soient prostituées (Boudjedra, 1986; Ben Jelloun, 1995), immigrées elles-mêmes (Selvon, 1985), ou bien cessent d'être respectables de par leur relation avec un immigré (Pilkington, 1996; Collins, 2001). Malgré un accès meilleur à la femme blanche dans la métropole, les logiques de sexisme et de respectabilité s'y appliquent aussi bien que dans le contexte colonial, et les immigrés coloniaux et post-coloniaux en sont exclus.

Le signe le plus flagrant de l'échec des relations entre immigrés et femmes blanches à renverser la relation coloniale est leur caractère stérile : les grossesses sont interrompues (Lamming, 1980, 1971) ou les enfants sont malades (Chraïbi, 1989). Ceci est une première indication du pessimisme des romanciers quant à un futur dans la métropole impériale.

6.4 Chapitre 3. Dissolution psychique

6.4.1 Une condition représentative

La maladie mentale est présente dans presque tous les romans du corpus, et forme un élément important du roman chez Chraïbi, Lamming et Ben Jelloun. Ces trois romanciers tentent de faire de la maladie mentale une expérience

représentative de la condition immigrée. Dans *The Emigrants*, deux personnages de classe différente sont affectés, et leur trouble mental se déclare alors qu'ils se trouvent chacun dans un lieu où l'autre était attendu (Lamming, 1980, 199). Ce chiasme démontre bien que pour Lamming la maladie mentale est fondamentale pour l'immigré. Ben Jelloun nous présente plusieurs personnages affligés de troubles psychosomatiques et de dysfonction sexuelle. Le protagoniste, dont on nous dit très peu, ce qui en fait un immigré-type, partage ces troubles et est de plus victime d'hallucinations. La tentative de Chraïbi de montrer le caractère représentatif de la maladie mentale est plus confuse : son protagoniste, Waldik, connaît des épisodes psychotiques. Il se démarque d'autres immigrés par sa capacité de lire et écrire le français, mais a eu les mêmes emplois durs et vécu dans les mêmes lieux sordides que la majorité des Algériens en France. Son projet d'écrire un roman sur les Boucs afin d'alerter l'opinion sur leur situation est aussi présenté comme faisant de lui un personnage représentatif, car il l'envisage comme un témoignage de l'intérieur et une tentative de rédemption de l'ensemble des immigrés nord-africains aux yeux des Français. En choisissant de se faire le représentant des Boucs, il s'adjuge une fonction quasi Christique, ennobli paradoxalement par son lien avec un groupe d'hommes rejetés. Cette comparaison devrait renforcer la notion que Waldik est un personnage représentatif mais elle est peu convaincante (Chraïbi, 1989, 65).

6.4.2 Une rencontre pathogène

Les illusions brisées : Lamming et Chraïbi

Dans les romans de Lamming, les troubles mentaux des personnages apparaissent à la suite d'incidents au cours desquels ils sont confrontés au racisme de la population britannique. En particulier, Dickson dans *The Emigrants* et Teeton dans *Water With Berries* ont des épisodes psychotiques où ils ont l'impression de

ne plus contrôler leur corps quand des personnages anglais les renvoient brusquement à une vision stéréotypée de l'homme noir comme primitif et animal. Ceci est particulièrement choquant pour Dickson qui, en homme éduqué et aspirant à la culture britannique, s'attendait à une relation romantique normale avec sa logeuse avant de se sentir réifié par le regard salace de cette dernière.

L'étude de Sass (1992) sur les similitudes entre la schizophrénie et la littérature moderne peut éclairer ce processus. Il décrit notamment le phénomène de passivité chez les schizophrènes, qui semble bien correspondre aux sensations de Teeton et Dickson. Lamming affirme que la crise psychotique est une conséquence directe de stress particuliers causés par la présence dans la métropole. Sa représentation de la maladie mentale, bien que fondée sur son analyse théorique du rôle de l'histoire coloniale dans les relations entre la Grande-Bretagne et les Caraïbes, correspond aux statistiques concernant les immigrés antillais au Royaume Uni (Littlewood and Lipsedge, 1997). Schwarz (2003a) indique que les immigrés antillais dans les années 1950 avait le sentiment qu'un abysse existait entre leurs attentes, fondées sur leur éducation coloniale, et la réalité qu'ils découvraient une fois en Angleterre (8-9). L'expérience non seulement d'une perte de statut social mais aussi de problèmes de communication et de compréhension totalement inattendus pour les immigrés antillais est comparable à celle de la patiente schizophrène décrivant son sentiment, face à l'amie qui lui rend visite : « je connaissais son nom et je savais tout d'elle, et pourtant [...] j'étais en présence d'une étrangère » (Sass, 1992, 48). Il n'est donc pas surprenant que Lamming ait choisi de présenter la crise psychotique comme expérience représentative de l'immigré.

Le protagoniste des *Boucs* de Chraïbi a lui aussi des troubles mentaux. Il devient alcoolique, mais il est aussi victime d'une dissociation de son corps et de son esprit, dont nous apprenons qu'elle est la conséquence d'une overdose volontaire de barbituriques. Cette dissociation n'est peut-être pourtant pas complètement imputable aux médicaments, car dans certaines des scènes précédentes son état

d'esprit, combinant stupeur et une lucidité accrue, rappelle les symptômes précurseurs de la schizophrénie décrits par Sass. La cause est, ici aussi, la désillusion soudaine quant à la capacité des Français à l'accepter comme un homme et comme un égal. Waldik suppose que sa compagne l'a trompé avec le romancier, réputé défenseur des Nord-Africains, mais la jalousie n'est pas la cause de sa crise. C'est au contraire la découverte que ceux qu'il croyait ouverts d'esprit, sa compagne et ce romancier, sont en fait racistes et convaincus de leur supériorité par rapport à lui. Pour Waldik, ceci constitue l'ultime trahison par l'empire : malgré la promesse, contenue dans le discours de la mission civilisatrice, qu'une éducation française le sauverait de l'infériorité, on lui nie l'appartenance à une civilisation commune. En ceci, il se rapproche des personnages de Lamming, Dickson et Teeton. Waldik a appris à vivre avec le racisme ostensible ; ce qui le brise est sa prise de conscience que ses prétendus alliés cachent leur racisme sous la sollicitude. Les deux auteurs, écrivant durant la période coloniale, s'attachent à montrer les contradictions dommageables inhérentes à la mission civilisatrice à travers la brisure des psychés de leurs personnages. L'éducation coloniale impose l'abandon d'autres normes culturelles ; quand l'immigré colonial découvre, une fois arrivé en métropole, que la promesse de progrès jusqu'à l'égalité avec le colonisateur était fallacieuse, il n'a plus de structures sociales et psychologiques pour étayer sa personnalité.

Fuite face au cauchemar post-colonial : Ben Jelloun

Le roman de Ben Jelloun établit aussi un lien de causalité entre l'expérience de l'immigration et la psychose. Il a cependant une approche différente de celle de Lamming et Chraïbi car, écrivant vingt ans après l'indépendance politique des pays du Maghreb, il se concentre sur l'exploitation des immigrés en tant que travailleurs et non pas en tant que coloniaux. Son narrateur n'a pas de crise psychotique aiguë mais s'évade graduellement dans un monde d'hallucinations. La

narration communique la faiblesse du lien entre le protagoniste et le monde réel à travers le peu de détails diégétiques et un style débordant de tropes. Moncef-Mejri (1993) conclut dans son analyse de ces tropes qu'ils risquent de désorienter le lecteur, sans pourtant faire le lien avec l'état mental du narrateur. Le protagoniste est de plus un exemple d'autres troubles : la « sinistrose de l'immigré maghrébin », ensemble de symptômes physiques aux causes non expliquées dont on reconnaît maintenant qu'ils sont dus à un état dépressif (Al-Issa, 1997 ; voir aussi Fanon, 1967a; Ifrah, 1980; McCulloch, 1995; Ham, 2003), et les troubles de la fonction sexuelle, intimement liés à la virilité bien sûr mais rejaillissant aussi sur son statut social en tant qu'homme et en tant que pilier économiques de son foyer (Ben Jelloun, 1997a, 64-65).

Ben Jelloun montre le caractère isolé et répressif de la vie de l'immigré, notamment à travers une parodie réduisant à l'absurde des règlements en vigueur dans les foyers pour travailleurs immigrés, mais aussi par le rejet des immigrés et la non prise en compte de leurs besoins par l'administration. L'indifférence et la violence raciste sont des causes de la fuite du narrateur dans la folie, mais le déni d'une dimension sociale et émotionnelle dans la vie des immigrés maghrébins, qui sont ravalés au rang de machines, est l'un des éléments majeurs rendant leur vie insupportable. Ils ne peuvent pourtant pas échapper à cette vie : les conditions économiques et politiques dans un monde néo-colonial où les pays industrialisés dominent encore et où les régimes indépendants répriment leurs populations les obligent à rester expatriés. La folie devient alors une tactique plus ou moins inconsciente d'évasion, tout comme les névroses de combat durant la première guerre mondiale permettaient à des soldats traumatisés par les conditions sans précédent de la guerre industrielle de quitter le théâtre des opérations sans déserter ni déroger à leur code d'honneur (Leed, 1979). A l'inverse des personnages de Lamming et Chraïbi, l'immigré de Ben Jelloun est tout à fait conscient de sa position reléguée ; sa folie n'est pas la conséquence d'une brusque prise de

conscience mais provient bien, elle aussi, de la connaissance de sa situation en tant qu'immigré post/colonial.

6.4.3 Fonctions de la dissolution psychique

La présence de la folie en littérature peut signifier une résistance, puisque la folie est l'autre de la Raison (Foucault, 1976), et la littérature est le lieu privilégié de l'expression de son défi (Felman, 1978; Plaza, 1986). La folie est aussi utilisée dans certaines littératures postcoloniales pour exprimer une critique et une résistance face aux régimes politiques des indépendances (Deh, 1991) mais aussi face à la continuation des « hégémonies discursives » (Flockemann, 1999, 69). La folie, en tant que maladie mentale, est un outil important de dénonciation du racisme, de l'exploitation et de la relation coloniale pour Lamming, Chraïbi et Ben Jelloun, mais leurs accusations portent plus loin : les premiers s'attaquent aux habitudes de pensées développées chez le colonisé et le dernier étend sa critique au système capitaliste dans son ensemble.

Décoloniser l'esprit...

La représentation que Lamming donne de la maladie mentale chez ses personnages correspond, nous l'avons vu, aux statistiques disponibles sur les immigrés antillais en Grande-Bretagne. Mais le schéma interprétatif qu'il fournit, lui, ne correspond pas. Les membres de minorités ethniques sujets à des crises de schizophrénie et de paranoïa tendent à penser que leur persécution provient de l'intérieur du groupe, alors que les sources réelles de stress (la discrimination, la pauvreté) ne sont pas nommées, probablement parce cette reconnaissance équivaudrait à abandonner le projet de mobilité sociale qui a motivé la migration (Littlewood and Lipsedge, 1997, 136-145, 240-241 ; Rack, 1982, 129-130). En mettant en évidence l'influence du racisme et de la relation coloniale dans les troubles psychiques de ses personnages, Lamming cherche à nouveau à dissiper

les illusions qui entourent la présence de l'Antillais au Royaume Uni.

La folie des personnages de Lamming est aussi un commentaire sur l'héritage colonial dans les Antilles elles-mêmes, notamment la hiérarchie raciale. L'état d'esprit de Dickson alors qu'il se prépare à ce qu'il croit être une rencontre amoureuse avec sa logeuse indique subtilement qu'il a internalisé les préjugés raciaux sur le caractère primitif des noirs, bien que ceci soit presque inconscient chez lui. Le regard réifiant de sa logeuse le renvoie à une image de lui-même qu'il rejette mais tient tout de même pour vraie, d'où la dissolution psychique qui résulte de ce moment (Lamming, 1980, 253-255). Le contraste avec le personnage de Tornado, dans le même roman, est instructif. Il subit les mêmes discriminations que les autres personnages et, comme les autres, ne rencontre pas la prospérité, mais contrairement aux deux personnages de *The Emigrants* qui deviennent fous, il n'a aucune illusion sur sa relation avec la Grande-Bretagne et garde sa santé mentale. De même, le roman de Chraïbi utilise les autres personnages d'immigrés, sans illusions eux non plus, comme repoussoirs pour Waldik. Son ami Raus, comme les Boucs, rejette la civilisation occidentale, sous-entendant qu'elle n'a rien à lui offrir, ce qui, en définitive, le protège de la folie, de la déception et de la déchéance : « Il n'avait jamais été un Bicot » (Chraïbi, 1989, 180). En plus de la dénonciation du fonctionnement psychologique du colonialisme, la folie sert à Lamming et Chraïbi à affirmer la nécessité pour les colonisés de se détacher, pour les Antillais, d'une vision raciste de l'homme, et pour les Maghrébins, de la foi dans le progrès technologique.

... et au-delà

Comme nous l'avons vu, Ben Jelloun s'intéresse peu à la relation coloniale. La psychose de l'immigré lui permet de donner libre cours à l'expression de ses émotions, chose qui lui est interdite par le système répressif encadrant les immigrés. En cela, la folie dans ce roman permet de critiquer les dessous du système

fondant la prospérité de la France d'après-guerre : l'exploitation ne s'arrête pas avec le colonialisme. Elle permet aussi à Ben Jelloun, dont la vocation d'écrivain s'est déclarée lors de confrontations avec le régime politique indépendant en 1965 (Goure, 1984), de critiquer le Maroc indépendant. Dans ses hallucinations, le narrateur converse avec un étudiant qui tente d'éveiller la conscience politique des paysans selon les principes marxistes. La présence de ce personnage permet la critique de l'exploitation des paysans dans le Maroc moderne. Une autre figure, Moha, dénonce le matérialisme de la société. Associée aux représentations traditionnelles de la figure du fou visionnaire dans la littérature arabe, Moha est un personnage plus puissant que l'immigré narrateur, rendu pathétique par son isolement dans le monde occidental.

Le problème de l'efficacité

Lamming, Chraïbi et Ben Jelloun acclimatent tous la maladie mentale dans leurs romans et l'utilisent pour introduire certains thèmes et critiques concernant la vie des immigrés. Leur objectif est de communiquer l'expérience de la folie au lecteur à travers le pathos de la vie de leurs personnages afin de provoquer une prise de conscience et de montrer les structures d'exploitation économiques néocoloniales (*La réclusion solitaire*), ou le caractère omniprésent et les racines profondes du racisme et de l'exploitation qui sont les fondations de la société occidentale moderne (*The Emigrants*, *Les Boucs*). La folie dans ces romans se trouve donc du côté de la résistance à l'oppression, ce qui pose la question de l'efficacité. La folie et la maladie mentale demeurent l'opposé de la communication et de l'intelligible. Comme Plaza (1986) le rappelle, la littérature peut « acclimater » la folie justement parce que l'écriture y exerce un contrôle sur la menace de l'inintelligible (123). Deh nous rappelle aussi que, si la folie est utilisée dans la littérature sub-saharienne et nord-africaine pour exprimer le désaccord ou la

rébellion, elle reste incompatible avec une rébellion par les actes. Les trois romanciers semblent aussi être de cet avis. La folie du protagoniste de Ben Jelloun résulte de son isolement dans la société française. Il est clair que son entrée dans le monde des hallucinations l'isole d'autant plus, et sa guérison survient lorsqu'il réalise qu'il est possible de créer des liens avec d'autres. La dissolution psychique est en fin de compte un échec. Le roman de Chraïbi montre également que la maladie mentale est une impasse. Waldik, lui aussi, réussit à établir un contact égalitaire avec un autre personnage à la fin du roman, ce qui lui permet d'envisager un futur. Enfin, Lamming ne suggère pas d'issue pour ses personnages : les troubles psychiques qui les affectent ne changent pas leur situation matérielle, même si leurs expériences nous permettent, en tant que lecteurs, d'appréhender la critique que Lamming fait du racisme. Dans une cité dangereuse où ils sont confrontés à la discrimination, où les tentatives de réponse au discours du colonisateur ont des résultats ambigus et où leur intégrité mentale est menacée, quel futur les romanciers envisagent-ils pour ces immigrés ?

6.5 Chapitre 4. Communautés

6.5.1 Introduction

Sayad (2006) montre que l'immigration est un état contradictoire, toujours considéré comme temporaire, mais durable dans les faits. Ceci est vrai pour les discours français et britannique sur l'immigration en provenance de l'empire après la deuxième guerre mondiale (Noiriel, 2007; Carter et al., 2000; Fryer, 1989). En particulier, les gouvernements français et britanniques des années 1970 encouragent explicitement le retour de ces immigrés dans leurs pays d'origine (Cashmore, 1989; Castles et al., 1984), mais nous savons que des populations immigrées d'origine antillaise et maghrébine se sont installées en France et en Grande-Bretagne.

Théories de la diaspora

Les théories de la diaspora se sont développées à la fin des années 1970 dans les universités américaines. Elles adaptent certains aspects de la diaspora biblique pour décrire et analyser les pratiques écononiques et culturelles des minorités ethniques issues de l'immigration au sein des nations. En permettant de s'affranchir en partie du cadre national comme cadre d'analyse, elles offrent un point de vue utile pour étudier des pratiques qui dépassent ce cadre et le subvertissent (Glick Schiller et al., 1999; Armstrong, 1999; Clifford, 1999; Cohen, 1997).

Après avoir examiné la notion d'une communauté immigrée dans les romans, ce chapitre interroge la façon dont les romanciers traitent la temporalité de l'immigration et l'émergences de minorités ayant des pratiques diasporiques : privilègient-ils le temporaire, et par conséquent le retour, ou bien la durée et l'installation ?

6.5.2 Des communautés fragiles

Une réticence caractéristique

Nous avons vu que les romanciers de l'immigration mettent en avant la marginalisation des immigrés en France et en Grande-Bretagne. Plusieurs d'entre eux montrent aussi que cette situation force les immigrés à rester entre eux, ce qui crée des semblants de communautés. L'une des images fortes de la conclusion de *The Lonely Londoners* est celle de visages noirs dansant dans la foule de visages blancs comme des bouées sur l'eau (« black faces bobbing up and down in the millions of white, strained faces » Selvon, 1985, 141-142), ce qui suggère que les immigrés forment une île, un groupe à part. L'hostilité des Britanniques, tant de part des autorités que des individus, est évoquée dans le roman, ce qui indique que cette identité isolée leur est, au moins en partie, imposée. *The Emigrants* de Lamming donne la même impression : toute sortie des espaces liminaires de la

communauté Afro-Caribbéenne donne lieu à des tensions. Chraïbi dans *Les Boucs* va plus loin en suggérant que l'hostilité ambiante impose une identité stéréotypée aux immigrés dont ils ne peuvent s'affranchir : ils sont des Bicots, dégradés, et finissent par se saisir de cette identité dans un mouvement de défi : « je chômerai, [...] je volerai, je tuerai... foi de bicot, de malfrat, d'arabe, de crouillat, de sidi, de noraf » (Chraïbi, 1989, 18).

Les groupes d'immigrés présentés dans ces romans se caractérisent donc par une certaine réticence. *Les Boucs* montre, plus clairement que les autres romans, que la sociabilité entre les immigrés est une réaction à l'hostilité des français plutôt qu'une impulsion émanant des immigrés eux-mêmes : « [Les mineurs arabes] fuyaient [leur cabane] tacitement comme la peste. Car ils savaient que là, tôt ou tard ; tous les soirs, *la société les faisait se retrouver, entre Arabes* » (135, mes italiques). Chez Selvon, ceci se traduit par des exemples de rivalités ou d'égoïsme malgré les origines antillaises communes, et la fragmentation graduelle du groupe d'immigrés de Lamming montre que le sentiment de destin commun formé durant la traversée n'était pas durable : des divisions de classe apparaissent à Londres et les personnages se perdent de vue. Ces communautés fragiles, artificielles, ne laissent que peu de place à la solidarité. On peut donc difficilement parler de « communautés immigrées » dans ces romans du début de la période étudiée. Constituées d'individus relégués au plus bas de l'échelle sociale, elles sont au mieux dysfonctionnelles.

La solitude : l'expérience dominante

Dans ce contexte de décomposition de la communauté, l'expérience dominante est celle de la solitude, ce qui est particulièrement apparent chez Selvon et Ben Jelloun, qui présentent une sorte de solitude au sein de la compagnie désignée comme habituelle. Leurs personnages se rassemblent dans des chambres mais pourraient aussi bien être seuls car ils ne communiquent pas vraiment, chacun

restant absorbé par ses propres préoccupations (Selvon, 1985, 138-139 ; Ben Jelloun, 1995, 41). La différence entre les deux romans sur ce point est que les personnages de Selvon parlent, et circulent dans la ville, alors que ceux de Ben Jelloun sont silencieux et se détournent de la ville, espace terrifiant. Ceci peut refléter la différence entre des immigrés maghrébins souvent illettrés et ne parlant pas toujours le français, ce qui réduit leur autonomie dans la ville, et des immigrés antillais qui n'ont d'autre langue que celle du colonisateur.

6.5.3 Retour : impossible ou décevant

Une injonction privilégiée

La représentation de cette expérience négative coexiste, nous l'avons vu, avec une idéalisation de la région d'origine, qui est le lieu d'une communauté structurée. Les romans mettent-ils en scène une impulsion de retour vers cet espace ? Dans le roman de Chraïbi l'idée de retour est éclipsée par l'urgence de faire la critique de la situation inhumaine des immigrés en France et de la fascination que cette dernière exerce sur les hommes maghrébins. Mais Chraïbi est l'exception parmi les romanciers dont les œuvres sont étudiées ici. Le retour, pour des raisons idéologiques ou émotionnelles, est élevé au rang d'idéal. Cependant, il est rarement atteint. Dans les romans de Lamming et Ben Jelloun se développe, et il semblerait que ce soit malgré les efforts des auteurs, un sentiment d'être pris au piège ; chez Boudjedra, les personnages qui sont rentrés au pays ont une existence décevante. En ceci, Boudjedra se rapproche de Selvon, qui est le seul à examiner les tensions que la notion de retour soulève dans l'expérience des immigrés.

La place privilégiée qui est donnée au retour dans la conception de la vie immigrée chez ces romanciers relève de l'influence de la relation coloniale : en Algérie le système d'émigration est dénoncé car il va à l'encontre du désir de souveraineté économique du régime indépendant, et le roman de Boudjedra souscrit

à cette vision. Lamming montre de son côté, par la logique qui se développe dans l'ensemble de ses romans, que la migration vers la métropole est un facteur décisif dans la pertes des illusions coloniales et la prise de conscience de la nécessité de changer la culture et la situation du pays d'origine. L'expérience de l'immigration devrait donc catalyser le retour vers les Caraïbes et un engagement culturel fondé sur les pratiques et traditions de la culture populaire.

Pris au piège

Lamming, cependant, ne réussit pas à relier l'expérience de l'immigration et celle du retour et se voit forcé d'écrire un nouveau roman, *Of Age and Innocence*, pour pouvoir représenter ce retour. Dans *The Emigrants*, les rares personnages qui approchent d'une telle prise de conscience et seraient candidats au rôle de leader pour le renouvellement culturel ne rentrent pas aux Caraïbes. L'écrivain, Collis, perçoit à la fin du roman la communauté de destin des victimes de la perte d'illusions, Dickson et Higgins, et fait le lien entre leur chute et leurs attentes face à la Grande-Bretagne. Mais il refuse aussi de considérer son rôle d'écrivain comme un rôle public. Tornado, qui n'a aucune illusion sur sa relation avec la métropole et qui de plus, en tant que musicien de calypso, est en contact avec la tradition populaire, reste bloqué en Angleterre malgré sa préférence pour les Caraïbes. Les changements d'attitude inévitables lorsque l'on vit dans un pays différent sont bien sûr l'une des raisons pour cela, quoique Lamming n'explore pas ce sujet avec la même sensibilité que Selvon. Dans son roman, la raison principale qu'ont les immigrés de ne pas rentrer au pays est leur échec à réaliser leurs objectifs économiques. Ils sont enfermés dans la pauvreté, or le succès économique et la capacité à être le soutien de famille sont liés au sentiment de virilité. Si Dickson est métaphoriquement émasculé par l'objectivation inhérente au regard que sa logeuse porte sur lui, Tornado est émasculé par les conditions de travail et d'exploitation qui l'empêchent de prospérer. Les freins principaux au retour sont donc

l'absence de prospérité et l'échec concomitant à construire une masculinité acceptable, même quand les conditions historiques et culturelles de prise de conscience par rapport à la colonisation sont remplies.

Ben Jelloun ne traite pas des illusions coloniales ni de la prise de conscience, nous l'avons vu, mais présente lui aussi une dynamique impliquant l'échec de l'avancement économique et de la virilité comme obstacles au retour. Cependant, ce thème du retour est traité de façon détournée : la place privilégiée du retour ressort de l'opposition entre un Maghreb idéalisé et une métropole morne et dangereuse. Le seul retour évoqué explicitement est celui d'un personnage décédé, ce qui vide la notion de sa substance, car si le départ de la métropole haïe est abordé, l'arrivée au village, les retrouvailles, sont hors d'atteinte. Les romans de Ben Jelloun et Lamming font du retour un élément privilégié, sans pour autant que cette injonction soit remplie. Mais cette base implique que le fait de rester en Europe est envisagé dans ces romans comme un échec.

Nostalgie de la terre d'exil

Le roman de Boudjedra contient lui aussi une opposition structurelle entre le Maghreb et la France, et donc entre le retour, privilégié, et l'installation en métropole, dénigrée. Il présente néanmoins des personnages immigrés rentrés au pays, les laskars, qui viennent compliquer cette opposition. A travers ces personnages, Boudjedra critique la perpétuation de l'émigration par la mystification qui résulte de l'attitude ostentatoire des émigrés rentrés au pays. De plus, ce retour est pour les laskars, au mieux, ambigu. Certes, ils jouissent d'un certain prestige à cause de leur accès aux devises (salaires, économies, pensions de vieillesse ou d'invalidité). Mais ils souffrent d'un isolement par rapport à leur village qui n'est pas sans rappeler celui des immigrés en France, jusque dans les aspects intimes de la vie. Tout ceci reflète la sensation inévitable que « l'absence est une faute » qu'on ne pardonne pas même à ceux qui sont revenus (Sayad, 2006, 154). Enfin, l'ironie

d'une nostalgie lancinante pour la métropole couronne ce retour bien décevant. Malgré son attachement explicite à la notion de retour et d'arrêt de l'émigration, Boudjedra reconnaît les difficultés inhérentes au retour des immigrés (Boudjedra, 1975b,a).

Une tension intrinsèque

Les romans de Selvon présentent eux aussi les difficultés des immigrés et la stagnation qui caractérise leur position dans la métropole. Le retour est aussi une idée récurrente chez lui, mais n'est pas offerte comme un idéal ou une injonction. Selvon l'explore au contraire consciemment comme source de tensions et de contradictions dans la vie de l'immigré, et ceci dès ses premiers écrits sur l'immigration. « Come Back to Grenada » (1955), premier jet de ce qui deviendrait *The Lonely Londoners*, est structurée autour des désirs contradictoires du personnage principal, tiraillé entre la nostalgie de son île tropicale et les attraits de Londres en été (Selvon, 1989a). Ce tiraillement est traduit dans le roman par les figures contrastées de Moses, installé à Londres depuis longtemps et qui rêve de rentrer aux Antilles, et Galahad, pour qui l'excitation de la capitale est sans pareille. Vingt ans plus tard dans les années 1970, Selvon représentera le retour d'un Moses transformé par son séjour en Angleterre à tel point qu'il en est un touriste dans sa propre île natale (Selvon, 1983). Cette tension apparaît déjà dans une nouvelle datant de l'arrivée de Selvon en Grande-Bretagne, « Poem in London », qui explore le caractère irréversible de l'acte d'immigration : « Si on peut toujours revenir au point de départ [...], en revanche on ne peut revenir au temps du départ, redevenir celui qu'on était au moment du départ, ni retrouver en l'état les lieux et les hommes qu'on a quittés » (Sayad, 2006, 141-142). Le narrateur en désigne les divers moments qui peuvent symboliser la nouvelle naissance, la transformation de l'émigré en immigré. Si les immigrés sont piégés en France et en Grande-Bretagne ou choisissent d'y rester, quel futur les romanciers

envisagent-ils pour eux ?

6.5.4 S'installer ?

Désintérêt

Nous l'avons vu, les personnages de *The Emigrants* de Lamming ne retournent pas aux Caraïbes, mais le roman ne donne pas l'impression qu'ils vont former une communauté. Dans la chambre de Tornado, un lieu de sociabilité où l'on discute de la relation entre les immigrés et la Grande-Bretagne, ce qui ressort est une loyauté envers la Caraïbe plutôt qu'un engagement envers une vie en Grande-Bretagne. Lamming retourne au thème de l'immigration antillaise en Grande-Bretagne en 1971 avec *Water With Berries*, où les relations entre les personnages ont un fonctionnement allégorique signifiant les relations entre la Grande-Bretagne et les Antilles. Les secrets de famille de la Vieille Douairière mettent Teeton face à face avec le véritable contexte historique de sa relation avec elle : les horreurs de l'histoire de l'esclavage. Quand il découvre qu'elle est raciste, ses illusions sont définitivement brisées. Teeton est menacé de mort par le beau-frère de sa logeuse et est victime d'un épisode de dissociation, qui lui permet de réaliser ce que Dickson n'avait pas réussi : la dislocation mentale lui permet de faire table rase de ses illusions et de réinventer de nouvelles façons de se comporter envers les deux personnages. Celles-ci se caractérisent par la violence, conformément à l'opinion de Lamming selon laquelle celle-ci est inévitable, étant donnée l'histoire coloniale.

Lamming refuse consciemment de représenter dans ses romans le vécu de la génération de jeunes Antillais ayant grandi en Grande-Bretagne. Cependant, la nouvelle perspective de Teeton à la fin de *Water With Berries*, aussi sombre soit-elle, paraît tout de même une forme de reconnaissance de l'attitude plus agressive des jeunes de couleur dans la Grande-Bretagne des années 1970. Le désintérêt de

Lamming pour cette expérience se conforme tout de même à une pensée délimitée par la catégorie nationale, qui n'envisage pas les pratiques diasporiques par lesquelles se développent des attaches identitaires multiples.

Un point aveugle

Il est difficile pour Chraïbi, Boudjedra et Ben Jelloun, de par leur forte critique de la modernité industrielle française, d'envisager l'installation des immigrés en métropole. Boudjedra écarte d'une phrase les jeunes grandissant en France ; Chraïbi présente l'enfant d'un couple mixte comme un être fragile et malade et ses Boucs, s'ils demeurent en France, se fondent dans le paysage, hors d'atteinte de la société française. Le roman de Ben Jelloun, s'il présente des immigrés qui demeurent en France, ne fournit pas de réflexion sur les conditions de la pérennité de leur présence. A l'inverse de Lamming, Ben Jelloun ne donne pas l'impression que son manque d'intérêt pour le sujet est réfléchi. Son roman ignore tout simplement l'émergence des femmes, des familles et des jeunes comme composantes de plus en plus significatives de la population maghrébine en France. Il faut rappeler que Boudjedra et Ben Jelloun ne rencontraient que des travailleurs immigrés type dans les contextes particuliers que sont les cours d'alphabétisation et un centre de soins pour maghrébins.

Ben Jelloun met tout de même en avant la présence de groupes militants dans son roman mais, alors que ses personnages abandonnent l'idée de militer pour les droits des travailleurs immigrés et se tournent vers le combat des Palestiniens, l'histoire du Mouvement des Travailleurs Arabes (MTA) a en réalité suivi la trajectoire inverse (Aissaoui, 2006). Ce type d'action militante fût un vecteur important de l'installation des immigrés maghrébins en France et de l'abandon du « mythe du retour », mais les militants eux-mêmes n'avaient pas toujours conscience de ce processus, comme le reconnaît Driss El Yazami, l'un des militants du MTA (Laurentin, 2008).

La figure de l'immigrant que Ben Jelloun et Boudjedra proposent correspond à une certaine réalité, mais correspond surtout à une représentation officielle de l'immigration. Ils en remettent en question certains aspects afin de contester les discours sur l'immigration et d'exposer au grand jour l'injustice de la condition immigrée. Cependant, ils tombent aussi dans le travers de ne pas remettre en question les bases mêmes de cette représentation, passant ainsi à côté des tendances qui se révéleraient les plus subversives pour des discours sur l'immigration fondés sur la nation.

Intérêt et exploration

L'homme qui enjamba la mer, de Mengouchi et Ramdane, diffère sensiblement des autres romans maghrébins sur l'immigration. Il se place sur le mode de la fiction spéculative : ni fantastique, ni science-fiction, ce roman imagine néanmoins une France en guerre civile et des immigrés se rebellant et prenant le contrôle de la ville de Paris à l'aide des fantômes de leurs semblables, assassinés. Plusieurs éléments du roman pourraient indiquer un processus d'installation, mais ils sont marginalisés par l'action et par le narrateur. La parole de Hassad, qui souhaiterait être enterré en France après l'échec d'un retour en Algérie, est sans cesse interrompue et dénigrée. Puis, le mariage de Zoubir et Zoulikha, qui se sont rencontrés en France, est laissé de côté par le narrateur, inquiet qu'il ne diminue la portée du thème de l'oppression des travailleurs immigrés. Enfin, lorsque ces mêmes travailleurs immigrés se rendent maîtres de la ville de Paris, leur première réaction est de retourner au Maghreb. Alors que Mengouchi et Ramdane sont les seuls parmi les romanciers maghrébins à envisager l'installation et une possibilité d'action pour les travailleurs, il semblent ne pas savoir quoi faire de cette éventualité.

L'insistance sur la séparation entre les immigrés et la population majoritaire,

ainsi que sur la notion de retour dans ces romans, correspond à l'une des caractéristiques des groupes diasporiques. Mais les romans maghrébins étudiés ici ne peuvent envisager les autres, notamment l'installation et les pratiques, constituant une manière d'« habiter autrement », qui définissent ces communautés (Clifford, 1999, 234).

Selvon, au contraire, a suivi le processus d'installation et d'adaptation des immigrés antillais dans tous ses écrits sur l'immigration, tout en en montrant les difficultés ainsi que la tension qui peut exister entre communauté et fragmentation. Les immigrés s'adaptent à l'Angleterre mais y laissent aussi leurs marques (Nasta, 1995; Woodcock, 1999). Les femmes contribuent largement à ce processus. Forbes (2005) suggère que dans *The Lonely Londoners*, les « garçons », comme le narrateur les appelle, interprètent les rôles masculins et féminins comme représentant les structures sociales et la responsabilité, et qu'ils rejettent ceci (ce qui est apparent dans leur refus d'appeler les femmes des femmes, n'utilisant que des expressions argotiques). La soirée dansante organisé par un immigré anglicisé, Harris, est un lieu de mélange culturel (Rahim, 2005; López Ropero, 2004; Thieme, 2003). Forbes argumente que la présence des femmes, et surtout de femmes d'âge mûr, est traitée dans le roman comme une menace pour le style de vie dissolu des garçons et qu'elles étouffent la vitalité linguistiques des personnages masculins. Je considère que la présence de plusieurs générations et genres dans ce roman, et dans cette scène en particulier, montre une attention plus soutenue de la part de Selvon au processus d'installation. En dansant avec Harris au son d'une chanson plus ou moins grivoise, la vieille Tanty représente l'union d'une certaine vitalité antillaise avec des structures sociales. Ainsi, malgré la stagnation sociale et économique et la discrimination qui affectent les immigrés, Selvon montrait dans les années 1950 les processus d'installation d'une minorité antillaise en Grande-Bretagne.

Les femmes continuent de jouer un rôle important dans le processus d'enracinement dans un autre roman de Selvon, publié dans les années 1960. *The Lonely Londoners* utilise l'humour et la figure du trickster pour montrer la résistance des immigrés face à des conditions difficiles, mais *The Housing Lark* reconnaît les limites de cette approche ; le narrateur se moque des personnages qui adoptent cette posture. Les femmes affirment l'importance du projet d'acheter une maison pour tenter d'améliorer les conditions de vie de leurs familles. Elles sont actives et semblent réussir là où les garçons stagnent. Ce motif n'est toutefois pas progressiste. Il reproduit la tension entre la présence féminine comme socialement structurante et une certaine conception de la masculinité comme irresponsable, un schéma qui se conforme aux représentations, courantes aux Caraïbes, d'une opposition entre le foyer comme domaine d'une féminité respectable et stabilisante, et la rue comme lieu masculin de liberté (Barrow, 1998; Antonio de Moya, 2004).

Selvon présente dans ses romans sur l'immigration l'installation des immigrés antillais en Grande-Bretagne comme un processus basé sur un mélange des cultures fait sur une base d'égalité entre celles-ci. Le mélange des registres de langue dans *Moses Ascending* en est l'exemple, tout comme son traitement moqueur des immigrés trop anglicisés. Certains anecdotes de *The Housing Lark* et un projet de pièce pour la télévision, « Brackley and the baby », indiquent que selon lui, une attitude d'apaisement face aux préjugés des Britanniques est une perte de temps qui se retourne contre les immigrés (Selvon, nd). Pour Selvon, l'immigré doit s'adapter dans une certaine mesure au pays où il s'établit, mais a aussi une richesse à apporter à ce pays.

En suivant le processus d'adaptation et d'installation, Selvon ne minimise pas

les tensions qui peuvent exister, non seulement entre les immigrés et une population hostile, mais aussi entre les immigrés eux-mêmes. Le personnage irresponsable de Battersby dans *The Housing Lark*, est traité avec un peu moins d'indulgence que son prédécesseur Cap dans le roman antérieur. Cette préoccupation continue dans *Moses Ascending*, où les progrès de Moses, qui a réussi à s'acheter une maison, mais aussi son refus d'assumer son appartenance à une communauté antillaise, ont des résultats ambigus.

Selvon est le seul des écrivains étudiés ici à s'intéresser à l'expérience des jeunes d'ascendance antillaise grandissant en Grande-Bretagne. Ses dramatiques pour la BBC se distinguent de ses romans car il n'y utilise pas l'esthétique inspirée du calypso et des contes populaires antillais caractéristique des *Lonely Londoners* ou de *The Housing Lark*. Ceci lui permet d'explorer avec sensibilité les émotions d'un jeune homme et d'un jeune fille confrontés à leurs racines multiples et à leur position instable en Grande-Bretagne : ils ne sont ni tout à fait antillais mais reconnaissent aussi qu'ils ne sont pas complètement accepté dans le pays où ils ont grandi (Selvon, 1968b, 1975). Les pièces explorent les tensions entre ces jeunes gens et leurs parents. Eloisa en particulier, dans « You right in the smoke », négocie non seulement l'affirmation de sa position en tant que jeune fille Britannique (bien qu'elle reconnaisse les similitudes entre sa situation et celle de son père), mais aussi une identité féminine dans un monde patriarcal. Elle fuit les règles trop strictes de son père mais décide de rester seule plutôt que d'entrer immédiatement dans une vie de couple avec son ami anglais, Jim. Les deux dramatiques donnent aussi une vision plus positive des relations possibles entre les immigrés et les Britanniques, puisque toutes deux s'achèvent sur le début d'une relation amoureuse. L'évocation des problèmes de discrimination dans les deux pièces indique que ce projet d'une Grande-Bretagne multiraciale et multiculturelle est difficile, mais Selvon y affirme que la place des Antillais en Grande-Bretagne n'est pas séparée, même s'il représente des jeunes qui y

« habitent différemment », sans renier ce qui les rattache aux origines de leurs parents. Ce parti pris est encore plus fort dans *Moses Ascending* à travers le personnage de Brenda. Elle est britannique, mais elle est consciente de la situation peu sûre des antillais en Grande-Bretagne et affirme sa position en tant que Britannique en utilisant les ressources linguistiques des Antilles (Forbes, 2005).

Les romanciers maghrébins et antillais qui dépeignent l'expérience des travailleurs immigrés en France et en Angleterre après la deuxième guerre mondiale font de la déstructuration psychologique et sociale un élément représentatif et l'utilisent pour dénoncer le sort des immigrés. Ils prennent en compte le statut ambigu de l'immigration, qui est toujours considérée comme temporaire mais conduit à une installation non prévue des immigrés. Malgré cela, à l'exception de Selvon, leur approche des thèmes du retour et de l'installation démontre la même incapacité que les autorités à penser l'immigration comme durable. Lamming, Boudjedra et Ben Jelloun intègrent tous des réflexions politiques conscientes sur la relation coloniale et les relations de domination caractéristiques du capitalisme mondial. L'approche plus humaniste et individualiste de Selvon, qui ne considère pas l'immigration uniquement comme un problème social, est peut-être la raison pour laquelle il peut considérer les phénomènes d'installation que les autres ne traitent pas.

6.6 Chapitre 5. Réception

Les romans étudiés ici présentent, à des degrés divers, une dénonciation de la situation des immigrés antillais en Grande-Bretagne et maghrébins en France. Certains de ces romans exigent une réponse qui va au-delà de l'appréciation esthétique : ils tentent de convaincre un lectorat, indifférent ou hostile, que la situation doit changer (Chraïbi, Boudjedra, Ben Jelloun), ou tentent d'exposer les déterminants historiques de la rencontre entre immigrés et autochtones (Lamming, Kateb). Publiés en France et en Grande-Bretagne, comme la majeure partie

de la production littéraire antillaise en langue anglaise et maghrébine en langue française de l'époque, ces romans s'adressent à un public métropolitain. Sont-ils entendus ? Ce chapitre évalue la réception des romans de l'immigration dans la presse généraliste anglaise et française de l'époque, après avoir étudié le contexte de la réception des littératures maghrébine et antillaise en général.

6.6.1 Tendances de la réception

Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, un nombre croissant de romans, par des auteurs maghrébins écrivant en français et des auteurs antillais écrivant en anglais est publié dans les principales maisons d'édition de Paris et de Londres. Ces romans sont donc évalués dans la presse au même titre que les autres publications de ces éditeurs. Les études existantes sur la réception de ces littératures suggèrent qu'elle est plutôt réductrice, qu'elle soit fondée sur une approche documentaire au détriment des aspects littéraires (Déjeux, 1993a; Bonn, 1995, 2001b; Bennaïr, 1999; Lotodé, 2003), ou qu'elle réitère des clichés sur les pays chauds (Allis, 1982; Lawson Welsh, 1996). On peut identifier de telles tendances. En France en particulier, dans le contexte des luttes de libération, les critiques de tous bords considèrent les romans maghrébins comme des sources d'informations. Mais, dans leur majorité, les comptes-rendus de romans maghrébins et antillais les traitent tout de même comme romans, adoptant une approche purement littéraire ou une approche mixte, alliant observations sur les aspects d'actualité et commentaires sur le style. Les critiques français et anglais n'hésitent pas à considérer ces romans dans le contexte de la littérature européenne afin de les situer pour leurs lecteurs. En général, les romans mineurs sont traités de façon documentaire et comparé à des œuvres mineures, alors que les romans plus importants - ou participant des tendances expérimentales de ces deux littératures émergentes - forcent les critiques à se référer à la tradition littéraire européenne des dix-neuvième et vingtième siècles. Ceci renforce l'opinion selon laquelle les critiques traitaient ces

romans en tant qu'œuvres littéraires. Cependant, cette pratique peut conduire à la suppression des aspects spécifiquement maghrébins ou antillais des romans concernés. Les critiques avaient-ils des opinions particulières sur ces littératures en tant que maghrébines ou antillaises ?

6.6.2 Conceptions de la littérature maghrébine et des Caraïbes

Certains facteurs ont pu encourager les critiques à considérer la littérature maghrébine en langue française et la littérature antillaise en langue anglaise comme des littératures à part, régionales. A Londres, l'émission de radio littéraire *Caribbean Voices* (1946-1958), joue un rôle important dans le développement de la littérature antillaise en langue anglaise ; ses critiques ont pour objectif de d'encourager la qualité d'une littérature considérée comme régionale (Calder-Marshall, 1948; Cobham, 1986; Nanton, 1998; Griffiths, 2001). Arthur Calder-Marshall, en particulier, publie des articles dans ce sens dans les pages du prestigieux *Times Literary Supplement* (Calder-Marshall, 1952, 1955). En France, le fait que les auteurs maghrébins soient en général musulmans et aient le statut d'« indigènes », ou de Français musulmans, mais surtout les tensions inhérentes aux conflits anticoloniaux, peuvent pousser les critiques littéraires à les considérer comme un groupe à part. Cependant, des deux côtés de la Manche, la plupart des critiques perçoivent ces romanciers en tant qu'individus. Quelques comptes-rendus groupés sont publiés à l'apparition des auteurs maghrébins sur la scène littéraire française en 1952, et à la suite des émeutes racistes de 1958 en Angleterre, mais la tendance générale est de suivre la carrière d'un écrivain ou de le voir dans le contexte de la littérature française ou britannique.

S'il y a des conceptions de la littérature maghrébine ou de celle des Antilles, elles se développent à partir du contenu des romans eux-mêmes. Les premiers romans du début des années 1950 semblent s'attacher à dépeindre les sociétés

maghrébines et antillaises, et les critiques tiennent les romans pour des représentations plus authentiques et plus proches de la vérité que celles fournies par les voyageurs européens. Cependant, lorsque des auteurs maghrébins tels que Chraïbi et Kateb commencent à publier des romans critiquant les sociétés maghrébines traditionnelles ou le colonialisme, les critiques français intègrent cette dimension plus politique dans leur conception de la littérature nord-africaine. Seuls les critiques ayant un intérêt dans la définition d'une littérature antillaise ou maghrébine semblent avoir eu des opinions normatives sur ce qu'un roman maghrébin ou antillais devrait être.

Esthétiques convergentes ou séparées ?

Ni les Antilles ni le Maghreb n'était considéré comme une « région productrice de culture » avant l'émergence de leurs littératures après la deuxième guerre mondiale (Bonn, 1995, 49). Les critiques français et britanniques, dont les cultures étaient conçues comme le sommet de la civilisation de par la domination impériale, avaient conscience que ces écrivains étaient situés en marge de l'histoire et de la culture, bien qu'étant publiés à Paris et à Londres. Certains des critiques, aussi bienveillants soient-ils, ne se départissent donc pas du sentiment que ces littératures des marges ne peuvent être proprement intéressantes que si elles se rapprochent, dans la forme et dans les préoccupations, des littératures européennes modernes, considérées comme porteuses d'une expérience universelle. Ces critiques voient donc les littératures maghrébine et antillaise comme étant dans leur enfance et comme ayant vocation à converger avec les critères de la littérature occidentale, y compris ses hiérarchies entre culture et culture populaire, comédie et littérature sérieuse.

Les auteurs antillais et maghrébins, formés à l'école coloniale, connaissent ces traditions et les manipulent. Ils le font pour des motifs esthétiques et/ou politiques et mêlent des techniques proches des avant-gardes et les riches traditions du

Maghreb et des Antilles. Quelle est la réaction des critiques ?

La réception des littératures maghrébine et antillaise tend à privilégier les romanciers qui traitent des thèmes « universaux » et dont la forme se conforme aux conventions littéraires occidentales. C'est le cas pour Dib et Naipaul, qui cessent graduellement de se focaliser sur le domaine algérien et le domaine antillais. Le contraste avec la réception de Lamming et Harris est éclairant : ces derniers mènent des expérimentations au niveau de la forme, ce que Dib et Naipaul font aussi, mais se concentrent sur l'exploration des racines multiples des cultures des Caraïbes. Ils dédaignent les conventions européennes de clarté et de réalisme, ce que les critiques leur reprochent. La critique ne procède donc pas toujours d'une attitude condescendante mais d'une conception arrêtée de ce qui fait la bonne littérature. L'universalisme, ici, a trait aux normes esthétiques.

Les critiques tendent à négliger ou ignorer aussi les caractéristiques esthétiques fondées sur des normes non-européennes. Dans le cas de la littérature antillaise, l'utilisation de formes tirées des traditions populaires est traitée comme une simple faiblesse, comme le montre la réception des romans de Selvon jusque dans les années 1970 (Huth, 1975 ; voir aussi Scott, 1953; Tylden-Wright, 1957; Nicholson, 1958c). Les critiques ignorent les apports d'autres cultures, et surtout les apports de la culture populaire, tout en niant, pour certains, le droit des auteurs antillais de procéder à des expériences avec les conventions de la littérature. Dans le cas de la littérature maghrébine, les critiques se réfèrent à une esthétique non-européenne, mais le résultat est similaire. Les critiques louent le dynamisme et le caractère expérimental d'une certaine littérature maghrébine mais l'étude de la réception de *Nedjma* de Kateb montre que celui-ci n'est jamais vraiment mise sur un pied d'égalité avec les avant-gardes occidentales. Les critiques, tout en affirmant la qualité de l'écriture, ramènent la forme du roman à une supposée esthétique du conteur arabe. Ce renvoi paternaliste du roman à une tradition

populaire orale permet au critique de ne pas le comparer aux avant-gardes françaises, mais dénie aussi l'habileté du romancier et le caractère délibéré de la subversion formelle qu'il opère. Ce paradigme a connu une présence durable dans la réception de la littérature maghrébine en France, jusqu'à la consécration de Tahar Ben Jelloun par le prix Goncourt en 1987.

6.6.3 Reconnaissance des aspects politiques

La tendance des critiques à évaluer les écrivains maghrébins ou antillais au plan individuel et à utiliser la littérature occidentale pour ce faire dénote une approche proprement littéraire de leurs textes. Mais l'examen des critères esthétiques des critiques révèle leur incapacité ou leur réticence à apprécier à leur juste valeur des projets esthétiques s'éloignant des paramètres de la littérature européenne. Bien des critiques semblent ne pas envisager la possibilité qu'un écrivain puisse expérimenter de façon délibérée et provocatrice, et préfèrent interpréter les résultats de cette expérimentation comme un manque de talent ou un signe d'atavisme.

Une telle attitude a des implications politiques. Les littératures émergentes des pays colonisés sont liées, consciemment ou non, au mouvement vers l'indépendance. La représentation littéraire d'une société selon les termes de ses membres est un défi à l'idéologie impériale ; elle peut appuyer la demande politique d'indépendance en renforçant la conscience d'un groupe ethnique ou national, miner la conception des peuples colonisés comme appartenant à l'empire et remettre en question la supériorité des normes culturelles européennes. Que les auteurs maghrébins et antillais aient des motivations politiques ou non, le fait qu'ils situent l'action de leurs romans dans les sociétés de leur naissance implique nécessairement qu'elles évoquent des problèmes intimement liés à la situation coloniale. Par conséquent, et dans le contexte de la décolonisation, le fait d'envisager les littératures maghrébines et antillaises comme des branches de la littérature française ou britannique plutôt

que comme des traditions à part a des implications politiques. De même, la réaction des critiques aux messages politiques explicites ou implicites contenus dans les romans, qui correspondent en général à une critique du colonialisme, est significative.

Au début des années 1950, les quelques critiques qui s'interrogent sur le positionnement des littératures maghrébine et antillaise tendent à les incorporer dans la littérature française ou britannique. Seul un petit nombre de critiques considèrent les auteurs antillais ou maghrébins en tant que groupes, et la notion de ces littératures comme traditions autonomes n'émerge que difficilement, après l'indépendance. Il est aussi relativement rare que les critiques fassent le rapprochement entre ces écrivains et les autres écrivains de pays colonisés en Afrique ou en Asie. Un petit nombre d'articles font le rapprochement avec les écrivains Africains-Américains ou Africains, mais très peu font le lien avec la décolonisation. Certains évitent même soigneusement d'évoquer la relation coloniale (voir en particulier Calder-Marshall, 958e).

Les critiques britanniques ont conscience que la littérature antillaise traite souvent de thèmes sociaux et politiques, et en particulier du problème du racisme, mais l'impression qui se dégage de leurs commentaires est que, dans leur majorité, ils trouvent cette insistance déplaisante. En particulier, bien peu d'entre eux sont prêts à reconnaître la présence du thème du colonialisme dans plusieurs romans antillais. Calder-Marshall, pourtant l'un des défendeurs de la littérature antillaise en tant que catégorie, donne un exemple flagrant de cette attitude. Les critiques français, du fait d'un contexte politique que peu pouvaient ignorer, montrent moins de réticence face aux thèmes politiques et sociaux, bien que certains d'entre eux ignorent ostensiblement ces aspects des romans. Une poignée de critiques font néanmoins le lien entre les innovations formelles de certains romans antillais et leurs thèmes politiques, notamment dans les comptes-rendus du *Polygone étoilé* de Kateb (Gorin, 1966; Estang, 1966) et de *Palace of the Peacock* de Wilson

Harris (Barker, 1960; West, 1960; Playfair, 1962; Scott, 1963).

6.6.4 Réception des romans de l'immigration

Les comptes-rendus des romans ayant pour sujet les immigrés reflètent les tendances générales de la réception des littératures maghrébine et antillaise en général. Ces romans reçoivent une réception variée, caractérisée dans certains cas par une approche documentaire, mais dans d'autres par l'attention portée aux aspects littéraires. Ici encore, les critiques privilégient les formes littéraires proches des normes occidentales et négligent les formes inspirées de la culture populaire. Dans l'ensemble, les critiques sont réceptifs au discours des romans sur l'immigration.

Influence des conventions européennes pour les critiques

La réception contrastée des *Emigrants* de Lamming et des *Mimic Men* de Naipaul démontre bien la demande implicite d'une convergence avec les critères esthétiques européens. Le style réaliste et lucide du roman de Naipaul, malgré sa structure temporelle complexe, séduit les critiques, qui n'hésitent pas non plus à prendre en compte ce que le narrateur a à dire sur la relation coloniale (Green, 1967; Caribbean and Aegean, 1967; Wilson, 1967; Jones, 1967). Cela n'est pas le cas pour le roman de Lamming qui, nous l'avons vu, suit des personnages multiples et concentre le thème colonial dans des discussion entre des personnages qui parlent l'anglais populaire des Caraïbes. Les critiques goûtent peu la densité de son écriture dans ses romans *The Emigrants* et *Water With Berries*, se référant implicitement à la norme de transparence narrative inhérente à la tradition du roman réaliste (Muir, 1954; Shrapnel, 1972a,b).

Bonn (2001b) suggère que les romans de Chraïbi et Boudjedra bénéficient d'une tendance similaire : le fait que leurs romans se situant clairement dans la lignée de la littérature occidentale d'avant-garde (Faulkner, Nouveau Roman),

alors que ceux de Bourboune et Farès, à l'instar de Lamming et Harris, dédaignent les styles occidentaux, expliquerait la différence dans l'accueil qui leur est fait. Les romans de Selvon sont plutôt bien reçus, mais la plupart des critiques sont relativement condescendants envers le langage utilisé (Freeman, 1956; Hopkinson, 1956; Nicholson, 1958b; Huth, 1975). En effet, dans ses romans consacrés à l'immigration, Selvon adopte une forme modifiée de l'anglais populaire de Trinidad non seulement pour les dialogues mais aussi pour la narration.

Dans certains cas, donc, l'influence des opinions des critiques sur la littérature se traduit par une incapacité à reconnaître des techniques littéraires non-européennes, ce qui en retour les empêchent d'accorder une grande attention aux thèmes socio-politiques des romans. D'autres comptes-rendus de romans sur l'immigration reproduisent la réticence à reconnaître ces thèmes socio-politiques, non pas pour des raisons littéraires mais parce qu'ils privilégient les thèmes « universels ». Cela a pour conséquence que les dénonciations spécifiques des romans sur la situation des immigrés sont minimisées (Calder-Marshall, 1954; Mauriac, 1975). Jennings (1954) et Poirot-Delpech (1975), en particulier, semblent penser que l'immigration n'est pas un sujet intéressant par lui-même les publics britanniques et français.

Demande d'authenticité et attitude normative

On peut discerner l'approche documentaire évoquée plus haut dans certaines critiques des romans sur l'immigration. A nouveau, cette approche se fonde sur l'idée que des romans écrits par des membres du même groupe ethnique ou régional que ceux qu'ils dépeignent fournissent une représentation plus authentique. Mais les idées préconçues ont beaucoup plus d'influence sur l'attitude des critiques dans le domaine de l'immigration que pour la réception des littératures

maghrébine et antillaise en général, et les déviations par rapport aux représentations attendues sont remarquées. La décision de Salkey de présenter un personnage dont les interrogations identitaires ne concernent ni le racisme, ni le colonialisme, mais plutôt son orientation sexuelle, n'est pas très bien reçue (New fiction, 960c; Amis, 1960; Coleman, 1960). En France, l'introduction d'un personnage d'intellectuel dans le roman de Chraïbi n'est pas appréciée non plus (Coiplet, 1955). Quand il s'agit d'immigrés, un certain nombre de critiques sont d'avis que les préoccupations sociales l'emportent sur les considérations littéraires et que les romanciers ont donc des devoirs envers leur sujet. Pour certains, ils doivent présenter une bonne image de ce groupe injustement affligé de représentations négatives (voir Dabydeen, 2000; New fiction, 956a,b). D'autres au contraire veulent que les romans insistent sur le scandale des conditions de vie des immigrés (Sombre fureur, 1955; Storm-tossed, 1972). On peut difficilement reprocher une telle attitude aux critiques puisque, à l'exception de Selvon, les romanciers traitant de l'immigration avaient manifestement l'intention d'intervenir dans le débat public sur le sujet. Un petit nombre de critiques ont cependant su prendre en compte ces interventions sans négliger les qualités littéraires des romans. Ils reconnaissent même le rôle de la forme littéraire des romans dans la transmission de leur message socio-politique (Rousseaux, 1955; Leonardini, 1975).

6.6.5 Conclusion

On voit donc que la réception des romans sur l'immigration est conditionnée par les attitudes des critiques envers la littérature, les littératures émergentes, et l'immigration elle-même. La majorité des auteurs de romans sur ce phénomène ont une conception politique du rôle de la littérature, même s'ils la séparent du domaine politique proprement dit, et ils ont surtout la conviction que des formes littéraires nouvelles et provocantes peuvent servir ce rôle politique. Chez les critiques, une conception normative, traditionnelle ou eurocentrique de la

littérature conduit à un point aveugle : la dimension politique est évacuée ou les techniques littéraires novatrices négligées. Les critiques qui admettent le contenu socio-politique des romans le font à cause d'une conviction pré-existante de l'importance de la question et peuvent négliger l'apport de la perspective autre, tant au plan de l'interprétation du phénomène qu'au plan littéraire, des romanciers maghrébins et antillais.

6.7 Conclusion

Les romanciers maghrébins francophones et antillais anglophones ayant traité le sujet de l'immigration vers la métropole coloniale ont adopté des manières variées de dépeindre ce phénomène. Il existe des contrastes aussi forts au sein des groupes maghrébins et antillais qu'entre eux. On peut néanmoins identifier des tendances générales. Tous les romanciers dénoncent les difficiles conditions de vie et le racisme qui frappe les immigrés, et mettent cette dénonciation au service d'une interpellation du public français et britannique qui met en avant les déterminants coloniaux de ses attitudes, que ce soit au moyen de techniques de narration ou du thème de la maladie mentale. Il existe aussi des distinctions selon la période : dans les années 1950, sous les régimes coloniaux, les analyses de Lamming et de Chraïbi ou Kateb sont assez proches. Dans les années 1970 au contraire, Ben Jelloun et Boudjedra adoptent une analyse économique de la domination internationale qui fait sa place au colonialisme mais rappelle la théorie des world systems (voir Wallerstein, 1974), alors que Lamming et Selvon ont une approche fondée sur les "race relations". Cette distinction reproduit celle qui existe dans le discours des sciences sociales à l'époque (Castles et al., 1984). Les romanciers maghrébins partagent néanmoins avec Lamming une réticence certaine à envisager l'immigration comme durable et à dépeindre l'installation des populations immigrées en France et en Grande-Bretagne. Selvon, au contraire, explore ce thème avec attention dans les années 1960 et 1970.

Le parallélisme entre le discours littéraire et celui des sciences sociales pousse à interroger la figure de l'immigré présentée par ces romanciers. A travers leurs représentations, les romanciers remettent en question certains aspects de la définition de l'immigré qui sous-tend les discours alarmistes prévalant dans les sociétés française et britanniques de l'époque. Mais ils se conforment à d'autres aspects, notamment la notion de l'immigration comme temporaire et la négligence des femmes dans l'immigration. De plus, l'immigré qui est présenté est une figure caractérisée par la défaite, ce qui se rapporte bien sûr à une certaine réalité mais ignore tout de même les engagements forts des associations immigrées dans les années 1970 en France comme en Grande-Bretagne. Les romanciers entendent parler pour les immigrés dans un certain débat sociétal, mais les inflexions de leurs représentations ne sont-elles pas dommageables à ceux qu'ils prétendent défendre ?

Il n'est pas certain qu'on puisse accuser ces romanciers de substituer leurs préoccupations à celles des immigrés : la présences de personnages d'écrivains dans les romans rappelle et rend évidente la différence entre l'auteur et les travailleurs immigré ; de plus c'est souvent ce personnage qui interpelle le lecteur. L'absence de parole du personnage de l'immigré ouvrier exploité dans ces romans n'est pas un abandon de cette figure mais un respect de son opacité (voir Glissant, 1990, 204). Les romanciers utilisent leur position entre la culture européenne et la culture populaire de leurs pays d'origine pour répondre et remettre en question le discours du colonisateur, mais ne prétendent pas que ce pouvoir textuel qu'ils s'arrogent soit équivalent à une amélioration de la situation des immigrés. Ils rappellent, par contre, des dimensions négligées du débat sur l'immigration en France et en Grande-Bretagne. Malgré tout, leur représentation de l'immigré, qui exclut bien des aspects positifs de l'expérience, et qui exclut aussi en majorité le vécu des femmes, est troublante.

Au vu des similitudes identifiées entre les romans maghrébins en langue française et antillais en langue anglaise sur l'immigration vers la métropole, il serait utile d'étendre ce travail comparatif aux romans s'intéressant au vécu des étudiants et classes moyennes ainsi qu'à des romans plus tardifs explorant le vécu des femmes et des enfants. Des études existent qui examinent les représentations de l'immigration dans la littérature en Grande-Bretagne et en France, mais souvent leur champ se délimite aux frontières nationales et linguistiques du pays de destination, le territoire de l'ancien colonisateur. La comparaison des représentations de l'immigration coloniale et postcoloniale d'après-guerre des deux côtés de la Manche permet de mettre l'accent sur les déterminants coloniaux de la situation des immigrés et sur les remises en question de la représentation du problème de l'immigration en France et en Grande-Bretagne, ce qui permet de se diriger vers une décolonisation culturelle de la métropole.

Cette thèse examine la représentation littéraire de migrations depuis des colonies vers les centres impériaux à l'époque de la décolonisation par l'analyse comparative de romans antillais en langue anglaise et maghrébins en langue française traitant d'immigration vers la Grande Bretagne et la France respectivement. L'attention portée à la relation de domination est un point de convergence majeur. Lamming, Chraïbi et Kateb la présentent comme une relation coloniale ayant des effets tant économiques que psychologiques et culturels. Boudjedra et Ben Jelloun dans les années 1970 placent et l'immigration et la colonisation le cadre plus large de l'exploitation capitaliste. La représentation des conditions de vie difficiles et de la marginalisation des immigrés participe dans ces romans d'une critique générale de la modernité européenne. Les auteurs maghrébins dénoncent le caractère oppressant de la rationalité occidentale, tandis que les romanciers antillais se concentrent sur les racines coloniale de l'attitude des Britanniques face aux populations non-Européennes. Des deux côtés, on répond au discours colonialiste et à la représentation positive du colonisateur à travers la manipulation du point de vue et de la voix narratifs et le thème de la folie. La plupart des écrivains réfutent les images négatives des immigrés en insistant sur des aspects négligés, tels que la dimension émotionelle de leur vécu et les tenants et aboutissants coloniaux des relations entre immigrés et autochtones. Ce faisant, leurs représentations finissent par se conformer à la figure de l'immigré sous-tendant les discours qu'ils dénoncent. Leurs préoccupations se distinguent de celles de générations d'auteurs ultérieures et de discours récents sur les populations d'origine maghrébine et antillaise en France et en Grande Bretagne : à l'exception de Selvon et, de façon plus ambiguë, de Mengouchi et Ramdane, ces auteurs ne s'intéressent pas aux processus de formation de minorités ethniques ou diasporiques dans ces deux pays.
Mots-clés : littérature en langue anglaise - Caraïbes ; littérature en langue française - Maghreb ; migration dans la littérature ; folie dans la littérature ; réception ; approche postcoloniale

This thesis examines the literary representation of migration from a colony to the imperial metropolis in the period of decolonisation through a comparative analysis of novels by Anglophone Caribbean and Francophone Maghribi writers about migration to Britain and France respectively. A major point of convergence is the focus on the relationship of domination. Lamming, Chraïbi and Kateb address this explicitly as a colonial relationship that is psychological and cultural as well as economic, whereas the 1970s writers Boudjedra and Ben Jelloun place both immigration and colonisation within a wider framework of capitalist exploitation. The difficult material conditions and the racism targeting immigrants are not depicted for their own sake but are the occasion of a wide-ranging critique of European modernity. Maghribi writers attack the rationality of Western civilisation as oppressive, whereas the Caribbean novelists focus on the colonial roots of attitudes to non-Europeans. Both sets of writers nonetheless provide responses to European colonialist discourse and to the positive self-presentation of the coloniser through the manipulation of narrative point of view and voice and through the theme of mental breakdown. Most of the novelists set out to refute negative representations of immigrants by restoring aspects they feel are neglected, in particular the emotional dimension of the immigrant experience and the colonial determinants of the relationship between immigrants and natives. In doing so their representations of immigration often conform to the immigrant figure underpinning the discourses they attack. Their preoccupations are distinct from those of later writers and recent discourses about Caribbean and Maghribi populations in Britain and France: with the exception of Selvon and, more ambiguously, Mengouchi and Ramdane, the novelists are not interested in the process of formation of ethnic/diasporic minorities in France and Britain.
Keywords: Caribbean literature in English; North African literature in French; migration in literature; mental illness in literature; reception; postcolonial approach

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