CHAPTER II
Caribbean Creole Language and Creolization in the Selected Fiction of Selvon

The English word ‘creole’ is derived from French ‘cre´ole,’ which the term came from Portuguese ‘Crioulo’. This word, a derivate of the verb ‘criar’ (‘to raise’), was coined in the 15th century in the trading and military outposts established by Portugal in West Africa and Cape Verde. The term ‘creole,’ originally referred to a white man of European descent, born and raised in a tropical colony (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language). The term later meant indigenous people and others of non-European origin and was soon applied to the languages spoken by creoles in and around the Caribbean and in West Africa. Yet the most common use of the term in English was to mean ‘born in the West Indies,’ whether white or black (Ashcroft 1998: 57). As Brathwaite points out, the term was used in Trinidad to refer to the black descendants of slaves to distinguish them from East Indian immigrants. Edward Brathwaite explains:

New ethnic groups such as Portuguese, Chinese, Indians were introduced. New colorations into the black / white / coloured stratification; New numerical dispositions, new religions: moslem / Hindu, new occupational specializations – cocoa / rice–farming and new cultural identities, problem and orientations were continuously introduced into the already fragmented world. (Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 24)

Caribbean is not ethnically, culturally or nationally homogenous. Selvon himself was a creole from Trinidad. He says “I was creolized from an early age, which is a good thing, in my opinion as a mixing of tradition makes for a more harmonious world” (Nasta, 1988: 70-71). Selvon’s novels reflect the diversity of West Indies. His immigrant novels: The Lonely Londoners, Moses Ascending and Moses Migrating explore the first phase of British Black community from their arrival as West Indian migrants and their transition to becoming what Stuart Hall calls the ‘New Ethnicity’ and the ‘New World’ (Postcolonial Theory: A Reader, 110). In this context, K T Sunitha in her thesis Caribbean Transition: Motif of Journey in the Fiction of George
Lamming records the inner psychological journey of the Caribbean transition from the ‘old world’ to the ‘new world’ that is towards ‘creolization process’:

Caribbean novelists like Samuel Selvon and George Lamming explore an imaginative insight into the growth of West Indian sensibility and interpret to the West Indian history coupled with an exposition of Caribbean transitions in society. The West Indian history deals with journeys, the original one being that of the Atlantic slave trade to the Islands, voyages between them, emigration to England in the 1950’s and the journeys are explored by Selvon, Lamming and other Caribbean Writers as historical facts. As a historical fact, Empire creation and colonial settlement involved on the part of Conquerors or settlers, a transition with a beginning in the ‘Old World’ and an arrival in the ‘New’. The arrival in a ‘new world’ involved for settlers and conquerors a dislocation of geography, climate and race. (Caribbean Transition: Motif of Journey in the Fiction of George Lamming; (thesis) 1984, 1)

At the centre of Selvon’s works lies the experience of ‘creolization’. Creolization is the transformation of traditional cultural patterns of European, African and Indian as they made historical contact with each other. Ethnic and social differences in a plural, hierarchical, racially–structured society insure that creolization cannot be reduced to westernization. Selvon’s works explore the indulging contradiction in the creolization and hybridization process and point to historical possibilities beyond India, Africa or Europe. Hybridization and creolization can be observed in a variety of disciplines covering linguistic, cultural, and racial concerns. The present study focuses on the creole and hybrid identities in the context of cultural changes in the Caribbean.

One of the contemporary authors who has been long neglected by academic criticism and who came to the Department of English, University of Mysore, Mysore, Karnataka in 1984 is the Trinidadian, Samuel Selvon, best known for his novels The Lonely Londoners (Moses trilogy), and A Brighter Sun (peasant novels). In these works he experiments with a language and culture that is neither English nor Trinidad ‘creole,’ but an artificial fusion where two languages, even cultures, merge and blend to yield an innovative and precocious response to the difficulties brought about by decolonization. Behind his humour, there is an implicit critique of colonialist mental
enhancement and of the rigid application of alien aesthetic canons, which go hand in hand with his linguistic challenge against western cultural discourses. A range of questions related to the universal nature of European and British experience are addressed to the readers in his Moses novels, and he finds inside ‘hybrid’ and ‘creole’ languages and multiple cultural signs (creolization).

Selvon neither rejects British language and culture nor does he parrot English literature. Instead, he maintains a position which is not unlike other Caribbean writers such as Lamming, Walcott, Brathwaite in that he recognizes the inescapable weight of European influence but still interrogates and contaminates it using ‘other’ narratives. Colonialist violence is thus countered by what Homi K. Bhabha calls ‘cultural hybridism’ (The Location of Culture), which does not postulate a one-way process when two or more cultures come into intact, but a fruitful reciprocal and unavoidable influence.

One of the most influential advocates of the use of ‘creole’ or Caribbean English rather than Standard English has been Brathwaite, the Barbadian poet and historian. Brathwaite coined the term ‘national language’ which he defines: “the kind of English spoken by the Caribbean, not the official English now, but the language of slaves and labourers, the servants who were brought in by the conquistances” (Brathwaite, History of the Voice: The Development of National Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry, 5-6). The ‘national language’ refers to culturally specific ways of speaking in the Caribbean islands that is, those aspects which are distinctively Caribbean in terms of syntax, intonation, vocabulary and pronunciation. (Innes, C.L. Postcolonial Literature, 106)

The languages of the Caribbean reflect the region’s diverse history and culture. There is great variety among the languages. There are six official languages spoken in the Caribbean which are Dutch, Spanish, French, English, Haitian Creole, and French Creole. However, there are also a number of creoles and local patois among the languages in use. Dozens of creole languages of the Caribbean are widely used informally among the general population. There are also a few additional smaller indigenous languages. Many of the indigenous languages have become extinct or are dying out. In recent years, the postcolonial Caribbean islands have become aware of a linguistic inheritance of sorts. However, in the Caribbean, languages are mostly aimed at multilingualism. The mixture of languages and cultures produced their counterpart
in legends drawn from deeply fed layers of imagination. The present study is an attempt to examine the nature of English language usage in postcolonial fiction. Even as the novelists are engaged in creative writing, their involvement with English language is crucial to the analysis of postcolonial fiction since they use various strategies to appropriate the English language so as to suit their ideological intentions. Given the fact that English came to the colonies along with the colonizers, it has the dubious distinction of being the colonizer’s language. It was used as a powerful tool in the process of colonization andthrived in the colonies at the expense of indigenous languages.

As language and culture are inextricably intertwined, the induction of English gave rise to cultural alienation in the colonies. English was effectively used in the construction of colonial discourses which extended the cause of colonization. Therefore, a postcolonial writer’s engagement with the English language is also simultaneously an exercise that reassesses, through the grid of fiction, the cultural and linguistic positioning of the ex-colonized, which are inextricably embedded in the political history of the colony and its own recurrent consequences. The postcolonial novelists express their unflinching involvement not only with the experiential content of their writing but also with the medium through which it is conveyed. English language, in the historical context, happens to be the colonizer’s language, it becomes paramount in the postcolonial response of writers. As English language is the field of contention of the cultural politics of writers, fiction becomes a means in which history is the content. In the view of using language, Edouard Glissant analysis that the creole language reflects the power relations and also used for creative writing in the Caribbean literature:

Language not only reflects but enacts the power relations in Martinican society. Neither French nor creole is the true language of the community. If, as most militant writers are tempted to do, artist resorted blindly to creole, could fall into an empty ‘folkorism’. (Caribbean Discourse, XXV)

Language plays an important role in determining human identity; it will invoke the Derridean concept of ‘deconstruction’. For the Caribbean writers, English language was the language of oppression because of the history of the region and attitudes of the colonizers and even the people of the Caribbean themselves towards
the local population. From a linguistic point of view, the creole dialect of the region was neglected and disclaimed for a long time. Not only the change in linguistic approaches, but also the literature produced by the Caribbean writers began to change the position of the languages of the Caribbean in literature and in society in general.

Writers like Selvon, Lamming, Harris, Naipaul and Lovelace from the Caribbean are portrayed as “being torn between two languages” (Hall, 111). The roots of myth went much deeper and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* is one of the major literary works the West Indian authors had to contend with. To deconstruct the myth about their homeland and their languages, the writers from the Caribbean had to confront the imposed English language, as well as the established literary canon, especially in the 19th century European realistic novel. In the creole speaking Caribbean islands, both oral and written texts came to represent forms of resistance to colonial cultural dependence in the crucial period of transition from British imperialism to the postcolonial age. Another important characteristic of these writers is the fact that they are often in a state of exile from their home country. Creole language is considered as ‘low’ being that of the colonized people, and English, obviously, is considered ‘high’ being the language of colonizers, labels such as ‘high’ and ‘low’ clearly represent the attitudes of both the colonizers and the colonized. During the age of transition from colonialism to postcolonialism, the Caribbean writers were torn between these two languages in a complex political and linguistic situation. Writers such as Selvon settled for a linguistic compromise, using Standard English to represent the voice of the narrator and creole for the dialogues.

Selvon uses creole dialect in his writings. Creole language is considered as a primitive language. To decolonize the myth of the primitive from the colonizers, Selvon uses creole language in his works. The myth pervasive among the Caribbean people gave the impression of their language originating from the colonizer, like the relation between Shakespeare’s characters Caliban and Prospero. To deconstruct their myth, the Caribbean writers use creole language as the concept of decolonization in both language and culture. So the Caribbean identities triggered as creole and the whole society undergoes the process of creolization which can be seen clearly in the novels of Selvon, Earl Lovelace and Naipaul.

The study of postcolonial fiction in English gains significance due to the fact that the language in which it is written came through the experience of colonization.
In the process of colonization, English language played a very significant role to the postcolonial writers to appropriate the language and re-fashion it for their own purpose. A writer like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o rejects English as culturally and politically alien, and reverts to Gikuyu language. But to many postcolonial writers, it is English with which they are most comfortable. Postcolonial writers are ambivalent regarding their attitude to English. The postcolonial writers appropriated the English language for various reasons. For them, English no longer remains the colonizer’s language, for it becomes a tool to be used ‘creatively’ in the process of decolonization. In *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, the authors view that:

Language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial centre—whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a ‘standard’ against other variants which are constituted as impurities’ or by planting the language of Empire in a new place—remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. (283)

Thus, the postcolonial writers use the medium of English language in their writings and they incorporate their indigenous language forms into the English language on an experimental basis.

Samuel Selvon, as a postcolonial novelist, uses a language to suit his style by subverting the language of the colonizer. In the Caribbean, language and culture are intertwined. The Africans were transported and transplanted in the Caribbean Islands and Asians came there as indentured labourers. The Africans and the Asians were inherently resistant to the colonizers and their systems and manifest them to take up writing of the masters’ language. In recognition of a language as an instrument of the power politics, Derek Attridge points out:

Why does the culture privilege certain kinds of language and certain modes of reading? Such a question can receive an answer only when we reach the realm of political and economic relations, the structures of power, dominance, and resistance which determine the patterns and privileges of cultural formations. (*Peculiar Language*, 1988; 15)
The use of creole by Selvon is a classic example of postcoloniality in which the concept of language and practice take centre stage as opposed to the concept of ‘centre’ and ‘marginal’. In this context, it is pertinent to consider what the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* say:

The theory of the Creole Continuum, undermining, at it does, the static models of language formation, overturns ‘Ecocentric’ notions of language which regard ‘Standard English’ as a core. Creole needs no longer to be seen as a peripheral narration of English. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 47)

Therefore, Selvon writes in the ‘Creole Continuum’ to give voice to the suppressed thoughts, feelings and emotions of which had been silenced for ages.

Samuel Selvon, though a Trinidadian, sets *The Lonely Londoners, Moses Ascending* and *Moses Migrating* in London, and choses English to write his novels. The juxtaposition of the English language and ‘Creole Continuum’ is a bold attempt at a new experimentation in his novels. As a native West Indians writer, he cannot use English as his mother tongue. So Selvon incorporates ‘creole’ and fuses it with English language. The London novels deal with the problems of black immigrants that they face due to the inevitable culture contact and the ensuing assimilation process. The language they select is a variety that was influenced by their native dialects. All the characters in the novel are non-natives, and they come and settle down in London for various reasons. The characters speak in their own ‘creole English’ that Selvon has brought in a ‘realistic way’.

Selvon uses English language in a unique form. He uses ‘creole’ as the narrative form in his London novels, *The Lonely Londoners, Moses Ascending*, and *Moses Migrating*. Creole is the principal narrative form in these novels and it figured prominently in all the novels. Ismail S. Talib points out:

Selvon’s novel [*The Lonely Londoners*] does appear to be particularly successful in its language use. Other Caribbean writers, such as Wilson Harris and Roy Heath, have expressed their admiration of Selvon’s language in his work. Wilson Harris specifically commends Selvon for making ‘dialect part of the consciousness of the narrator’. (*The Language of Postcolonial Literatures*, 139)
As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have argued, language is one of the key uses in which postcolonial writers to express their cultural distance from the literature of the colonizing power. Selvon, in particular, uses many of the language strategies that Ashcroft identified as defining post-colonial writing: abrogation, appropriation, the challenging of Western concerns the concept of a ‘poly-dialectic continuum’, and syntactic fusion. Selvon claims that his novels operate in a realist context, and this is produced through the representation of language. In narratological terms, *The Lonely Londoners* presents with a third-person narrative that adopts the ‘idiosyncratic’ language styles of the characters it describes:

And this sort of thing was happening at a time when the English people starting to make rab about how too much West Indians coming to the country: this was a time, when any corner you turn, is ten to one you bound to bounce up a spade. (*The Lonely Londoners*, 24)

Selvon uses of West Indian slang words (such as “rab”) and Standard English syntax to represent the speech patterns of the Caribbean black immigrant working-class people. Selvon produces an ‘authentic’ and ‘realistic’ representation of this particular multi-cultural group of black immigrants. This claim to verisimilitude, in the context of the debate on realism in the novel in the 1950s, gives Selvon’s work connotations of ‘authenticity’ and ‘documentary’.

The Caribbean black immigrant characters speak in non-Standard English that is ‘Creole dialect’. Selvon has described his decision to use a form of ‘Creolized’ expression for his narrative voice as a crucial and liberating stage in the writing of *The Lonely Londoners*:

... when I started to work on my novel *The Lonely Londoners* I had this great problem with it that I began to write it in Standard English and it would just not move along ... It occurred to me that perhaps I should try to do both the narrative and the dialogue in this form [Trinidadian form of the language] I started to experiment with it and the book just went very rapidly along... With this particular book I just felt that the language that I used worked and expressed exactly what I wanted it to express. (Nazareth. “Interview with Sam Selvon,” 421)
Jean D’Costa states in the *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literatures in English* that, “within the cultures, the educated assumed that Creole language signified ignorance, backwardness, and distance from the metropole” (810). Therefore, there are many difficulties in using a creole in writing novels. Creole narrative form is also considered as the decolonization process through the mode of ‘creative writing’. Selvon’s novels deal with a particular set of people, but it is not written for any particular community. Selvon uses both ‘Creole’ and ‘English’ language to gain national and international audience. Therefore, most of the Caribbean writers use Creole and English language in their writings. Selvon says the reason for using Creole dialect as an experiment:

> I could [not] have said what I wanted to say without modifying the dialect… the pure dialect would have been obscure and difficult to understand … [it would have been] Greek to a lot of people… (In Talib, 126)

Selvon uses ‘creole’ in his novels as an experiment. His very first novel *A Brighter Sun* testifies to his literary genius in using of ‘creole’. Selvon has to write for double audience— for the native West Indian and for the European. He faces the problem of conveying a story and message to a double audience. For this, he had to create a literary language which was identifiable by the Trinidadian as it was culturally specific, and at the same time, to the foreign reader to whom the culture was alien. Therefore, he mixes both the ‘Creole’ and the ‘English’ language in his peasant and immigrant novels.

Though Selvon uses Standard English as a preferred narrative form, yet the characters from his peasant novels speak different kinds of English, depending on their individual nationality, age and level of education. In his peasant novels- *A Brighter Sun* and *Turn Again Tiger*, Tiger’s father, Ramdeen’s language is different. He uses ‘Creole dialect’ which is not ‘Standard English’ as he was uneducated and he had come from an Indian peasant family. Ramlal, the old Indian peasant, uses the same Creole dialect which is influenced by Indian peasants’ language. To cite an example, Ramlal says: “You gettam house which side Barataria, Gettam land, cow-well, you go live that side. Haveam plenty boy chile-girl chile no good, only bring trouble on yuh head. Yuh live dat side, plantam garden, live good” (*A Brighter Sun*, 126).
7). Tiger’s speech also resembles Ramlal’s Indian peasant language and later he shifts to the free flowing Trinidad dialect.

The vitality of the popular Creole dialect and idiom is reflected in the achievement of the Trinidadian Samuel Selvon. In his novels, Selvon uses a modified literary form of Trinidadian Creole dialect, distanced from everyday speech. Jeremy Taylor has written on Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*:

> The first novel was written throughout in the fully Creole dialect form, that the Caribbean speech, with all its intricacies and subtle rhythms, onto the page not as curiosity, not as something exotic, but natural as sunlight. Caribbean language suddenly found a narrative voice its own. (Taylor, Jeremy. *Play Again, Sam*, 34)

Selvon portrays the black immigrants as ‘misfits’ in white dominated society, London. On the contrary, using ‘Creole language’ becomes a political issue to Selvon. In the postcolonial context, Selvon’s experimentation of the Creole language demonstrates the assertion of the ‘marginal voice’. Selvon constantly ‘modifies’ and ‘reshapes’ the Standard English language purposefully. For instance, Selvon writes:

> Who you think was at Mable Arch at the strokes of six precisely next evening, with note book and pencil poised? Who you think wait there a poor-me-one till seven O’clock, then had was to catch the tube and come home in a fiery mood of destruction? (*Moses Ascending*, 62)

In the above passage, Selvon uses phrase like ‘poor-me-one’ as an example of Creole dialect/Caribbean local dialect.

In the use of language, Moses, in *Moses Ascending*, being black, faces problem with the ‘English language/Standard language’. He desired to write of his memories and he wants to prove that even the ‘blacks’ are capable of writing. Moses states:

> I longed to get back of my philosophizing and my analyzing and my rhapsodizing, decorating my thoughts with grace notes and showing the white people that me, too, could write a book. (*Moses Ascending*, 100-101)
Selvon uses Trinidadian ‘Creole/West Indian dialect’ and ‘Standard English’ alternately in his immigrant novels. In this context, Salick Roydon considers that Selvon establishes: “inappropriateness and the inadequacy of Standard English, and affirms the usability and flexibility of dialect, using it as the language of narration, of dialogue, of description, and of philosophizing” (The Novels of Samuel Selvon, 120). In an interview, Selvon claims that the use of ‘Creole dialects’ and ‘English language’ in his novels, is “less an aesthetic balance between Creole and English language than a sense of worth and appreciation of native culture” (Michael Fabre, 70).

Samuel Selvon succeeds in communicating with the use of Creole and Standard English to the people who were of different environments, cultures and civilizations. He successfully addresses a ‘double audience’- local and foreign- in his first novel A Brighter Sun. It is not an easy task to cater to people of divergent tastes. Selvon had to evolve his own technique of narration, because, he had no predecessor to could learn from or follow. But he was undeterred by the daunting task and his A Brighter Sun is a classic example of that.

In A Brighter Sun, Selvon followed the tradition of the nineteenth century British novel, which contained only half-related stories, coalesced into a proper plot. The problem posed by tone and tongue was resolved, in the use of the third person narrative. His characters, whether East Indian Creole, or Chinese, cannot speak in sophisticated language; on the contrary, they relied on vernacular language which was understood by the general reader. But Selvon took care to use a standard in his own English for the narrator, thereby clearly separating the narrator from the individual characters. The narrative reflected conflict positions occupied by the folk and elite forms of Trinidadian speech on the one hand, and on the other hand of European usage and tradition.

In A Brighter Sun, Selvon examines the rapid semi-urbanization of the village of Barataria during the years of the Second World War, and the corresponding emergence of the Indian peasant in the creolized culture. This he does by tracing a gradual expansion of the consciousness of Tiger, the central figure of the novel, and by underscoring that the movement from a ‘folk’ to a ‘semi-urban’ situation is paralleled by subtle shifts in language.
Ramlal, an old Indian peasant, is one of the last groups of indentured labourers whose first language is Hindi, and whose creole is cryptic, and entirely functional. Here, for example, he maps out Tiger’s entire destiny in three sentences:

You gettam house which side Barataria, geetam land, cow - well, you go live dat side. Heaven plenty boy chile – girl chile no good, only bring trouble on yuh head. Yuh live dat side, plantam garden, live good. (*A Brighter Sun*, 7)

Tiger’s speech oscillates between an early syntax pretty close to his father Ramlal’s and Sookdeo’s the free-flowing articulacy in Trinidad dialect. The characteristic of the urban creole and the linguistic continuum are parallel to the socio-cultural. Early in the book, in one of his many statements about manhood, Tiger says: “to my wife I man when I sleep with she. To ‘bap’ I man if drink rum. But to me I no man yet” (*A Brighter Sun*, 17).

This is not quite the syntax of the fully urbanized creole. Tiger senses that part of the problem while adjusting to the changes in his society and status. It is also creating a language supple enough to deal with the growing complexities which accompany his loss of rural innocence. He understands this task in the traditional fashion of a Creole Trinidad. He seeks to assert his manhood by learning to read, painful though the process is, because of his age. He takes recourse to a dictionary, learn to use high-surrounding polysyllabic words in a pathetic attempt at emphasizing his manhood. This make-shift language, analogous to the ‘signifying’ of American Negroes, has been ritualized by the Carnival masqueraders in Trinidad called the ‘Midnight Robbers’. The complexities of the Creolization process are reflected in the instant theme of race and racism, in the calyposes of the forties, the period which Selvon is covering in *A Brighter Sun*.

The ‘boys’ (black immigrants), as Selvon calls his innocents abroad, reconstruct the ‘lime’ and the language of the ‘lime,’ and through imposing their language on the great city, they remake it in their own image. Sometimes they shrink by the use of a reductive simile. Hoary Paddington slums reveal walls which are cracking ‘like the last days of Pompeii.’ The winter sun, the symbol of the devitalized misery of the metropolis, is ‘like a force-ripe orange’. The ‘boys,’ who have originated from a world of language, recreate in the big city a world of words in
which they move, and through which they grope for clarity in the midst of experience as bewildering and vague as the London fog.

Catapulted into a strange world, the confusing experience is as strange as Tiger’s in *A Bright Sun*. They face a similar process of having to make sense of a bewildering milieu; like Tiger, the creoles begin to ask questions about existence itself, about identity and manhood. But the ‘boys’ remain fragmented, partial personalities. They continue to be identifiable in terms of idiosyncrasy. They have nicknames but not real names. Nicknames are an acknowledgement of individual richness of personality, but they are also suggestive of an incompleteness of self. This is definitely the case in Naipaul’s *Miguel Street*, which seems to owe much to early Selvon. In *The Lonely Londoners*, it is the group that has a full self, which faced the wilderness and survives, for not to belong is to be lost in the void. The term ‘boys’ begins to gain weight as the novel proceeds. It indicates not only the strange pre-moral innocence which Selvon’s people seem to preserve wherever they are, but a certain immaturity also persists because these calypsonians refuse to awaken to responsibility, even under the weight of metropolitan pressures.

By the end of the novel *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses sounds more like Sergeant Pepper than the Calypsonian Lord Kitchener. He is singing genuine urban blues. He sees laughter as part of a tragic process and he feels the weight of each man’s experience:

> Sometimes listening to them, he look in each face, and he feel a great compassion for every one of them, as if he live each of their lives, one by one, and all the strain and stress come to rest on his own shoulders.  

( *The Lonely Londoners*, 123)

By the end of the novel, Moses does the high priest’s role. He greets the new arrivals and tries reluctantly, in contrast to his Biblical namesake, to guide them through the wilderness. But near the end of the book, one sees him on the banks of the Thames, contemplating the aimlessness of things. Here, his function is similar to that of Lamming’s Old Man in *In the Castle of My Skin*, in that he becomes a repository for group consciousness, a sort of archetypal old man. It is accident or design, that this technique of moving from a fragmentary form, where several voices share the stage,
to a point where all the voices are blended either in chorus or into the single representative voice of an archetypal figure.

Selvon eschewed the exotic and he was led to use more indigenous forms. *The Lonely Londoners* has an impressive style with its mellow, mildly satirical tone. Modified West Indian dialect is used for dialogue and narrative passages alike. Whereas linguistic variations serve realistic to differentiate ethnic groups in *A Brighter Sun*, the major opposition now arises from the tension between ‘Standard English’ and ‘modified dialect’. Although the protagonists retain typical Jamaican, Trinidadian or African cultural habits, their common syntactic usage, slang words and phrases make them stand out from the dignified remarks of a British spinster or the sociological jargon of London newspaper reports. But Selvon’s problem lay in reducing the distance between the European reader and the characters. He succeeded in resolving this by having the narrator also speak modified dialect, subtly interwoven with Standard English, in lyrical monologues.

The modified dialect in which the story is narrated is a distillation of the language of the people, preserving its rhythms and cadences while making the script accessible to a largely foreign readership. Selvon had been tending in this direction in some of his earliest short stories, and the Jamaican novelist, V.S. Reid, had achieved a similar performance in *New Day* (1948), an epic novel which was narrated in modified Jamaican dialect. With *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon pushed this linguistic experiment beyond the boundaries set by a sound colonial education. It was this novel with its contemporary subject matter that made the break through, that opened up the field for succeeding generations to write unaffectedly and inventively in the language of the islands. The subtly growing identification in the novel among the third-person narrative voice, the character of Moses, and the author himself, is of great moment.

The eleven page concluding rhapsody, all in one sentence without punctuation, on spring in London is remarkable for the lyrical quality of its language as it gradually emerges from the everyday dialect, and the reader having mastered sufficient dialect through repetition and connotation, is able to appreciate the discarding of it. Later in the novel, the end of the narrator’s meditation on the changing of seasons in pure poetry:
In the grimness of the winter, with your hand plying space like a blind man’s stick in the yellow fog with ice on the ground and a coldness defying all effect to keep warm, the boys coming and going […]. (*The Lonely Londoners*, 122)

The conversion of orality into literariness becomes a pronounced characteristic of West Indian writing after Selvon. This manifests itself not only in the shape of the language, but also in form and structure, and in the relationship between the reader and the text. Incidentally, Selvon always protested in interviews that he wrote the spoken language so well because he was intimate with the written forms and their contexts. Selvon’s major contribution to Caribbean fiction in English has been to mould a literary version of Trinidad speech and as V.S. Reid had one with Jamaican in *New Day* (1949). Selvon employs the creole not only in dialogue but also in the language of narration. In Selvon’s words, creole dialect is: “modified the dialect, keeping the lilt myth” (*Canadian Literature*: 1982, 60-61). In a more recent interview “Samuel Selvon Talking: A Conversation with Kenneth Ramchand” (1982) he says:

I saw potential in this modified dialect to the extent that in my last novel using this language form, *Moses Ascending*, I experimented even further with using both this and an archaic form of English which is not spoken anywhere today. (*Canadian Literature*: 1982, 60-61)

The characteristic effects of *Moses Ascending* derive from the surprising combination of styles: archaic and modern; formal, often stilted, Standard English and casual Trinidad slang; academic phraseology and non-standard grammar; pseudo-literary affectations, clichés, foreign expressions, all tumbled together.

In Selvon’s second novel *An Island is a World*, the problem of tone and tongue for the ‘double audience’ reached a complex stage where he used Trinidad, the United States and London as locales. Here, Selvon widened his linguistic range by making use of American English and of a slightly pompous and stilted variant of the Queen’s English which Foster, the protagonist who immigrated to London, seems to be fond of using for satirical effect. Foster’s own attitude to language is remarkable. He spoke proper English in Trinidad, employing local dialect only for emphasis and contrast. He saw Trinidadians resorting to broken English when they could not hold
their own while arguing. He recognized the importance of native tradition in London as compared with the aesthetic affectations of the British intelligentsia:

“It strikes me”, he writes his brother, “that unless you can affect a sophisticated attitude, especially with regard to art, whatever you say is received with a condescending smile… Don’t say: Be kind to dumb animals. That is too naïve…. Say: Deep purple hoipolli ladeda, and if they’re brave enough to ask you what you mean, look at them as it they’re native and say: Oh, that means be kind to dumb animals. (An Island is a World, 134)

Selvon observed the limitations of British tradition for his own purposes. He was forced to use more indigenous forms which suited him best. Selvon suggested many solutions to solve the problem of the narrator’s tone in contradiction to the character’s dialect in his collection of short stories Ways of Sunlight (1957), but easily found most of his answers in The Lonely Londoners.

Selvon is too involved with his character as a person to be distracted into superficial comedy. As a result, we find that the dialect is contrived in the direction of the standard, and the authorial voice slips in and out of the speech without drawing attention to its greater ‘correctness’. The episode occurs when Tiger’s parents come to visit him on the birth of Tiger and Urmilla’s first child. There is a small party, and Joe, the neighbour, proposes a toast:

Tiger saw a chance to prove he was getting to be a man. He said: “I is the man of the house, and I have to answer Joe toasts”

Urmilla moved with a sixth sense and filled the glasses again.

Tiger looked at her and smiled and she knew she had done the right thing.

But when he began to talk he found it wasn’t going to be as easy as he thought, even with the rum in his head. “Well”, he began waveringly, ‘-we – glad to have family and friends here good day especially as the baby born. Is true we not rich and we have only a small thing here but still is a good thing. So let we make a little merry for the baby’. (A Brighter Sun, 52)
In Selvon’s works, the language of the implied author boldly declares itself as a dialect differing little from the language of the characters. In the short story “Brackely and the Bed”, the author takes up the stance of the calypsonian or ballad-maker and both Standard English and West Indian Standard are abolished. The West Indian author has gone towards closing the gap between the language of narration and the language of the fictional character. It has been argued that social attitude has something to do with the closing of the gap.

Selvon’s is essentially that of a peasant sensibility. The peasant character is emphatically a central character in Selvon’s A Brighter Sun, Turn Again Tiger, and Those Who Eat the Cascadura. And it is in these novels that dialect first becomes the language of consciousness in West Indian fiction. For, Tiger is an introspective and a dialect speaking character. As it is followed Tiger developed from premature Hindu wedding to turbulent fatherhood and responsible domestic anxiety. From Indian legacy to Trinidadian citizenship, and from obscure youth to naïve inquiring manhood, dialect becomes saturated with inner experience. Selvon presents Tiger’s consciousness not just exclusively through dialect, but also through authorial comment, reporting of the character’s thought processes, and reproduction of these processes directly in dialect. These forms are modulate into one another so smoothly that the impression given is one of direct access to the dialect-speaker’s raw consciousness.

If Tiger’s thought processes are naïve, they are at least spread over a wide area of experience. In following the character’s inner working in a credible modification of dialect, Selvon helps to make dialect a more flexible instrument. Selvon has written with an explicit fidelity, without the slightest touch either of sentimentality or of superiority of the Trinidad poor both at home and in England, in A Brighter Sun, The Lonely Londoners and Turn Again Tiger. He uses an idiom based upon the rhythm and images of folk speech which is capable of elaborate and subtle effects.

Selvon uses language as a means of defining Trinidadian identity, of reflecting his thematic vision as a writer and of manipulating his point of view. He conveys, in the process, a lyricism in prose which is deceptively hidden behind the easy colloquialism and local idioms of his style. Selvon’s early works, in the main, contain a pure and unpretentious use of the Trinidad creole dialect. His later works reflect a distancing from, and a modification of, this primary, naked freshness of language.
And the later stage of his career shows evidence of the increasing impact of the Standard language, a merging of dialect and standard forms, and a waning of original local patterns.

**The Process of Creolization**

Creolization in the Caribbean context is a historical, psychological and socio-cultural process that lies at the very centre of any discussion on trans-culturalism, trans-nationalism, diversity and hybridization. This part examines the process of creolization in the aforementioned wider context. The Caribbean society is the product of a complex ethnic and cultural experience. Creolization is a social and cultural phenomenon which is to understand the ‘New World’ experience [Brathwaite]. The origins of creolization in the Caribbean region lie in the highly contested and interrelated process of slavery, Middle Passage, colonization, migration and indentured labourers.

As a result of slavery, colonization and migration in the Caribbean, there was a mixture of people like indigenous, African, Asian and European descent, which came to be understood as creolization. The mixing of people and their socio-cultural pattern resulted in a ‘cultural mixing,’ which ultimately led to the creation of ‘new identities’ and a ‘New World’. It is very important to emphasize that the ensuring creolization is the mixing of the ‘old’ and ‘traditional’ with the concepts of ‘new’ and ‘modern’. In this context, Robin Cohen states that the creolization process is a condition in which, “the formation of new identities and inherited culture evolve to become different from those that they possessed in the original cultures” (“Creolization and Cultural Globalization: The Soft Sounds of Fugitive Process” in *New National and Post-colonial Literature: An Introduction*, 45).

Today, the Caribbean accommodates the legacy of hundreds of years of colonization, and displays a large population of mixed ‘races’ and ‘cultures’. The ethnic composition in today’s Trinidad is reflective of her colonial history. The term ‘creole’ refers to someone born in the Caribbean. This term originated in the seventeenth century to differentiate ‘whites’ born in the newly settled colonies from those of European birth. Since the nineteenth century, the term ‘creole’ has been used to describe all people born in the West Indies. Ashcroft suggests that the term “originally referred to a white man of European descent, born and raised in a tropical
colony” (The Key Concepts, 57). The term later pointed at a larger target embracing indigenous people and others of non-European origin, and was soon applied to the languages spoken by creoles in and around the Caribbean and in West Africa. Yet, Ashcroft claims that the most use of the term, ‘creole,’ in English was to mean “‘born in the West Indies,’ whether white or black” (Ashcroft, 1998:57). Brathwaite points out that the term was used in Trinidad with reference to the “black descendants of slaves to distinguish them from East Indian immigrants” (Brathwaite in Ashcroft 1998:58).

The very concepts of postcolonialism and the postmodernism question the rationale of cultural displacement, hybridity and creolization: “the contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement” (Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 172). In this context Aijaz Ahmad clearly explains the idea of displacement and the formation of hybrid and creolization society in the postcolonial context:

… the individual of the agent occurs in a moment of ‘displacement’ because the postcolonial studies are the specific ‘histories of cultural displacement’ and hybridity defines term of ‘counter-hegemonic strategies’. Hybridity must also be sharply distinguished from that very common life-process through which people move within national boundaries … culture has been endemic to all movements of people, from country to city, form city to city, from site of labour to another at shorter or longer distances; and all such movements in history have involved the travel contact, transmutation, hybridization and creolization of society, values, ideas and behavioral norms. (“The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality” in Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, 290)

From the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, however, the most common use of the term ‘creole’ in English was to mean “born in West Indies” (Brathwaite in Ashcroft 1998:58) whether ‘white’ or ‘negro’. Although, the term had “connotation of colour” (Oxford English Dictionary), it is increasingly being conjured, in European eyes, the threat of ‘colonial miscegenation’ (Young, Robert). Historically, and today, the term has been used in different ways by different societies. The Caribbean historian, Edward Brathwaite notes:
In Peru, the word was used to refer to people of Spanish descent who were born in the New World. In Brazil, the term was applied to Negro slaves born locally. In Louisiana, the term was applied to the white Francophone population, while in New Orleans, it applied to mulattoes. In Sierra Leone, ‘Creole’ refers to descendants of farmers. New world slaves, Maroons and ‘Black poor’ from Britain who were resettled along the coast and especially in Freetown, and… from a social elite distinct from the African population. In Trinidad, it refers principally to the black descendants of slaves to distinguish them from East Indian immigrants. When used with references to other native groups, and adjective prefix- French Creole, Spanish Creole- is used. In Jamaica, and all settled colonies, the word was used in its original Spanish sense of Criollo: born into, native, committed to the area of living, and it was used in relation to both white and black, free and slave (Brathwaite 1974:10).

Generally, the process of intermixing and cultural changes produces a ‘creole society’. The creolization process might be argued by Brathwaite as to being present throughout the world, societies, particularly the Caribbean, West African and South America, and more loosely to those post-colonial societies whose present ethnically or socially mixed populations. Those countries are a product of European colonization. According to Edward Brathwaite, creolization is a ‘cultural,’ ‘psychological’ and ‘spiritual’ process. Brathwaite stresses that the creolization process is an ‘inter-mixture’ and an enrichment of each culture. In his classic work The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, Brathwaite traces the ways in which the process of creolization began as a result of slavery and inter-culturation of ‘black’ and ‘white’:

[Creolization] therefore in the first instance involving black and white, European and African, in a fixed superiority/inferiority relationship, tended first to the culturation of white and black to the new Caribbean environment; and at the same time, because of the terms and the conditions of slavery, to the acculturation of black to white norms. There was at the same time, however significant inter-culturation going on between these two elements. (Brathwaite 1971:11)
process of racial mixing triggered the issue of creolization which is regarded as a cultural process based upon the stimulus/responses of individuals within the society to their (new) environment and to each other (Ashcroft 1998). The newly produced society, through a process that can be explained with the concepts of acculturation and intercultural, is moulded into a ‘new’ sphere carrying the vestiges of both the cultures of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘new’. The world of colonization is all about a dominant culture that exposes its set of ideas, belief and customs on an indigenous society which is valued as inferior to the colonizer (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*). The indigenous society and the new settlers (African slaves and Indian indentured labourers) exposed to a dominant culture absorbed the colonialists’ rules, both consciously and unconsciously. Instead of adapting to the dominant culture, they adapted themselves to the ‘new culture’ (creole). This process led towards the transition of ‘new culture,’ ‘new ethnicity’ and ‘new world’. The process of adapting to the new culture may be considered as decolonization in culture.

The Caribbean has always been a space of transition as a two-way process, through its different languages and cultures. It even has its own term for it: ‘creolization’. As the word ‘creole’ implies, here translation involved displacement, the carrying over and transformation of the dominant culture into new identities which take material elements from the culture of their new location. As a result, both sides of the exchange get ‘creolized’ and transformed. Robert Young explains: ‘Caribbean ‘creolization’ comes close to a foundational idea of postcolonialism. That the one-way process by which translation is customarily conceived can be rethought in terms of cultural interaction and as a space of re-empowerment”. (*Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, 142).

The Caribbean Anglophone islands represent a fusion of various tensions, since they have undergone a history of exploitation and enslavement. Their native inhabitants were exterminated by European colonizers, who erased indigenous culture and history to forcefully introduce plantation societies, which counted on the labour force provided by African slaves brought over across the Atlantic. The history of the Caribbean has been marked by a steady and random accumulation of cultural and ethnic elements, which have contributed towards producing the challenging artistic responses to colonialism, imperialism and to the imposition of the English language
and the Western cultural legacy. Hintzen writes about the identity politics in the Caribbean:

In reality, what is “West Indian” or “Caribbean” has come to be cognitively constructed as the product of cultural and racial hybridization. To be “West Indian” is to be located along a continuum spanning from the “pure” European at one pole to the “pure” African at the other. These refer to putative notions of racial and cultural purity. However, in the hybridized reality of Creole space, racial and cultural purity cannot exist together. (Hintzen, 2002: 478)

Creolization, as defined by Brathwaite, is specific and is best analyzed and understood within the framework of Caribbean history and societies. However, it must be noted that Brathwaite’s model of creolization can be compared with some of the similar work discussed under the title ‘hybridization’ as their objective is identified. Robert Young identifies an “unconscious hybridity, whose pregnancy gives birth to ‘new forms of amalgamation rather than contestation’ or ‘the imperceptible process whereby two or more cultures merge into a new mode as creolization’.” (Young, Robert. Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race: 1995; 21)

Creolization, hybridity, marginality and the diaspora become even more comprehensive notions for describing contemporary constructions of conflicts; the experience of migration becomes “emblematic of the fissured identities posited by post-structuralist theory, and hence synonymous with the fractures– and otherwise - experienced by colonized people” (Selected Subaltern Studies, 35). Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, while liberating the analysis of colonial discourse from the binary opposition between ‘self’ and ‘other,’ between ‘the speaking subject’ and ‘the silent native,’ also generated a host of problems. On the one hand, it enables him to produce an “autonomous position for the colonial within the confines of the hegemonic discourse” (Oxford Literary Review). Bhabha’s celebration of hybridity has led to the privileging of migrancy and exile which confers a greater critical edge to migrant intellectual.

Creolization has been frequently used in post-colonial discourse. It is to mean simply a “cross-cultural exchange” (Ashcroft 1998: 118-119) stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impact on both the colonized and the colonizer. Creolization has been regarded as ‘new ethnicity’. It is replicating
‘assimilationist’ policies by masking or ‘whitewashing’ cultural difference (Ashcroft 1998: 118-119). The concept of creolization in the Caribbean context is a social process that lies at the very center of discussion of diversity, transnationalism, multiculturalism, and hybridization (Young, Robert).

West Indian islands have suffered the greatest cultural and social extremes. The planters and their ladies tried often to outdo high life in the mother country itself: Paris in the Morne-Rouge (Martinique), London in Bridgetown (Barbados). The labourers and poor people seem almost to nod in the hot sun; and then in contrast, existence in the poverty ridden villages clinging likes barnacles to the dry steep hills of Haiti, Trinidad, Barbados and so on. Also there is the level of trade, the heavy labour for uncertain markets, and the search for new ways to balance the often faltering economy in these densely packed little islands.

Creolization is a historical study with a socio-cultural emphasis, seeking to understand the making of a ‘creole’ society during the central period of British West Indian slavery and the aftermath of colonization. The word ‘creole’ has been used to refer to a variety of societies and ‘cultures’. The process of creolization into the ‘new world’ has to include groups such as Caribs, Black Caribs, Central American, Brazilian, Maroons and African. The involvement of these groups significantly makes for the social and cultural interaction with each other. The formation of ‘creole society’ was the result of a complex situation. Brathwaite explains:

[creolization is] a situation where the society concerned is caught up in some kind of colonial arrangement with the metropolitan European power, on the one hand, and a plantation arrangement on the other and where the society is multi-social but organized for the benefit of a minority of European origin. (Brathwaite, 1978, Xvi)

During the period of colonization, slavery and indentured labourers, the most important for an understanding of the Caribbean development was the process of creolization. The process of creolization is a way of seeing the society, not in terms of ‘white’ and ‘black,’ and ‘master’ and ‘slave,’ but as contributory parts of a whole. Brathwaite explains:

To see the West Indians generally as a ‘slave’ society is as much falsification of reality, as the seeing of the island as a naval station or an
enormous sugar factory. Here in the Caribbean, fixed within the dehumanizing institution of slavery, were two cultures of people having to adopt themselves to a ‘new’ environment and to each other. (*The Development of Creole society in Jamaica*, 307)

Creolization process refers to a form of ‘resistance’ in the postcolonial context. The process of creolization reflects the slaves’ adaptation of their African culture to a ‘New World’. Creolization was an unrestricted freedom from the slavery and indentured labours. Brathwaite explains, “[…] Creolization, the greater could have been the freedom…with the consequence of dependence on Europe, to exposure to creolization and liberation of their slaves” (*The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, 307).

It proved to be so very important that many of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean societies were experiencing the creolization. A big part of cultural decolonization entails gaining control over creolization processes, and decolonizing creolization processes might be one way of thinking to resolve decolonization problems:

Caribbean creolization in its origin and evolution, has always been shaped by global processes of transnationalism, nationalism and citizenship, “selective process” which it also influenced. (Michacline Chichlow, *Globalization and the Post Creole Imagination*, 27-8).

Creolization process challenges the decolonization process, particularly in the light of global modern contexts. Creolization process in the Caribbean context has the origin in the very basic concept of colonization and decolonization of the so-called ‘New World’.

The process of creolization becomes ‘global’ process in the postcolonial era and it is associated with heterogeneity, creativity and interconnectivity. In this regard, Hannerz asserts:

To me “Creole” has connotations of creativity and richness of expression… Globalization need not be a matter only for-reaching or complete homogenization; the increasing interconnectedness of the world… “a bit of that is how newness enter the world”… The core concept of creolization, I think is a combination of diversity, interconnectedness, and innovation, in the context of global center-
CHAPTER II: Caribbean Creole Language and Creolization in the Selected fiction of Selvon


Similarly, Edward Brathwaite proponents the creolization model as the condition of mixture of impurity embodied by the intermediate coloured population was necessary emergence of ‘new culture’ in the Caribbean society. Creolization in the Caribbean context has a wider meaning. The process of creolization is considered as a global process of cultural fragmentation. Mintz argues: “what typified creolization was not the fragmentation of culture and the destruction of the very concept, but the creation and construction of culture out of fragmented, violent and disjunct parts (Mintz, Sidney. “Enduring Substance, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Region as Oikocemene”;289-311). Thus the creolization process has been seen in an optimistic view in the Caribbean context. From this perspective, creolization demands and pays attention to a specific history– that of colonialism in the ‘New World’– the plantation-slavery complex.

The creolization process can be seen from both positive and negative angles. The process has been seen within the oppressive terms set by the plantation and slavery complex, where the processes of inter-culturation generate cultural forms of indigenous to the ‘New World’. On the other hand, creolization acknowledges the creative capacity of Caribbean people to forge ‘new’ cultural forms that escape representations of diasporic people as mere reproducers of traditional forms or assimilators of dominant cultures.

Caribbean cultures have been primarily forged by diasporic people such as Europeans, Africans, and Asians. Creolization emerged as a key concept for examining the processes of cultural adaption, change, and synthesis where ‘new’ cultural forms developed from ‘old world’ to ‘new world’. In Trinidad, ‘creole’ signifies people of primarily African ancestry, whereas those of European ancestry are signified by an adjectival prefix as in French creole or white. East Indians, in contrast, are not looked upon as ‘creole’. Thus, the term ‘creole’ signified all those of African and European ancestry who were born in the ‘new world’. As such, Creole societies were those connected with colonization, plantation, slavery, and triangular trade/Middle Passage. As this result, the process of creolization and the historical processes became more complex, internal adjustment and cultural heterogenous. In this context, Brathwaite explains:
[creolization is] a complex situation where, a colonial polity reacts, as whole, to external metropolitan pressures and at the juxtaposition of master and labour, white and non-white, Europe and colony, and European and African... in a culturally heterogeneous relationship. (Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Interrelation in the Caribbean*. 1974:10-11)

Brathwaite insists on processes of cultural dialogue and exchange despite a context of power differential during slavery. The creolization process is not simply a one-way mimicry; instead, it is both imitation (acculturation) and native creation (indigenization). Social scientists have also documented the notion that Caribbean creolization involves a new cultural creation.

Derek Walcott explores the creolization concept in his poetry. Walcott seems to project his critical thinking on Creolization as ‘double consciousness’. According to him, the creolization process lies ‘in-between’ the two worlds, namely, the nostalgic of ‘old world’ and the practical of ‘new world’. Selvon’s concept of the process of creolization is not any dissimilar to Walcott’s thought. Selvon’s characters are always ‘in-between’ their ‘roots’ and the present place. In his classic novel, *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon describes the identity crisis or being ‘in-between’ in white dominated London through the character of Bart. Bart is a ‘black’ immigrant. He suffers from a sense of inferiority complex for being ‘black’. Selvon explains his state of ‘in-betweeness’:

Bart have light skin. That is to say, he neither here nor there, though he more here than there. When he first hit Brit’n, like a lot of other brown – skin fellars who frighten for the lash, he go around telling everybody that he is a Latin-American, that he come from South America [. . .]. *(The Lonely Londoners, 61)*

Similarly, Walcott captures the liminal situation of being ‘in-between’ and his suffering as a ‘creole’ and the ensuing ‘hybrid’ state of his mind in his popular poem “A Far Cry from Africa”. He expresses his dilemma as:

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,

Where shall I turn, divided to the Vein?

I who have cursed
The drunken officers of British rule, how choose

Between this Africa and the English tongue I love? (Walcott, *Collected Poems*)

In identical ways, both the West Indian writers, Selvon and Walcott capture creole identity in their works. For Walcott, ‘in-betweeness’ lies between the ‘two worlds’ that is the nostalgic world of Africa (his roots), and the present world of the Caribbean.

In an important essay, Walcott tackles the issue of creolization in “The Muse of History”. He boldly declares: “amnesia is the true history of the New World” (“The Muse of History”). While exploring his idea of creolization, Walcott speaks of the “aesthetic possibility of transcending of conception of history that imprisons those who adopt it as well as those who reject it” (Michael Dash, 49). In one of his poems, “The Schooner Flights”, Walcott repeatedly refers to the creolization process which lies between the individual and the community- “I loved you alone and I loved the whole world; I have no nation now but the imagination; either I’m nobody or I’m a nation (“The Schooner Flights”). His juxtaposition of ‘nobody’ and ‘nation’ in the poem is a simple formulation that lies at the heart of the process of creolization.

Selvon expresses the same tension in his essay, “Finding West Indian Identity in London”:

My life in London taught me about people from the Caribbean and it was here that I found my identity. I had no desire to shed my background and cultivate English ways and manners. I was discovering a pride, a national pride in being what I am, that I never felt at home. (Selvon; 1987, 35)

In his major theoretical work *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant explains his vision of the specificity of Caribbean identity, which consists of two main axes, antillanité, or Caribbeanness, and “poétique de la relation”, or cross-cultural poetics. According to Glissant, these interrelated and interdependent concepts express the racial and cultural pluralism, historical discontinuity, geographical fragmentation and political insularity of the Caribbean experience. Through cross-cultural poetics, Glissant seeks to express the diversity of his people’s collective identity through
practice of textual métissage by which he establishes the possibility of a pluralist postcolonial textuality able to forge a new Caribbean identity.

For Stuart Hall creolization is a complexity which found by defining ‘new ethnicities’. He states:

If the black subject and black experience are not stabilized by nature or by some other essential guarantee, then it must be the case that they are constructed historically, culturally, politically– and the concept which refers to this is ‘ethnicity’. (Hall, Stuart. New Ethnicities, 257)

The process of identity formation in the postcolonial Caribbean as latter dimensions of creolization on processes wherein the majority of lies under the process of the power relations of colonization. The creolization process lies at the very center of decolonization in the cultural forms in the postcolonial era in the Caribbean society. In the postcolonial view of the Caribbean, the themes of rejection of European cultures and the process of decolonization have been embedded in the Caribbean literature and culture. In the using of the ‘creole dialect,’ writers like Selvon, Naipaul and Wilson Harris seem to be connected in their rejection of Europe, both in language and culture. Due to colonization in the Caribbean, the indigenous society and the ‘new’ settlers of African slaves and Indian indentured labourers exposed to a dominant culture and society absorb the white master’s rule, both ‘consciously’ and ‘unconsciously’ (The Wretched of the Earth). Thus, instead of adopting the dominant culture [white], they adapt themselves to the ‘new culture’ [creole]. This process led towards the transition of a ‘new culture’ a ‘new ethnicity’ and a ‘new world’ from the ‘old world’. The process of adapting to the new culture and the process of creolization may be considered as decolonization in culture. The Africans are identified as slaves and Indian as indentured labourers, but the creolization process opposes the specific identifying respectively and engenders the feeling of ‘oneness,’ ‘national identity,’ and ‘Caribbeaness’. The process of creolization entails the inter-mingling of all sorts of cultures in a plural society.

Regarding the notions of ‘national culture’ and ‘national identity,’ Frantz Fanon writes: “a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (The Wretched of the Earth, 233).
Fanon’s concept of ‘national identity’ and ‘national culture’ and Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘self,’ ‘oneness’ and ‘Caribbeaness’ are closely allied to the concept of Edward Brathwaite’s notion of ‘creolization’. ‘National identity,’ ‘Caribbeaness’ and ‘Creolization’ emerged in the postcolonial situation in a ‘Third World Revolution,’ paradoxically limits such efforts at liberation because it re-inscribe an essentialist, and totalizing, other middle-class specific understanding of ‘nation’ rather than encouraging the articulation of an oppressed people’s culture heterogeneity in the Caribbean society. These three concepts/notions of ‘national identity,’ ‘Caribbeaness,’ and ‘creolization’ are closely connected to the concepts of ‘oneness’ and ‘self’ (Hall).

Creole identity is uprooted from different ethnic and cultural origins. Yet, the struggle of the people between the cultural root or past and the diasporic notion, has given rise to an assumed a kind of cultural plurality, in the place of hybridity. Consequently, as Bhabha says, they suffer from a sense of “un-homeliness or in-betweeness” (*The Location of Culture*). Thus, displacement, search for identity, and location of culture are the main streams in the works of Selvon, Naipaul, Walcott and other postcolonial Caribbean writers. Indeed, (re) location, alienation, marginalization, identity, and homelessness are the major themes of postcolonial Caribbean writings.

The results of hybridization and creolization in praxis may be best observed in the conditions of the different racial and cultural groups within Trinidad. For instance, Indian indentured labourers were kept apart geographically and culturally from the rest of the confined labour force. This separation produced an atmosphere which perpetuated the negative stereotypes initiated by the white planters. The planter elite rationalized the division of labour by claiming that Africans were poor workers, lazy, irresponsible and light-hearted while East Indians were characterized and discursively created as hard-working, subservient, obedient and manageable. Later, some East Indians also adopted this view of the enslaved Africans perpetuating and institutionalizing a cliché image of the oppressed, although they were similarly situated. East Indians were also stereotyped as tight-fisted, prone to domestic violence, and heathens, for not adopting Western ways. Therefore, it might be deduced that, the planter elite, as a means of effectively controlling the labour force, created the division of labour among races (Brereton, 1979: 146-49).
Although Africans and East Indians were both labelled as inferior, their subordinate status differed in form. Given that they were looked upon as inferior, East Indians were thought to possess their own civilization, evidenced by their text-based religions and corresponding languages. The Indian population in Trinidad retained a dominantly Eastern identity. However, their identity seems to have undergone serious changes stemming from the process of colonizations. Selvon confesses in an interview:

In fact, the thing with me is that I am so much Westernized, so much Creolized, that it’s the only element that I think I am really strongest in. In some of my books, I’ve had to avoid going into too much description of Indian ritual and custom purely because I don’t know them myself.

(Jussawalla, 1992: 112)

Hence, it might be clearly stated that Indian language and cultural identity are largely creolized by the Western values. In this regard, Hintzen writes about the identity politics in the Caribbean:

For the racially pure African, accommodation at the “lower” extremes of créolité is accomplished through cultural redemption. The combination of racial and cultural hybridity determines location in between the extremes. For the European, this pertains to the degree of cultural and racial pollution. It implies a descent from civilization. For the African, creolization implies ascent made possible by the acquisition of European cultural forms and by racial miscegenation whose extensiveness is signified by color. This, in essence, is the meaning of creolization. It is a process that stands at the center of constructs of Caribbean identity.

(Hintzen, 2002: 478)

The process of Creolization is an assimilation of different cultures and people in the Caribbean context. The people from Africa, Asia and Europe had cultural contact in the Caribbean islands. The Caribbean region became a ‘melting pot’ and a ‘salad bowl’ of different cultures and people. The process of creolization also can be explained with the concepts of ‘acculturation’ and ‘inter-culturation’; the creolization process is moulded into a ‘new sphere’ carrying both the cultures of ‘traditional’ and ‘new’. Samuel Selvon’s novels have two well-known aspects of ‘assimilation process’– the Indo-Trinidadian experience of creolization in his peasant novels– A
Brighter Sun, Turn Again Tiger and Those Who Eat the Cascadura, and the Caribbean/black immigrant experience in London in his London novels– The Lonely Londoners, Moses Ascending and Moses Migrating. In A Brighter Sun, Selvon describes the marriage process of Tiger, the protagonist of a novel. The concept of marriage signifies the ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’ process. The newly married young couple, Tiger and Urmilla, came to Barataria to lead an independent life. Barataria is considered ‘melting pot/salad bowl’ of all cultures. Selvon uses Barataria as a module of the creolization process. Barataria is a multi-social and multi-racial society which helps to assimilate all cultures. Tiger and Urmilla are from the Indian cane community of Chaguanas. The creole couple Joe and Rita, are their friends and mentors. They are from Port of Spain, but Joe came to Barataria to work in the American naval base. Other people such as Chinese, Africans and Americans came to live in Barataria. Selvon depicts the positive aspects of creolization process through the relationship between the families of Tiger and Joe Martin. The two families live harmoniously in the multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-social society. Though there is racism in the novel, Selvon offers an optimistic view of ‘assimilation,’ ‘acculturation’ and ‘interculturation’ of different cultures, which lead towards the creolization process in the cultural and psychological context.

In Those Who Eat the Cascadura, Sans Souci’s the cocoa estate which is the setting of the novel, is also a creolized place. It has an English owner, but an Indian overseer and workers, along with Indian characters. The relationship between the English owner and multi-racial workers is a harmonious one. The triumph of multi-racial relations is reflected in Sarojini-Garry Johnson relationship. Belonging to different races does not affect them. The success of the relationship is the success of creolization. Here Sarojini, the gorgeous Indian woman, is the moral centre of the novel. Her actions and thoughts are supposed to be endorsements of creolization. Local myth and exile are also dealt within the novel. Readers can see the same trends in the novel, Plains of Caroni.

The Caribbeans described in the novel belong to a multiracial creole community or an ethno-cultural/multi-ethnic melting pot. Michael Dash defines the idea of ‘Creole identity’ as ‘nationalist idealism’ in the Caribbean context. He explains: “The idea of a “creole identity” as gained importance whenever there has
been a surge of “Nationalist idealism” (“Psychology, Creolization and Hybridization”, 46).

Creolization is an ‘on-going’ process. It is never static. It is a dynamic continuous process and makes for the social formation of different cultures. As Nigel Bolland argues:

Creolization then, is not a homogenizing process, but rather a process of contention between people who are members of social formation and carries of cultures, a process in which their own identity and ethnicity is continually re-examined and redefined in terms of the relevant oppositions between different social formations at various historical moments. (“Creolization and Creole Societies” in Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century Caribbean I, 72)

Creolization is not a notion of ‘fixed’ in the social, cultural and psychological context. It is a process of ‘transition’ from the ‘old world’ to the ‘New World,’ both culturally and psychologically. Creolization process is considered as a ‘transformation’ of cultures.

The process of creolization indicates settlement in the ‘New World’ and Braithwaite defines it as a socio-cultural process in his, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica. He explains:

“[T]he single most important feature in the development of Jamaican society was not the imported influence of the Mother Country or the local administrative activity of the white elite, but a cultural action material, psychological and spiritual based on the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment and as white/black, culturally discrete groups- to each other […]. This cultural action or social process has been defined […] as creolization. (Bratwaite, 296)

The concept ‘creolization’ is an ‘intermixing’ of peoples and cultures in the ‘new world,’ which is an essential feature of the process of creolization. The above passage indicates clearly that creolization process is not only a ‘socio-cultural’ but also a ‘psychological’ and a ‘spiritual’ process in the Caribbean context.
Works Cited


CHAPTER II: Caribbean Creole Language and Creolization in the Selected fiction of Selvon


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