

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Migration literature refers to literature that explores the themes on man's relocation from one geographical space to another, specifically the experiences and effects of this relocation on individuals and societies. It encompasses a range of literary works, including novels, essays, and poetry, that examine various aspects of migration such as cultural identity, foreignness, and the psychological impact on migrants, particularly children¹. Migration literature is often situated within the broader context of world literature, with scholars considering migrant authors and texts as examples of world literature. It is also seen as a part of postmodern literature, influenced by historical events such as colonialism and the division of Europe^{2,3}. African writers, for example, have depicted the effects of migration from Africa to Europe in their works, highlighting the challenges faced by young Africans seeking a better life⁴.

Made more serious by the effects of living in a globalised society concerning aspects of migration such as cultural identity, foreignness, and the psychological impact on migrants, particularly children's writers, for example, migration literature have depicted the migrants and the regions involved in the process⁵. Migration has become a frequent topic across various fields in media discussions, often driven by statistics; in sociology, because of its social and psychological impact; in legislation, due to the bureaucratic processes involved in relocation or employment; and in literature, where it is explored through narratives and themes⁶. Despite the various changes and shifts in how these representations have evolved over time, the often wide

gap between how a place is perceived and how it is imagined has stayed constant and today, it can no longer be ignored⁷. Migration, when explored in literature through fictional storytelling, not only reflects social realities with a degree of truth but also challenges the boundaries between different categories. We are in an era where maps are being redrawn, and where intense processes of losing and regaining territorial belonging occur. People are crossing borders but at the same time, borders are also crossing people⁸. The word "migrant" has now become a broad term that includes others like exile, expatriate, refugee, nomad, homeless person, wanderer, and even explorer. Because of this fluidity in both boundaries and categories, literature that addresses these social, cultural, and identity shifts becomes a tool for mapping these changes and supports their discussion in various fields⁹. When we talk about migration literature, we can cover a range of current issues from the role and themes of migrant writers, to the movement of books across global markets, and the way literature reflects the cultural, identity-based, or psychological impacts of migration¹⁰.

As a literary theme, migration has gained significant relevance in recent years. This interest reflects the shifting population dynamics throughout the twentieth century, largely driven by war and economic disruptions¹¹. In fact, the migrant has emerged as a central figure of the twentieth century. Migration is no longer seen as unusual or exceptional; rather, it has become a widespread norm, prompting a deep rethinking of concepts such as identity, belonging, and home¹².

In literature, migration often reflects a fascination with the unfamiliar and the marginal, while also taking on autobiographical dimensions. Both of these aspects align with literature's role in representing society capturing the imaginative portrayal of the world and giving voice to lived

experiences¹³. Literature offers a unique and irreplaceable response to specific social issues, community dilemmas, tensions, and anxieties. Without either overstating or downplaying its artistic value, literature can be viewed through a sociological lens serving as a social barometer that reflects and critiques society. It also has the power to bring into conversation images of ‘the other’ and the prejudices attached to them¹⁴.

In today's world, people from various parts of the globe continue to migrate to the United Kingdom and other developed nations like the United States both through legal and illegal means. Their reasons range from seeking better education and job opportunities, escaping persecution, or relocating after tragic events such as wars, natural disasters, or terrorism¹⁵. Others migrate to reunite with family members who had previously moved abroad in search of a better life. Economic or educational migrants often travel alone first, followed by their families later on, while political migrants may flee in large groups, sometimes with their families, sometimes without¹⁶.

Migration is generally understood to take place in three main stages. The first is the pre-migration stage, which involves the decision to migrate and the preparations leading up to the move. The second stage is the act of migration itself the physical relocation from one place to another. The third stage, known as post-migration, involves adapting to the new society, learning new social and cultural norms, and adjusting to new roles¹⁷.

If individuals feel cut off from their original culture, are not accepted by the dominant culture, or lack social support, they may experience feelings of rejection, alienation, and low self-worth a condition often described as trauma. Throughout the migration process, several factors can increase the risk of trauma. These include a person’s personality traits, experiences of forced

migration, and exposure to persecution, among others. It is important to note, however, that these stages are not always clearly separated and often overlap with one another¹⁸.

More than a million migrants and refugees in Africa have in 2015 crossed over to Europe. Most of these desperate migrants arrive Europe by sea while many others arrive on land mostly through Turkey and Albania. The harsh winter of the European countries do not in any way discourage migrants from entering Europe. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 135,711 individuals have reached Europe by sea since the start of 2016¹⁹. Although the bulk of migrants arriving Europe claim asylum; considering the conflict in Syria, the violence going on in Afghanistan and Iraq, the abuses in Eritrea and further the poverty in Kosovo, many other migrants have migrated, not for any of these reasons but probably for economic reasons. Despite the fact that many migrants have lost their lives in the process of crossing the Mediterranean Sea, more migrants refuse to be deterred by this^{20, 21}

In recent years, some postcolonial writers living in exile have reshaped their identities by embracing the label of "migrant" instead of "exile." They use the term "migrant" to describe both their literary work and their personal experiences of cultural transition. Likewise, a newer generation of Caribbean writers including Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar, Edwidge Danticat, Michelle Cliff, Jamaica Kincaid, and Julia Alvarez are increasingly making their homes in the United States rather than the former colonial 'Mother Country.' Unlike earlier writers such as Samuel Selvon and George Lamming, this generation is less frequently associated with the theme of exile and does not focus on it as heavily in their writing²².

The shift from viewing postcolonial writing as "exile literature" to framing it as "migrant literature" carries significant consequences for how contemporary postcolonial texts are

interpreted. It compels writers and critics to rethink how the experience of exile is represented. In other words, exile can no longer be taken at face value, even if it is described differently, because the meaning of exile itself changes when the language used to describe it shifts²³. Although many writers may still live away from their homelands under conditions that could be described as exile, this new emphasis on migrant literature challenges the traditional approach in literary criticism that treats exile as a straightforward explanation for a writer's work. Instead, exile now becomes something that must be critically examined and understood within ideological frameworks²⁴.

In the past and still today it was often assumed that simply labeling a writer as being in exile explained key aspects of their writing. Exiled writers were frequently thought to possess a special objectivity, seeing both their native and host cultures more clearly because of their detachment. This idea, rooted in high modernist thought, granted them literary authority as neutral observers. Their supposed role as cultural mediators caught between two worlds has often shaped how their work is interpreted, reinforcing a binary view of identity: one that contrasts a difficult or alienating present (like life in Britain) with a nostalgic or idealised homeland (like the Caribbean), as seen in writers such as V.S. Naipaul²⁵.

The move from exile literature to migrant literature challenges the traditional binary thinking of "here" and "there" by focusing instead on movement, displacement, and the blending of cultures, races, and languages. Characters no longer exist in clearly defined spaces; their identities are shaped by constant flux²⁶. Because of their uprootedness, migrants often experience deep shifts in how they see themselves, leading to a sense of ambivalence toward both their past and present lives. They cannot simply look back on the past with nostalgia, as it no longer provides a stable

point of reference. Instead, identity becomes a process of becoming rather than a fixed state of being. Migration, then, is not just a temporary passage from one place to another it becomes a way of existing in the world: migrancy²⁷.

The voice of the migrant reveals what it means to feel both at home and foreign, to live in a space where one belongs and yet feels detached, always in motion. It reflects the longing to return to a homeland, while also confronting the reality that returning is impossible because the past is not just a different place, but a different time entirely²⁸. Migration also brings attention to the harsh reality of crossing borders, such as the Rio Grande or entering Fortress Europe, and suddenly becoming "illegal" in the eyes of the law. In this way, the shift to migrant literature doesn't just describe fixed identities like "illegal immigrant" it questions how such identities are formed in the first place. It reveals them as social constructs shaped by laws, perceptions, and politics, rather than as natural or permanent labels²⁹.

Likewise, the traditional contrast between a character's country of origin and their adopted homeland often used to interpret postcolonial novels is now seen not as a reflection of reality but as an ideologically driven construct. In place of this binary, migrant literature offers a more fluid, transnational, cosmopolitan, multilingual, and hybrid vision of the world. It reimagines global boundaries, creating connections between the Global South and the Global North³⁰.

In other words, this new understanding of migrancy embraces ambiguity, resistance, contradiction, and even subversion of cultural norms from both the home and host societies. It challenges rigid identities and opens space for in-between experiences³¹. Interestingly, in contemporary Euro-American literary criticism, the concepts of migrancy and exile are no longer simply opposed but have undergone redefinition. This rethinking has shifted their meanings from

their original associations. Traditionally, exile implied forced expulsion with little or no hope of return except under threat of punishment, imprisonment, or death whereas migration suggested a voluntary move with the option to return³². However, in modern critical discourse, migrant literature is now seen as highlighting the complex, evolving relationship between past and present, often portraying return as emotionally or psychologically impossible. In contrast, exile literature tends to focus on what was lost or left behind and the longing for return even if that return remains out of reach³³.

Postcolonial literature is widely understood as a body of work that engages with the historical, political, and cultural legacies of colonialism, particularly as they pertain to nations that were subjected to Western imperial rule, most notably before the year 1960. This field of literature is often associated with the voices of formerly colonized societies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and parts of Latin America regions commonly grouped under the term "Third World" during the Cold War era. These nations, having endured direct or indirect forms of imperial domination, use postcolonial literature as a platform to narrate their unique experiences, resistances, and identity negotiations in the wake of colonial trauma³⁴.

Postcolonial perspectives are rooted in the historical testimonies of colonized peoples and also draw from the broader discourses of minority and subaltern voices within the global power dynamics of East versus West, and North versus South. The term postcolonial, though it literally denotes the period following the end of colonial rule, in literary criticism refers more broadly to the critical engagement with colonial and imperial power structures during both the colonial and post-independence periods. In other words, postcolonial literature encompasses writings

produced under colonial conditions as well as those written in the aftermath of independence, reflecting a continuum of response rather than a neat chronological break³⁵.

The core objective of studying postcolonial literature is to examine the complex and often devastating impact of colonial rule on colonised societies. This includes analysing how colonial ideologies infiltrated and reshaped various aspects of life from political governance and legal systems to cultural practices, social norms, language, education, and even psychological identity. The postcolonial lens seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which colonial powers asserted control, the ways in which local populations resisted or internalised that control, and how these legacies continue to influence formerly colonised societies today. Moreover, postcolonial literary criticism interrogates the ideological underpinnings of colonialism and challenges the cultural superiority and racial hierarchies propagated by imperial powers. It also explores how colonised individuals and communities reclaimed their voices, traditions, and self-definition through literature. Writers often use narrative fiction, poetry, and drama not only as tools of resistance but also as means of healing, memory preservation, and cultural revival. These texts are rich sites for examining hybridity, mimicry, displacement, identity crisis, cultural conflict, language politics, and the struggle for decolonisation³⁶.

In the African context specifically, postcolonial literature emerged as both a reaction to and a critique of colonial domination not only as an external political force but also as a deeply embedded system of knowledge, representation, and value. African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, and Ama Ata Aidoo, among others, began to challenge the colonial narrative that depicted African societies as primitive, voiceless, or

dependent. Through their writings, they reconstructed African histories, celebrated indigenous cultures, and exposed the contradictions and injustices of the colonial enterprise.

Ultimately, postcolonial literature functions as a powerful form of cultural expression and intellectual resistance. It allows for a critical reassessment of the colonial past, while also offering new frameworks for understanding the postcolonial present. It remains a crucial area of literary and cultural study for its ability to confront inherited systems of domination, to amplify suppressed voices, and to contribute to the broader project of global justice and historical redress.

Postcolonial literature also operates within the broader framework of colonialism, a concept that encompasses the full range of political, social, cultural, and economic practices imposed upon Third World nations, particularly in Africa, from the onset of European colonization to the present day. Colonialism is not limited to historical conquest and occupation; it extends into ongoing patterns of dominance and control that continue to shape postcolonial societies. Within this context, postcolonial literature serves both as a reflection of and a response to these enduring legacies.

At the heart of postcolonial literature lies the idea of resistance a central theme that manifests in various forms such as subversion, direct opposition, and even mimicry. These literary strategies often serve to challenge colonial authority, undermine imperial narratives, and reclaim indigenous identity and voice. However, the notion of resistance is deeply complex and not without its contradictions. One of the key tensions in postcolonial theory is the recognition that resistance is never entirely free from the influence of what it opposes. In resisting colonial power, the colonised subject inevitably engages with the very structures, symbols, and languages of the coloniser. In this sense, resistance always bears the imprint of the power it seeks to reject,

making it a double-edged sword both an act of defiance and an entanglement with the colonising force.

Furthermore, the concept of resistance in postcolonial literature often introduces broader philosophical ideas such as freedom, liberty, selfhood, identity, and individuality. These ideas are frequently derived from Enlightenment and Western liberal traditions, and while they are crucial to the language of anti-colonial struggle, they may not align perfectly with the indigenous cultural frameworks or philosophical systems of colonised peoples. In some cases, these values may not have been present at all in the same form within the precolonial worldview, which complicates the process of articulating postcolonial identity and reclaiming cultural authenticity. Thus, postcolonial literature becomes a space where these tensions are explored and negotiated. It both critiques the impositions of colonial ideologies and grapples with the ambiguities and limitations of the resistance it proposes. In doing so, it fosters a rich and often paradoxical discourse on human agency, cultural survival, and the redefinition of subjectivity in a world still haunted by colonial legacies³⁷.

Postcolonial literature often explores the complexities of identity in the context of colonial and postcolonial societies. Characters frequently grapple with questions of self-identity, influenced by both indigenous and colonial cultures. Hybridity refers to the blending of these cultural elements, leading to new, often conflicted identities. This theme highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of identity in postcolonial contexts. Displacement, whether physical, cultural, or psychological, is a significant theme in postcolonial literature. Many works explore the experiences of characters who have been displaced due to colonial rule, including forced

migrations, exile, or voluntary diaspora. This theme examines the sense of loss, longing, and the struggle to find a place of belonging in a new environment³⁸.

Postcolonial literature aims to reclaim and reinterpret history from the perspective of the colonised. This involves challenging the colonial narratives that have historically dominated and presenting alternative viewpoints. Authors strive to give voice to those who were marginalised or silenced in colonial histories. Language is a crucial theme, as it is both a tool of colonial power and a means of resistance. Postcolonial writers often grapple with writing in the language of the coloniser versus their native languages. This theme explores how language can be a site of control, but also a space for subversion and reclaiming identity. The legacies of colonialism often include collective and individual trauma. Postcolonial literature explores the impact of colonial violence, exploitation, and oppression on the psyche of individuals and communities. It examines how memories of colonial pasts shape contemporary identities and social realities. Finally, Colonialism often involved the exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation. Postcolonial literature addresses the ecological impacts of colonial practices and the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples to protect their identity and environment³⁹.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers* present the complex and numerous experiences of migrants as they navigate displacement, loss of identity, and the challenges of integration in foreign lands. While migration is often portrayed in terms of physical movement, less attention is given to the emotional and psychological toll it takes on individuals as expressed in the migrants use of languages and their documentations in literary texts, as well as the coping mechanisms they deploy. The problem this study intends to address lies in the

limited exploration of how migrants adapt to their new environments, particularly in terms of their psychological resilience, the cultural and social factors influencing their survival strategies, and the ways these mechanisms either help or hinder their integration. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the coping mechanisms of migrants in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers*, providing a deeper understanding of the migrant experience beyond the physical journey.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the psychological effects of migration and coping mechanisms among migrants, as depicted in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*. The specific objectives of this research are to:

- i. identify and discuss instances of migration and its psychological effects on character in the selected novels,
- ii. examine coping mechanisms employed by the characters to navigate their psychological challenges,
- iii. interrogate narrative techniques deployed by both Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila *Travellers* to convey psychological effects of migration on their main characters.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What instances of migration and its psychological effects on characters are depicted in the selected novels?

ii. What coping mechanisms were employed by the characters to navigate their psychological challenges?

iii. What narrative techniques were deployed by both Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila in *Travellers* to convey psychological effects of migration on their main characters?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In literary studies, this analysis enriches the understanding of migration narratives, a critical area in postcolonial and world literature. Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers* provide complementary perspectives on the migrant experience across different eras and geographic contexts 1950s London and contemporary Europe, respectively. This study reveals how literature captures universal themes like alienation, resilience, and identity formation, showing continuity and change in migration experiences across time and space. Additionally, it broadens the scope of postcolonial studies by demonstrating how migrants from former colonies, navigate identity and cultural hybridity in the metropole, offering insights into transnational and diasporic identities in literature.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study encompasses a thorough examination of the themes of migration and coping mechanism within Helon Habila's *Travellers* and Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* using psychoanalytical tools and concepts. This includes analysing characters' psychological experiences, such as feelings of displacement, identity crisis, and the search for connection, as well as exploring the narrative's socio-cultural context within postcolonial literature. Additionally, while focusing primarily on psychoanalytical interpretation, the study may touch

upon related themes such as race, migration, and urban life to provide a comprehensive analysis of the texts.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The analysis is limited to two texts; Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*, which may not encompass the entirety of literary exploration of migration and coping mechanisms. The study primarily focuses on the postcolonial era, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences of Caribbean and African migrants across different periods. Literary analysis is inherently interpretative, and the findings may reflect the subjective perspectives of the researcher.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Migration: The movement of characters in the selected novels from one place to another, often for reasons such as economic and job opportunities, better living conditions, or escaping war as depicted in the selected novels.

Coping Mechanisms: Strategies and behaviors used by characters being understudied to manage stress, adapt to new environments, and overcome challenges.

Postcolonial Literature: A body of literary work that addresses the cultural, political, and social impacts of colonialism and the experiences of colonised peoples. This is a genre of literature that shows the experiences of the characters and the effects of colonialism on them.

Identity: The sense of self that characters in the selected novels develop, influenced by personal experiences, cultural background, and social environment. Their feeling of belonging to a particular community or group.

Alienation: A feeling of isolation or estrangement from character's surroundings or community, often experienced by migrants in a new environment, especially in the country of their past colonialists. This is when the characters under observation does not feel like they belong to an environment.

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Endnotes

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter contains review of related literatures, that are presented under the following subheadings:

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Migration as a Global Phenomenon

2.1.2 Relative Benefits and Costs of Migration

2.2 Migration Literature

2.2.1 Themes in Migration Literature

2.2.2 Colonial Spread of Migrant Writers and their Literatures

2.3.1 African Literature

2.3.2 Text Summary of Selected Novels

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Psychoanalysis Theory

2.4.2 Coping Mechanisms Theory

2.5 Review of Empirical Studies

2.5.1 Displacement, Identity, Coping Mechanisms and Migration

2.5.2 Cultural Displacement in Literature

2.5.3 Coping Mechanism from cultural displacement

2.6 Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Migration as a Global Phenomenon

Migration refers to the movement of individuals from one location to another¹. It represents a form of territorial mobility within the population, occurring for a variety of reasons, irrespective of the purpose, duration, or frequency of movement between areas. Throughout history, mobility has been a fundamental aspect of human existence and a driving force behind population migration². The closing years of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century witnessed a significant intensification of migration, influenced by numerous factors, including globalisation and the evolution of transport and communication technologies³. The past five decades have also been marked by a notable increase in the number of people migrating, driven by a combination of economic, social, political, and environmental factors⁴.

Migration, as a global phenomenon, is marked by both voluntary and involuntary movements of people across international borders. Individuals leave their countries of origin for a variety of reasons, whether by choice or due to compulsion. Migrants often face vulnerability during their journey to the destination country, as well as during their stay in the host nation⁵. Among the most at-risk groups are unaccompanied and separated minors. These children flee their countries without the support or protection of their parents, driven by factors such as persecution, international conflicts, civil wars, forced recruitment as child soldiers, harmful cultural practices, natural disasters, extreme poverty, trafficking in various forms, or even being sold by their parents⁶. Many are also motivated by the hope of finding better economic opportunities. Unaccompanied and separated minors are exposed to a range of risk factors affecting their gender status, health, education, and overall social welfare. Their rights and protection are upheld through international legal frameworks⁷.

However, their well-being can be further supported through practical interventions⁸. These include enhancing coordination and communication among the various stakeholders involved in providing services, adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, and investing in the capacity-building of professionals working with this vulnerable population⁹. Achieving meaningful change in the circumstances of unaccompanied and separated minors requires a fundamental shift in the attitudes of authorities and officials towards foreigners, as well as the development of the necessary competencies, skills, and knowledge¹⁰.

Migration is not a recent phenomenon; humans have been on the move since the earliest days of our existence. In fact, the history of humankind is, in many ways, a history of migration some even contend that movement is our natural condition. Throughout history, migration has played a crucial role in enabling people to adapt to environmental pressures, social disruptions, and various other challenges. This remains true today, although migration has now taken on a truly global scale¹¹. Far from being a modern occurrence, human migration dates back to long before the earliest signs of civilisation appeared in the Middle East. While the circumstances and the people involved have evolved over time, the act of movement itself has been a constant feature of human life. Even in the absence of conflict or climate-related pressures, it is entirely natural for people to seek new environments¹².

Our early ancestors migrated out of Africa and roamed the grasslands and tundra of Eurasia, following the paths of migrating mammoths and mastodons. It took millennia for humanity to populate the globe a process that concluded around 9,500 years ago, when humans reached the southernmost point of South America¹³. Centuries later, the European powers began to expand their reach beyond the continent, setting out to colonise what they termed the 'New World'. This

period of exploration and conquest marked a grim chapter in the history of migration, as it led to the forced displacement and enslavement of millions of Africans. These individuals were transported across the Atlantic under horrific conditions and subjected to relentless exploitation on plantations throughout the Americas. Their forced labour became the backbone of colonial economies, and their suffering remains a central element in the narrative of global migration and injustice¹⁴.

In the centuries that followed, voluntary and involuntary migration continued to shape societies across the globe. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, hundreds of thousands of Europeans left their homelands in search of new opportunities, fleeing not only poverty and persecution but also famine and political instability. Migrants from regions within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Scandinavia, and particularly Ireland where the Great Famine drove millions to the brink of starvation set sail for the United States and other destinations in the hope of securing better futures. These waves of migration significantly altered the demographic and cultural landscapes of the receiving nations¹⁵.

In more recent decades, developments in modern technology and transportation, alongside the increasing accessibility of resources necessary for migration, have contributed to a dramatic rise in both the scale and complexity of global migration. Aeroplanes, digital communications, and online networks have all made it easier for people to move across borders and establish connections in distant places. As a result, we now find ourselves grappling with migration not only as a local or regional phenomenon but as a truly global process with far-reaching implications¹⁶.

The transformations in global mobility are indeed remarkable and compel us to reconsider our understanding of migration in the context of an interconnected world. They challenge the conventional narratives we have inherited and demand that we reframe how we view the movement of people across borders. To understand the scale of this shift, it is worth reflecting on the nature of travel just two millennia ago, at the height of the Roman Empire. Back then, a journey from Rome to the area now known as Prague could take several months. Travellers endured grueling and perilous treks on foot or on horseback through rugged mountain ranges, across unpredictable rivers, and into the dense and often dangerous forests of the Alps. Migration was slow, fraught with hardship, and physically exhausting¹⁷.

Fast forward to the present day, and such a journey can now be accomplished in under two hours by air provided, of course, one possesses the means and the privilege of holding a powerful passport. This stark contrast highlights not only the astonishing advances in transportation but also the persisting inequalities in global mobility. While some enjoy ease of movement, countless others remain constrained by restrictive immigration policies, financial limitations, and geopolitical barriers. Thus, as global migration continues to evolve, it forces us to re-examine our assumptions, address issues of justice and accessibility, and acknowledge both the historical legacies and contemporary realities that shape the movement of people in the modern world.

Only a few decades ago, large-scale human mobility particularly movement that spanned national boundaries or entire continents occurred at considerably lower levels than we witness today. While the act of migration is by no means a modern development, the dynamics surrounding it, as well as the origins and destinations of migrants, have undergone profound changes. The nature of migration itself has evolved in response to shifting geopolitical, economic,

social, and environmental factors. What once may have been a seasonal or regional movement in search of subsistence or safety has become, in many cases, a complex, multi-directional, and global process.

Regardless of their country of origin or final destination, today's migrants typically fall into one of four principal categories, or what scholars often refer to as the major streams of international migration. The first stream is labour migration, which may be either permanent, temporary, or circular in nature. These movements are often driven by economic imperatives, with individuals seeking employment opportunities abroad, sometimes repeatedly, or moving permanently for better livelihoods¹⁸. The second stream is secondary migration, often motivated by the need for family reunification, whereby individuals relocate to join family members who have previously migrated. The third category is humanitarian or forced migration, encompassing refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced persons fleeing conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. Lastly, there is irregular migration, which refers to the unauthorised entry, stay, or employment of individuals within a country, often involving significant legal and personal risk.

It is essential to recognise that these streams are not rigid or mutually exclusive. Depending on the specific circumstances of a country such as its immigration policies, economic structures, political climate, and social networks migrants may shift from one category to another or inhabit multiple categories simultaneously. For instance, an asylum seeker may later become a permanent resident, or a labour migrant may eventually seek family reunification.

Historically, countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States have been regarded as the classic immigration nations, shaped by waves of settlers, economic migrants, and refugees over centuries. However, since the mid-20th century, many countries that were

previously considered nations of emigration those from which people primarily departed have themselves become significant destinations for migrants. This transformation reflects broader global trends such as economic development, demographic shifts, and the liberalisation of certain migration regimes¹⁹.

Indeed, across the Global South, there are now at least thirty-seven countries with net positive migration rates meaning they receive more migrants than they send. In some of these nations, migrants constitute a significant portion of the population. For example, in Qatar, migrants make up approximately 86 per cent of the total population, while in the United Arab Emirates they account for 68 per cent, and in Kuwait, around 66 per cent. These figures underscore the extent to which some countries have become entirely dependent on migrant labour, particularly in sectors such as construction, domestic work, and services.

Europe, too, has experienced a diversification in its migration landscape, with countries now grouped into three broad categories based on their migration histories. The first includes post-World War II immigrant destinations such as Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland which have long received migrants due to labour shortages, decolonisation, and humanitarian commitments. The second group comprises relatively new or intermediate destinations, including Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, which began experiencing significant immigration from the 1980s onward, often reversing their historical roles as emigration countries. The third and most recent category involves the early-stage migration cycle countries of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, which have emerged as migrant destinations only over the past decade or so, especially since joining the European Union²⁰.

This evolution illustrates how migration has become an inherently global phenomenon, no longer limited to a few corridors or traditional routes. Today, the drivers of migration economic disparity, conflict, environmental degradation, education, global connectivity span the entire globe, affecting both sending and receiving countries in complex and interdependent ways. Even in the face of contemporary global economic uncertainties, political instability, and heightened border restrictions, migration flows remain resilient. People continue to move by choice or necessity reflecting not only the human capacity to adapt but also the persistent structural inequalities and aspirations that propel movement.

Consequently, our understanding of migration must be reimagined. It is no longer sufficient to view it as an isolated or temporary issue. Rather, it should be recognised as an enduring and essential element of the human story an expression of agency, survival, ambition, and global interconnection²¹.

2.1.2 Relative Benefits and Costs of Migration

It is not a mystery why authorised labour migration tends to produce the most consistent and substantial net economic benefits for both origin and destination countries over time. Labour migration occupies a unique position within the broader framework of human mobility, as it simultaneously advances the economic interests of both the receiving and sending societies. Moreover, in comparison to other forms of migration, such as forced displacement or irregular migration, authorised labour migration tends to provoke significantly less political opposition, and in many cases even garners the approval and support of the host population, particularly when it is seen to serve national economic priorities or alleviate local labour shortages²².

From the perspective of the host country, labour migration delivers a series of tangible macroeconomic advantages, especially in terms of labour market efficiency, productivity, and growth. Employers and national economies alike benefit from four primary outcomes of authorised labour migration. Firstly, labour migrants are often concentrated in low-skilled, labour-intensive sectors that are essential to the functioning of national economies, such as agriculture, hospitality, construction, elder care, and sanitation services. These are roles that are frequently avoided or undervalued by native workers due to their demanding nature, low status, or comparatively modest remuneration. Migrant workers, by contrast, are often willing to accept these conditions in pursuit of economic improvement, enabling vital sectors to function without disruption.

Secondly, and particularly within the European context, where stringent labour laws can impose high costs and restrictions on hiring and dismissing native workers, migrant labour offers greater employment flexibility. In many cases, unskilled or semi-skilled migrant workers are less costly to recruit and more straightforward to release from employment contracts. This flexibility, while ethically debated, is often viewed by employers as a strategic advantage in adapting to changing market conditions and labour demands²³.

Thirdly, migrant workers demonstrate a high degree of adaptability. They tend to be more open than native workers to accepting employment under variable working conditions and in a wider range of geographical locations, including remote or economically disadvantaged regions. This geographic and occupational mobility plays a crucial role in ensuring that labour supply can respond dynamically to demand, whether in urban centres experiencing rapid growth or rural areas facing workforce shortages.

Fourthly, in the short term, migrant labour can serve as a more economically viable solution than capital investment in labour-saving technology. While automation and mechanisation may offer long-term efficiencies, they often require significant upfront costs and time to implement. Migrant workers, by contrast, provide an immediate solution to labour shortages, particularly during peak periods or in industries where automation remains impractical²⁴.

Beyond these specific economic functions, migrant workers both highly skilled professionals and those engaged in less-skilled occupations play an essential role in maintaining broader labour market flexibility. Their presence allows for quicker adjustments in labour supply in response to economic, demographic, and social shifts, including ageing populations, declining birth rates, and evolving consumer needs. In doing so, they help to support economic resilience and growth, facilitate foreign investment, and contribute to the fiscal sustainability of public services such as healthcare and pensions by expanding the tax base.

It is also important to acknowledge the value of labour migration to sending countries, which benefit not only from remittances that bolster household incomes and stimulate local economies, but also from the transfer of skills, knowledge, and connections gained abroad. In the long term, this can lead to the development of transnational networks that support trade, innovation, and further mobility opportunities. Therefore, authorised labour migration should not be viewed merely as a temporary economic fix, but rather as a strategic component of global economic interdependence. It represents a mutually beneficial arrangement that, when managed effectively and ethically, supports sustainable development for all parties involved. In this light, migration policy must be approached with care, foresight, and an appreciation of the complex economic, social, and human realities that underpin the movement of people in the modern world²⁵.

Authorised labour migration also serves as a significant advantage for the vast majority of migration-sending nations, particularly those in the Global South. One of the primary benefits lies in its capacity to alleviate domestic unemployment pressures. By enabling sections of the working-age population to seek employment opportunities abroad, countries of origin are able to ease the strain on local labour markets, thereby reducing the overall rate of joblessness. This, in turn, can contribute to greater social stability and mitigate the risks associated with underemployment, particularly among the youth.

Furthermore, labour migration fosters stronger economic linkages between sending and receiving nations. The movement of workers frequently acts as a catalyst for increased bilateral trade and investment, as migrant communities often retain commercial ties with their home countries. In this way, migration becomes not merely a demographic phenomenon but a driver of economic interdependence and cooperation. A particularly valuable by-product of labour migration is the transfer of skills and expertise. Many migrant workers particularly those in skilled or semi-skilled occupations acquire new technical knowledge, professional competencies, and cross-cultural experiences during their time abroad. Upon return, these repatriated migrants are often able to contribute to their home countries' human capital base, either by applying their newly acquired skills in local industries or by starting entrepreneurial ventures. Over time, this process can help to modernise local economies and enhance productivity, especially in sectors previously constrained by a lack of technical expertise²⁶.

Of considerable significance too are the financial remittances sent by migrant workers to their families and communities back home. These remittances represent a critical external source of capital for many developing nations, often outstripping official development assistance in size

and stability. For instance, in 2014 alone, remittance flows to less economically developed countries (LEDCs) amounted to a staggering \$436 billion, and projections at the time suggested this figure would rise to \$440 billion by the end of 2015. Such inflows are typically used to support household consumption, improve access to education and healthcare, fund small-scale enterprises, and finance housing construction. In doing so, remittances not only elevate living standards but also fuel broader processes of socio-economic development²⁷.

On the political and social front, authorised labour migration tends to be met with relatively favourable public attitudes in many of the receiving societies. Unlike irregular migration, which often provokes contentious political debate and public resistance, the orderly and legal entry of labour migrants is generally perceived as less problematic and, in some cases, even welcome. This tolerance can be attributed to several interrelated factors. Chief among these is the demographic reality confronting many countries, particularly in the Global North, but increasingly in parts of the Global South as well. With populations ageing and, in some instances, declining outright, these societies face looming labour shortages that threaten economic growth and the sustainability of social welfare systems. In this context, foreign workers are not merely tolerated but actively needed to fill essential roles across various sectors ranging from healthcare and agriculture to construction and domestic services. Thus, authorised labour migration is increasingly recognised not only as an economic imperative but as a demographic necessity²⁸.

Authorised labour migration yields multifaceted benefits that extend beyond mere economic calculations. It alleviates unemployment in sending countries, facilitates skill transfers, boosts international trade, and supports economic development through remittances. At the same time, it tends to generate minimal social or political backlash in host societies, especially when framed

as a response to structural demographic and labour market challenges. As such, it remains one of the most strategically advantageous forms of international migration for all parties involved.

As a result of prevailing economic and demographic conditions, the general public in much of Europe and the United States increasingly recognises that immigrants, particularly labour migrants, play a vital role in addressing labour market shortages. There is a broad and growing perception that such migrants occupy positions in sectors that suffer from chronic understaffing such as agriculture, hospitality, healthcare, and construction where native-born workers are either unavailable or unwilling to take up employment. This public understanding extends to the recognition that, far from displacing native workers en masse, labour migrants often contribute to the stimulation of economic activity and, by extension, facilitate the creation of new employment opportunities²⁹.

A second important factor contributing to the relative tolerance of labour migrants is the nature of their recruitment and integration into host economies. In contrast to asylum seekers or irregular migrants, labour migrants are frequently invited into the country through structured programmes and formal pathways. In many instances, governments themselves actively recruit migrant labour to address sector-specific shortages, often working in conjunction with employers and recruitment agencies. This official endorsement lends an aura of legitimacy to the presence of migrant workers and reinforces the notion that they are needed and, indeed, welcomed by the state. In essence, their migration is sanctioned and facilitated at the highest levels of policymaking they are not simply tolerated; they are explicitly sought after³⁰.

Thirdly, it is important to consider the temporal assumptions held by the public in host countries regarding labour migrants. Regardless of whether these individuals enter the country under

temporary guest worker schemes or through pathways that eventually lead to permanent residency, there exists a widespread expectation especially during the early phases of immigration that their stay will be short-lived. This perception of temporariness mitigates long-term anxieties about demographic change, cultural integration, and national identity. The belief that labour migrants will eventually return to their countries of origin reduces the sense of threat often associated with more permanent forms of migration, thereby softening potential public resistance³¹.

Moreover, labour migration is, of all the major forms of international migration, perhaps the most susceptible to governmental control and political management. Through the use of visa quotas, employment sponsorship requirements, and bilateral labour agreements, states can regulate the scale, pace, and composition of incoming migrant flows with considerable precision. This ability to fine-tune migration policies enables governments to respond to both economic demand and political sentiment, thereby maintaining a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the public. It is, therefore, unsurprising that countries such as Australia and Canada which have long histories of structured labour migration and well-institutionalised recruitment regimes tend to exhibit higher levels of public tolerance and acceptance toward migrants. In these societies, immigration is often framed as an instrument of national interest and economic planning, rather than as a threat to social cohesion³².

However, it is important to acknowledge that authorised labour migration does not universally or unconditionally produce positive outcomes for either the sending or receiving countries. The benefits, while often substantial, are not automatic or evenly distributed. In some cases, the influx of labour migrants may lead to unintended economic and social consequences. One of the

most frequently cited concerns in host societies is the potential for increased competition in the low-skilled labour market. Native workers with limited qualifications may perceive migrant labour as a threat to their job security or as a force that exerts downward pressure on wages and working conditions.

In addition to economic anxieties, the long-term presence of large migrant communities may generate cultural unease among segments of the host population. Concerns about the erosion of traditional values, challenges to national identity, and difficulties in social integration often surface, especially if migration is perceived as permanent rather than temporary. These cultural and societal tensions can be exacerbated by political actors who exploit public fears for electoral gain, framing migrants as scapegoats for broader systemic issues³³.

Thus, while authorised labour migration remains the most manageable and, in many respects, the most publicly palatable form of migration, it is not devoid of challenges. Policymakers must therefore strike a careful balance between economic necessity and social cohesion. This requires not only effective labour market regulation but also robust integration policies and public communication strategies that foster understanding and solidarity between migrants and host communities. Only through such comprehensive and adaptive approaches can the full potential of labour migration be realised while mitigating its more contentious effects.

The intention here is not to diminish the complexities or challenges associated with authorised labour migration, but rather to emphasise that, when all factors are weighed, this particular stream of migration tends to be the most aligned with national economic interests and the least susceptible to intense political controversy when compared to the other principal migration categories. Among the four major types of migration labour, family, humanitarian, and irregular

labour migration stands out as the most strategically managed and economically motivated. Its purpose-driven nature and the typically formalised pathways through which labour migrants are recruited render it relatively more acceptable to both policymakers and the general public³⁴.

In contrast, secondary migration primarily in the form of family reunification, which currently constitutes the largest migration flow into OECD countries also generates significant economic and social dividends, though it is often met with more ambivalence from host governments and societies. Unlike labour migrants, family migrants are not generally seen as fulfilling immediate economic needs, and as such, their entry is not always enthusiastically supported by public opinion or government policy. Nonetheless, the long-term benefits of family migration are noteworthy.

One of the key contributions of family migration lies in its capacity to support and strengthen the social integration of previously settled migrants. This is particularly important in receiving countries that lack well-defined or consistent policies aimed at integrating migrants into the wider society. The arrival of close family members not only provides emotional and practical support for settled migrants but also enhances their capacity to participate fully in the host economy and society. Family units tend to foster stability, encourage educational attainment among children, and provide informal networks that support employment and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, the presence of family members often accelerates the development of cohesive ethnic communities. These communities, while sometimes viewed with scepticism in terms of social assimilation, can actually play a vital role in the integration process. Ethnic networks offer newcomers a sense of belonging and practical guidance, which in turn eases their adjustment to the host country's cultural and economic systems. Though difficult to quantify, these forms of

social capital can prove indispensable in promoting self-sufficiency, reducing isolation, and fostering upward mobility among migrants³⁵.

Family migrants, therefore, serve a broader integrative function that may not be immediately visible in economic statistics but is nonetheless crucial in building socially cohesive, resilient multicultural societies. By enabling the formation of supportive community structures, they often become the connective tissue that links successive waves of migration, ensuring continuity, cultural preservation, and more seamless transitions for new arrivals³⁶.

In summary, while family migration does not always garner the same level of political and institutional support as labour migration, its contributions especially in terms of social cohesion and long-term integration are significant. Recognising this, policymakers must ensure that migration frameworks are not solely focused on economic utility but also acknowledge the profound human and communal dimensions that underpin the migration experience. Only through a balanced approach that considers both short-term economic interests and long-term societal wellbeing can migration policies truly serve the broader goals of inclusive and sustainable development³⁷.

Moreover, secondary migrants 'operate as sources of critical resources for newcomers, including opportunities for employment, access to credit, and different kinds of support. Family unification and settlement also create a fertile environment for establishing migrant-owned businesses³⁸. On the negative side of the ledger, family migration cements the establishment of permanent migrant communities and, consequently, introduces intra-societal ethnic, racial, and/or religious tensions into the receiving societies as well as a need to manage these tensions politically³⁹.

As the data indicate, despite the persistence of a weak economy following the 2008 financial crisis, a supermajority of Britons in 2011 supported increasing the number of high-skilled foreign workers and students in the UK. In contrast, only a minority favoured allowing more non-British immediate family members into the country and even fewer Britons (31%) advocated increasing the number of extended family members⁴⁰. Capturing approximately 10–12 per cent of all international migration, unauthorised or irregular migration raises a thorny dilemma for governments across the world. On the one hand, in countries plagued by rigid labour markets⁴¹, demographic ageing, and/or a deficit of low-skilled, low-paid workers⁴² irregular migration yields modest but ultimately positive economic returns. Moreover, irregular migration contributes to economies of scale, larger domestic markets, higher gross domestic product, and an enriched and more dynamic environment⁴³. By responding to market forces in ways that legal migration does not, irregular migration has an especially compelling economic rationale⁴⁴. Far from the economic scourge that its critics claim it to be, there is an ‘economically optimal level’ of irregular migration⁴⁵. On the other hand, and despite the facts that the financial costs of aggressively policing territorial borders and reducing illegality are often unjustifiably high⁴⁶, no government in the world explicitly embraces irregular immigration⁴⁷.

Moreover, no migration stream enjoys less public support and precipitates greater overt social and political conflict⁴⁸. Irregular migration to the OECD countries, on average, is more than twice as great a cause of public concern as authorised migration, with more than three times as many Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards anxious about illegal as legal migration. Unauthorised migrants are especially perceived as a threat and are a target of prejudice relative to other migrants in the United States⁴⁹ where approximately 80% of its estimated 11.1 million unauthorised migrants are of Hispanic origin⁵⁰. Given this hostility, it is more or less inevitable

that public discourse pertaining to irregular migrants is highly politicized virtually everywhere. Whether undocumented African migrants in Israel⁵¹, Mexican workers in the United States⁵², Bolivians in Brazil⁵³, or Albanians in Greece the presence of a critical number of irregular migrants within the receiving society feeds the public's unease with every migration stream⁵⁴.

Evaluating the claims and accommodating the needs of refugees and asylum seekers are costly for both governments and host societies. In addition to the often considerable financial burdens associated with humanitarian relief are the administrative costs incurred in assessing the merits of migrant petitions for refugee status or asylum and, in the developed countries, the political costs of effectively responding to the anti-refugee rhetoric of far right political actors⁵⁵. The toxic political environment within which asylum seekers and irregular migrants were received in Western Europe during the early 2000s⁵⁶. Since the 1980s both groups have been systematically stigmatised by sections of the popular media and more populist political parties. Asylum-seekers and irregular migrants have been linked to problems of unemployment, overstretched welfare systems, rising criminality and internal insecurity⁵⁷. This has often, though not exclusively, been in supposed contrast to tax-paying legal migrants or ethnic minorities.

Humanitarian migrants are resented by the general public for several reasons. First, humanitarian migrants are widely perceived as contributing far less to the welfare of the receiving society than authorised labour migrants and their dependents⁵⁸. Second, the public almost always and everywhere overestimates the number of asylum seekers and refugees⁵⁹. Third, asylum seekers and refugees are widely suspected, not always unfairly, of primarily having economic motives and, thus, undeserving of the host society's protection⁶⁰. Finally, the significant influx of humanitarian migrants into the host destination is frequently unanticipated and such migrants

often emigrate from source countries with few ties to and/or even hostile relations with the receiving country. Public attitudes, of course, are not always or everywhere ungenerous towards humanitarian migrants. Nevertheless, the political and social environments in which humanitarian migrants are typically received is less benign than that in which labour and secondary migrants respectively are received⁶¹.

2.2 Migration Literature

Migration literature and postcolonial literature show some considerable overlap. However, not all migration takes place in a colonial setting, and not all postcolonial literature deals with migration^{62,63}. A question of current debate is the extent to which postcolonial theory also speaks to migration literature in non-colonial settings. Although any experience of migration would qualify an author to be classed under migrant literature, the main focus of recent research has been on the principal channels of mass-migration in the twentieth century^{64,65}. These include: European migration to North America⁶⁶ or Australia; Arab migration to America after the collapse of the Ottoman empire; African and Asian migration from former colonies into Europe;⁶⁶ situations of ethnic cleansing;^{67,68} guest worker programs; and exile situations such as that of German dissidents during the Nazi period⁶⁹.

Migration literature focuses on the social contexts in the migrants' country of origin which prompt them to leave, the experience of migration itself, the mixed reception which they may receive in the country of arrival, experiences of racism and hostility, and on the sense of rootlessness and the search for identity which can result from displacement and cultural diversity^{70,71}. It encompasses a diverse range of narratives that explore the experiences, challenges, and identities of individuals and groups as they move from one region or country to

another. This body of work reflects the complexities of migration, including the reasons for leaving one's homeland, the journey itself, the adaptation to new environments, and the lasting impacts on personal and communal identities^{72,73}.

One of the defining features of migration literature is its ability to capture the multiplicity of voices and perspectives within migrant communities. These narratives often delve into the personal and emotional aspects of migration, highlighting the sense of loss, displacement, and longing for the familiar that many migrants experience. At the same time, they celebrate the resilience, adaptability, and creativity that migrants often exhibit as they navigate new cultural landscapes⁷⁴. Historically, migration literature has been shaped by various waves of migration, each bringing distinct themes and concerns to the fore. For instance, the early 20th century saw a significant influx of immigrants to the United States from Europe, which is vividly portrayed in works like Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. These novels depict the harsh realities of immigrant life, including the struggles with poverty, prejudice, and labour exploitation, while also capturing the hopes and dreams that drove many to seek a better life in a new land⁷⁵.

In the latter half of the 20th century, postcolonial migration literature emerged as a vital genre, addressing the legacies of colonialism and the movement of people from former colonies to the imperial centers. Writers like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, and Jhumpa Lahiri have explored the complex identities of postcolonial migrants, grappling with questions of belonging, cultural hybridity, and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, for example, famously delves into the immigrant experience in Britain, blending magical realism with incisive social commentary⁷⁶.

Contemporary migration literature continues to evolve, reflecting the ongoing global movements and the increasingly interconnected world. The refugee crisis, driven by conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and other regions, has given rise to powerful narratives that humanise the plight of displaced individuals. Works like Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* provide nuanced portrayals of the refugee experience, shedding light on the enduring impact of war, violence, and political instability on individuals and families⁷⁷.

The themes explored in migration literature are manifold, including identity, home, memory, and the negotiation of cultural boundaries. Identity is a central concern, as migrants often find themselves caught between multiple cultural frameworks, leading to a sense of hybridity or duality. The concept of home is similarly complex, as migrants navigate the tension between their place of origin and their new environment. Memory plays a crucial role in preserving connections to the past, even as migrants adapt to their present circumstances. Finally, the negotiation of cultural boundaries highlights the dynamic interplay between assimilation and the preservation of cultural heritage.

2.2.1 Themes in Migration Literature

Migration literature, a significant genre within contemporary literature, addresses the profound and multifaceted experiences of individuals and communities as they move from one place to another. This body of work often delves into themes such as displacement, longingness, belonging, alienation, identity, home, and dispossession, each of which reveals different aspects of the migrant experience. Displacement is a core theme in migration literature, reflecting the physical and emotional upheaval experienced by migrants. This theme explores the sense of loss and disorientation that comes with leaving one's homeland, often under duress due to war,

persecution, or economic hardship⁷⁸. The narrative of displacement highlights the challenges of finding stability and security in a foreign land, illustrating the profound impact of being uprooted from familiar surroundings.

Closely related to displacement is the theme of longingness, which captures the emotional yearning for what has been left behind. Migrants often feel a deep-seated nostalgia for their homeland, family, and culture. This longing can be a source of pain and melancholy but also a driving force that sustains their hope and connection to their past. Literature that explores longingness often depicts characters who grapple with the memories of their homeland, finding solace in reminiscence and storytelling. The quest for belonging is a central theme in migration literature. Migrants seek to establish a sense of community and acceptance in their new environment, which can be fraught with challenges due to cultural differences and societal barriers. This theme examines how migrants navigate the complexities of integration, balancing the desire to maintain their cultural identity with the need to assimilate. Stories of belonging often highlight the importance of solidarity and the creation of hybrid identities that bridge the old and new worlds⁷⁹.

Alienation is another significant theme, reflecting the feelings of isolation and estrangement that migrants frequently encounter. This theme delves into the psychological and social disconnection that arises when individuals are unable to fully integrate into their new surroundings. Alienation can stem from language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and systemic discrimination, leading to a profound sense of otherness. Literature that explores alienation often portrays the inner struggles of characters who feel like outsiders in their adopted homes. Identity is a multifaceted theme in migration literature, exploring how migrants construct and reconstruct

their sense of self amidst changing circumstances. This theme examines the fluidity and hybridity of identity, as migrants blend aspects of their native culture with those of their new environment. Questions of identity often intersect with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and class, revealing the complex ways in which migrants navigate their place in society. Literature that focuses on identity often portrays the tensions and negotiations involved in maintaining one's heritage while adapting to a new cultural context⁸⁰.

The concept of home is deeply complex in migration literature, reflecting both a physical place and an emotional state. Migrants often find themselves caught between two homes the one they left behind and the one they are trying to build. This theme explores the meaning of home as a source of comfort, belonging, and identity, as well as the pain of its absence⁸¹. Literature on this theme often grapples with the duality of home, portraying the internal and external struggles of creating a sense of home in a foreign land. Dispossession is a critical theme that highlights the loss of land, property, and rights that many migrants face. This theme underscores the economic and political dimensions of migration, revealing the ways in which individuals and communities are stripped of their assets and agency. Dispossession can result from various factors, including conflict, colonisation, and economic exploitation. Literature that addresses dispossession often portrays the struggles of migrants to reclaim their rights and rebuild their lives amidst systemic injustice⁸².

These texts often highlight the experiences of individuals or communities who migrate due to economic necessity, colonial legacies, war, political instability, or personal aspirations. Migration literature is a broad category encompassing various genres, including novels, poetry, memoirs, and short stories. Migration literature captures the lived realities of migrants, including

the struggles of adaptation, nostalgia for the homeland, and the challenges of cultural assimilation. It often addresses themes such as identity and belonging. Migrants often grapple with hybrid identities, as they negotiate between their homeland and host country⁸³. Many narratives portray migrants as outsiders, struggling to integrate into new societies⁸⁴.

Migration literature frequently examines discrimination and the racial hierarchies that migrants face⁸⁵. The longing for the homeland is a recurring theme, reflecting the emotional burden of migration⁸⁶. Many migrant narratives stem from colonial histories, where former colonial subjects move to metropolises like London, Paris, or New York⁸⁷. Migration literature has evolved in response to global movements of people, from forced migration (e.g., slavery, indentured labor) to voluntary migration (e.g., economic migration, exile, and diaspora communities). Works like Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) depict forced migration during the transatlantic slave trade⁸⁸. After World War II, many former colonies saw mass migration to Western countries. Writers from the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East produced literature reflecting the postcolonial migration experience⁸⁹. Modern works explore themes of globalisation, refugee experiences, and transnational identities, often focusing on second-generation migrants⁹⁰.

2.2.2 Colonial Spread of Migrant Writers and their Literatures

The colonial French and Spanish divided Hispaniola, the second largest Caribbean Island, into Haiti and what is now the Dominican Republic. It was the first location in the Western Hemisphere to receive the imprint of European civilisation. But after centuries of political turmoil and oppression, the two countries remain among the poorest in the Americas. A combination of high illiteracy rates and severe economic underdevelopment slowed the growth

of any strong literary traditions⁹¹. The letters and speeches of the liberator, Toussaint Louverture, indicate an early consciousness of the region's identity⁹².

Haitian literature generally continued to emphasise the problems of cultural and economic development. Among the country's notable authors were Massillon Coicou, the brothers Philippe Thoby-Marcelin and Pierre Marcelin, Jacques Roumain, Georges Sylvain, and Jean Price-Mars. Coicou was among the first to use Creole, a native language derived from French, in Haitian literature. His *Emperor Dessalines* was about a former slave who fought French attempts to regain control of the island⁹³. The brothers Marcelin collaborated on three novels on Haitian peasant life: *Le Crayon de Dieu (The Pencil of God)*, *Canapé-vert*, and *La Bête de Musseau (The Beast of the Haitian Hills)*. Roumain was also a populariser of native culture, his *Masters of the Dew* portrayed life in a peasant community. Sylvain catered to native tastes with his Creole stories, published under the title *Cric-Crac*, a traditional password and response exchanged between storyteller and audience at a tale's beginning. Price-Mars was a historian, ethnologist, and politician who wrote the first anthropological study of Haiti, *Ainsi parla l'oncle (Thus Spoke the Uncle)*, in 1928⁹⁴.

Two 19th-century romantic poets were José Joaquín Pérez, the author of *Native Fantasies*, and Salomé Ureña de Henríquez, a member of a distinguished literary family. Her father, Nicolás Ureña de Mendoza, was a poet. Her sons Pedro and Max Henríquez Ureña were literary historians and critics⁹⁵. A later poet, Gastón Fernando Deligne, was a follower of the modernist movement led by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. Probably the best 19th-century novelist was Manuel de Jesús Galván, whose book *Enriquillo* is about the last of the Indian chiefs to rebel against the Spanish conquerors⁹⁶.

In the 20th century two of the best-known writers also served as president of their country, Joaquín Balaguer and Juan Bosch. Balaguer began publishing poetry in 1922 and wrote a history of Dominican literature. Bosch was far more productive, writing political treatises, novels, short stories, and histories⁹⁷. His *Crisis de la democracia de América en la República Dominicana* (*The Unfinished Experiment: Democracy in the Dominican Republic*) told of the events leading to his overthrow in 1963. His short-story collections include *Cuentos escritos en el exilio* (*Stories Written in Exile*) and *Más cuentos escritos en el exilio* (*More Stories Written in Exile*)⁹⁸.

The outstanding modern playwright was Héctor Incháustegui Cabral, the leading representative of the movement called *poesía de sorpresa*, or poetry of surprise. One of his most significant works was a dramatic trilogy called *El Miedo en un Puñado de Polvo* (*Fear in a Handful of Dust*), which used themes drawn from the ancient Greek dramatists⁹⁹. Incháustegui was also the founder of a bimonthly review called *Eme-Eme*. Many 19th-century Cuban writers dealt with issues of freedom and political justice. Among them were Félix Varela y Morales, José Antonio Saco y López, and Rafael Mendive. Varela was a political philosopher whose essays were collected in *Cartas a Elpidio* (*Letters to Elpidio*). Saco was a journalist and editor of *Revista Bimestre Cubana*. He also wrote the six-volume *Historia de la esclavitud* (*History of Slavery*)¹⁰⁰.

Mendive's chief claim to fame as journalist and teacher was his influence over the great Cuban revolutionary José Martí. Martí was a romantic as well as an intellectual who wrote on art, literature, politics, history, and other subjects. A collection of his poetry was entitled *Versos libres* (*Free Verses*). His death in battle against the Spanish authorities greatly increased his stature as hero of the revolution¹⁰¹. Writers of a more traditional literature were José María de Heredia, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (*La Peregrina*), and Julián del Casal. Heredia was the

first great lyric poet of the Spanish colonies. His most widely acclaimed works were *En el Teocalli de Cholula* (*In the Teocalli of Cholula*) and *Oda al Niágara* (*Ode to Niagara*). Gómez de Avellaneda was born in Cuba but lived her adult life in Spain. Her play *Munio Alfonso* was based on the life of King Alfonso X. She also wrote a biblical drama entitled *Saul* and an antislavery novel called *Sab*¹⁰².

Casal was a leading inspiration for the modernist movement in Latin American literature. His first volume of poetry, *Hojas al viento* (*Leaves in the Wind*), shows the influence of the French writer Baudelaire. His third book, *Bustos y rimas* (*Busts and Rhymes*), was in preparation when he died at the age of 29. Two popular 20th-century Cuban novelists were Carlos Loveira y Chirino, a labour organiser and author of *Generales y doctores* (*Generals and Doctors*), and Luis Alejandro Baralt, famed author of *La luna en el pantano* (*The Moon in the Swamp*)¹⁰³. Since the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959, artistic production has generally been under the control of the state. While modern poets have maintained the high standards of prerevolutionary days, the novel has declined in quality. Recent fiction deals with such tedious themes as encouraging the workers and peasants to build the revolutionary society¹⁰⁴.

Poetry and drama preceded the development of the novel in Puerto Rico by several decades. Among the early poets were Lola Rodríguez de Tió, José de Diego, José Gautier Benítez, and José P.H. Hernández. In the 20th century Julia de Burgos, Cesáreo Rosa Nieves, Juan Antonio Corretjer, and Jaime Carrero have been popular. The most gifted and most often quoted poet of the island was Luis Palés Matos. The first great dramatist was Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, a writer of historical plays¹⁰⁵. Dramatists of the 20th century included Luis Llorens Torres, Manuel Méndez Ballester, Francisco Arriví, and René Marqués, whose *La carreta* (*The Oxcart*) deals

with the problems of leaving Puerto Rico for New York City. Manuel Zeno Gandía was the island's first novelist. His *La Charca*, published in 1894, depicts life in the poverty-stricken coffee-growing areas. First of the significant 20th-century novelists was Enrique Laguerre. Guillermo Cotto Thorner was one of the first to write on immigrant life in New York. Pedro Juan Soto wrote about racial prejudice in New York in such books as *Spiks* and *Temporada de duendes*¹⁰⁶.

Roger Mais of Jamaica was a novelist adept at depicting the lives of the underprivileged in such books as *The Hills Were Joyful Together* and *Black Lightning*. Other Jamaicans who have gained a following in the English-speaking world are John Hearne, author of *Voices Under the Window* and *The Eye of the Storm*, and Andrew Salkey, author of *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* and *A Quality of Violence*¹⁰⁷. Vic Reid was a folk-dialect novelist and author of *New Day*. Dramatist Barry Reckord dealt with political and cultural issues in *Don't Gas the Blacks* and *A Liberated Woman*. Jeanne Wilson wrote on 18th-century plantation life in *Weep in the Sun* and *Troubled Heritage*. Apart from Naipaul, the best-known writer from Trinidad was Samuel Selvon, whose novels present a grim and bitter picture of native life: *A Brighter Sun*, *An Island Is a World*, and *Plains of Caroni*. Novelist Cyril L.R. James published *Minty Alley*, *Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture* and *the San Domingo Revolution*, and *Spheres of Existence*¹⁰⁸.

Caribbean literature is the literature of the various territories of the Caribbean region. Literature in English from the former British West Indies may be referred to as Anglo-Caribbean or, in historical contexts, as West Indian literature¹⁰⁹. They share, apart from the English language, a number of political, cultural, and social ties which make it useful to consider their literary output in a single category. The more wide-ranging term, Caribbean literature, generally refers to the

literature of all Caribbean territories regardless of language whether written in English, Spanish, French, Hindustani, or Dutch, or one of numerous creoles¹¹⁰.

The literature of Caribbean is exceptional, both in language and subject. Through themes of innocence, exile and return to motherland, resistance and endurance, engagement and alienation, self-determination, Caribbean literature provides a powerful platform for Postcolonial studies and to Caribbean literatures in importance the context of all literature. Caribbean lands and seas have been depicted as a paradise on earth by foreign artists and writers¹¹¹. Scholars and writers in Postcolonial Studies have researched and published on this cultural phenomenon of an empty island, and the racist implications of a fantasy void of local people and their cultures¹¹². Caribbean classic novels such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) have inspired films, stories, and poems by other artists who seek to decolonize the relationship of people and landscapes¹¹³.

Caribbean novelists imbue island landscape with bustling life of the locals and migrants. The migration of Caribbean workers to the Panama Canal is often used as a narrative foundation. Maryse Condé's novel *Tree of Life* (1992) discusses the involvement of family ties and how people seek to improve their lot in life by working to build the Panama Canal¹¹⁴. Another contemporary classic about migrant cultures is Ramabai Espinet's novel *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), which explores trauma of displacement, Indian indentureship, and the phenomena of invisibility relating to women¹¹⁵. Caribbean stories and poems are ripe with references to storms, hurricanes, and natural disasters¹¹⁶. Derek Walcott's wrote *The Sea is History*, and dramatized the impact of tropical storms and hurricanes on the locals¹¹⁷. Caribbean writing deploys agricultural symbolism to represent the complexities of colonial rule and the intrinsic values of the lands.

Native fruits and vegetables appear in colonised and decolonising discourse. Derek Walcott describes the complications of colonialism using local fruit metaphors, such as star apples, in his poetry to connote the complexity of acidity and the sweetness¹¹⁸. Giannina Braschi's postcolonial work *United States of Banana* imagines a political and economic deal between China and Puerto Rico as the exchange of a bowl of rice for a bowl of beans, and a Lychee for a Quenepa¹¹⁹.

The Caribbean islands are collectively called the West Indies, but each island has its distinctive history and culture. In contrast to most of the nations of Central and South America, only Haiti and the Dominican Republic became independent of their colonial rulers in the 19th century. When the islands began to express yearnings for separate political and cultural identities from each other and from Europe, individual written literary traditions developed¹²⁰. Caribbean literature is an eclectic mixture. It includes works from French-speaking Haiti; the Spanish-language nations of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico; and some English islands. Few writers from the West Indies have gained a readership outside their region. A major exception is V.S. Naipaul, a Trinidad native of East Indian descent. He is widely known for both his novels and nonfiction. His early books dealt strictly with life in the Caribbean: *The Mystic Masseur*, published in 1957, *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), and *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961). But after he graduated from Oxford University and settled in England, his writing took him far afield. For example, two later books are India: *A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981)¹²¹.

2.3 African Literature

African literature is literature from Africa, either oral (orature) or written in African and Afro-Asiatic languages by African writers. Examples of pre-colonial African literature can be traced back to at least the fourth century AD. The best-known is the *Kebra Negast*, or *Book of Kings* from the 14th century AD¹²². Another well-known book is the Garima Gospels, one of the oldest known surviving bibles in the world, written in Ge'ez around 500 AD¹²³. A common theme during the colonial period is the slave narrative, often written in English or French for western audiences. Among the first pieces of African literature to receive significant worldwide critical acclaim was *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe, published in 1958. African literature in the late colonial period increasingly features themes of liberation and independence¹²⁴.

It may be impossible to give a satisfactory definition of African Literature. However, African Literature refers to those works which are written by African writers including those in the Diaspora to depict social-cultural, moral and political values of the continent. In the process, African writers had to use the language of the colonisers, an experience which has been objected to by many critics and writers of African descent¹²⁵. It is on the basis of this that a number of African writers have returned to the use of their own dialects first, before translation into foreign languages like English, French, Portuguese or any other inherited colonial language¹²⁶.

African Literature refers to the experiences of African writers who, through their literary works, express dissatisfaction or anger over the dislocation of African society, and their efforts to correct the dislocation¹²⁷. African Literature includes literary works of Africans originating from Africa, or of Africans based outside the continent. Thus, works from North Africa, South Africa, East and West Africa are included in most studies of African Literature. Most countries from Africa share the burden of colonial ideology and issues that surround crises of cultural identity¹²⁸.

In post-colonial African culture, African nations still struggle with the problem of neo-colonialism, ethnicity and the quest to have an identity of their own in the international arena.

African Literature can be broadly categorised into three phases from 1900 to 1940¹²⁹.

Considering the significance of the oral genre to modern African Literature, it will be incorrect to say African Literature began in the 20th century. In the early part of the twentieth century, Africa was exposed to Western education¹³⁰. Many African writers of the 20th century who returned to their countries after their studies abroad to produce literary works have been praised for their thematic concerns and issues. Their works have been categorised as the beginning of African Literature¹³¹. Examples of such works are those written by Gladys May Casely Hayford and Thomas Mafolo. The latter wrote *The Traveller of the East* (1934), *Chaka* (1925) and *Pitseng* (1910). His first novel was written in his native Sesuto language, though later translated into the English language¹³².

The second phase of African Literature is from 1945 to the independence era in 1960. The period was characterised by political agitations for most of sub-Sahara Africa. Literary activity in the period was intense. The period also witnessed literary protests against cultural imperialism¹³³. From the 1800s to the 1920s, European writers assumed the mouthpiece of African writers, leaning on their experiences as colonial masters and administrators to strengthen and popularise erroneous images of African people¹³³. This second phase pushed forward writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Aime Cessaire, Tchicanya Utamsi, Mongo Beti, to mention a few, who used their works to try to reverse the negative image of Africa presented in classical novels like Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*¹³⁴.

Many of the African writers of the second phase relied on aspects of oral tradition, literature and culture as literary tools to challenge ridiculous Eurocentric portrayals of Africa¹³⁵. The writers, for instance, present characters who struggle to adapt to a way of life that is highly individualised, as against a culture that they were used to, a collective people-oriented lifestyle which catered for the overall good of all. It is this changing society that is captured in the creative works of African writers like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Leo Gotran Damas, David Diop and Birago Diop, who adopt the African philosophy, Negritude, to protest colonial exploitation and denigration of African culture and ideology. The Senegalese poet and writer, Leopold Sedar Senghor, defined Negritude as the sum total of civilised values of the black world¹³⁶.

African writers of the period present an African identity to the world, totally contrary to the pitiable image of Africa across Europe back then. Literature reflects the social and political experiences of a particular time and place. For example, in 1948, the Apartheid regime of South Africa imposed all forms of restrictions on South African writers and non-writers¹³⁷. Most black authors could not publish their works, as they had no access to publishing houses. Only Afrikaner writers that were pro-apartheid or subtle apologists got their works published. South African writers like Nardine Gordimer, Dorris Lessing, Athol Fugard, J. M. Coetzee, and Alan Paton produced what became known as South African plays¹³⁸. Some black South African writers like Es'kia Mphahlele, Peter Abrahams, Alex La Guma, Bessie Head and Dennis Brutus wrote from exile, projecting the theme of apartheid in their works. Other writers whose ideals ran contrary to the philosophy of Apartheid were subtle and selective in the themes of their creative works¹³⁹.

However, language occupies a central place in the attempt to create an identity for African Literature. This is because most of the literatures from the region are written in English, French

and Portuguese and based on the fact that most African countries are inheritors of a tradition that is foreign or alien to the people¹⁴⁰. And, by virtue of history, political and geographical experiences, the literature that emerged from the ashes of the language contact and experience wear a distinct colouration termed African Literature¹⁴¹.

The response to the language dilemma has been taken seriously during the third and current phase of the development of African Literature. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a good and practical example of the language exponent and issue. He wrote his work, *I Will Marry When I Want*, first in his native Kikuyu tongue and later translated to the English language¹⁴². This is in line with the belief that for Africans to claim to be in possession of a literature, it must be written in a language that is theirs. However, some schools of thought have challenged this view because of the multilingual nature of many countries in Africa¹⁴³. For instance, in Nigeria alone, there are over 450 languages, most of which are mutually shared. It becomes difficult to limit the publication of creative works to a particular or one's mother tongue. To avoid a form of 'literary babel', it becomes imperative for a language of the colonial masters to be used in the expression of African Literature¹⁴⁴.

2.3.2 Text Summary of Selected Novels

2.3.3.1 Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*

Samuel Selvon was of Trinidadian descent and part of the first-generation immigrants who had made the passage to Britain from the West Indies, he published *The Lonely Londoners* in 1956, in the midst of increasing immigration waves and rising tensions in the country. Given that Trinidad achieved independence in 1962. *The Lonely Londoners* accentuates the life of West Indians immigrating to the Mother Country in hopes of acquiring well-paid jobs and finer living standards. Selvon presents the situation right after WWII, when the stereotypes had only evolved

into prejudices and hostility, rather than erupted into violence and rioting. The first character introduced in *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses Aloetta, is a male Trinidadian immigrant who has already spent ten years in London and has helped out other West Indians who come to the UK in search of a better life. One such immigrant is Galahad, the second protagonist of the story, who arrives in Britain at the beginning of the novel. Moses aids the newcomer since “he used to remember how desperate he was when he was in London for the first time and didn’t know anybody and anything”. Recalling the plight that he himself has faced, Moses deems it only fair to assist his countrymen when in a position to.

Incidentally, the mistreatment is apparent in the employment of immigrants, not just the lack of it. They are given lesser jobs, if any at all, and are gravely underpaid. The ‘logic’ behind the zero-sum belief demands that the West Indians be given lower wages, else there would not be enough money circulating for the white Britons. As for the experience of employment, West Indians emigrated primarily in order to work, as most migrants do, but when they began seeking employment in Great Britain, “they found out that whites doubted whether they were either willing to work or able to do so”, as the general consensus was that migrants are slow, lazy and irresponsible workers. Thus, the worst of vacancies were reserved for them. The exploitation of West Indians as presented in the novel is based on the false impression of immigrants as less intelligent or inept, which simultaneously justifies their mistreatment. The employers take advantage of the immigrants being in dire need of employment, since they are ready to do just about anything, no matter how inconsiderable the salary is.

Moses warns Galahad that many firms even deny access to black people applying for a job, and if a vacancy is open to West Indians, it is solely for the low-paid labor they provide: “They think

that is all we good for, and this time they keeping all the soft clerical jobs for them white fellars". West Indian men found themselves in a no-win situation: condemned whether they were employed or not. The characters in Selvon's work are not impoverished due to any personal failings, such as an inability to secure suitable employment or achieve career advancement. Rather, their deprivation stems from systemic exploitation employers capitalising on a labour force that is grossly underpaid and a society, including the government, that persistently refuses to recognise them as equals to white Britons. This societal disregard is reflected in the disparities in income, with migrant workers consistently earning less despite equal or greater effort.

Characters such as Moses and Galahad are not blind to the injustices they endure; on the contrary, they are acutely aware of them. However, they are rendered powerless by a socio-economic structure designed to suppress their agency. Their suffering is not born of ignorance or complacency but of the oppressive conditions that limit their ability to resist or bring about change. This unequal treatment of West Indians, when contrasted with the relative privilege of white Britons, becomes one of the few means by which these migrants attempt to understand and imagine "the other side" the life enjoyed by the white majority. For example, Ma, a diligent and honest immigrant who finds employment in a restaurant, encounters the British population in a rather peculiar and impersonal way. Her exposure to them is not through meaningful social interaction, but through the menial task of washing their dishes. It is only through washing up that Ma is able to form a conception of the inhabitants of London (p. 68). This highlights the stark divide between the worlds occupied by immigrants and those by white Britons. Ma inhabits a reality far removed from that of the dominant population, and her only point of contact with them is through the traces they leave behind a fleeting, indirect link between the lives of the affluent and the working poor.

As reprehensible as the exploitation of cheap migrant labour undoubtedly is, it is, strikingly, the ordinary British public who are portrayed as being the most openly hostile towards Caribbean immigrants. Their resentment and discomfort appear to stem not merely from economic anxieties, but more profoundly from entrenched racism and xenophobia. Many Britons are disturbed by the increasing presence of so-called “spades” from the Caribbean a derogatory term that underscores the racialised lens through which these newcomers are viewed. This antagonism reveals a deep-seated desire among sections of British society to distance themselves from the colonial “other,” despite the historical and imperial ties that bind them.

This phenomenon of prejudice and exclusion is insightfully examined by the social psychologist Gordon Allport, who introduces the concept of “in-groups” to explain how individuals define themselves in relation to others. In his seminal essay, Allport posits that these in-group affiliations are formed through a web of habitual behaviours and shared norms. When confronted with someone who deviates from these established customs, individuals instinctively react with discomfort or hostility. As Allport puts it, “These [in-group] memberships constitute a web of habits. When we encounter an outsider who follows different customs, we unconsciously say: He breaks my habits” (p. 46). In-groups, then, foster a sense of collective identity and familiarity an “us” which stands in contrast to those perceived as alien. The unfamiliar is not simply different; it is often seen as inferior, threatening, or uncivilised.

This conflict between the familiar and the foreign is poignantly illustrated in *The Lonely Londoners* through the character of Galahad. During his first harsh winter in Britain, Galahad finds himself in a desperate situation hungry, cold, and isolated. In a moment of resourcefulness and sheer survival, he ventures into a park, captures a pigeon, and plans to cook it with rice.

However, what unfolds is a stark encounter with British cultural sensibilities. A white elderly woman, witnessing this act, is horrified and responds with panic, branding Galahad a “monster” and a “killer.” She screams hysterically, treating his act of survival as a grotesque violation of social norms.

Galahad, bewildered and humiliated, later recounts the event to Moses: “The old geezer call me a cruel monster [...] If you did see she face, you would think I commit a murder.” His bemusement is palpable. The moral outrage directed at him for killing a pigeon one of countless such birds in the city stands in stark contrast to the indifference shown towards the suffering of West Indian immigrants, many of whom are left to starve and struggle invisibly in the streets of London. The old woman’s visceral reaction is not rooted in the cruelty of Galahad’s action, but in the perceived disruption of her familiar environment and the social codes it upholds. In Britain, pigeons are not seen as food, and the very idea of consuming one is considered bizarre and uncivilised. Galahad’s act thus becomes symbolic of the broader rejection of Caribbean customs and survival strategies, which are labelled as savage, unintelligible, and intellectually inferior.

Ultimately, this episode underscores the deep cultural chasm between the migrants and the host society. Galahad’s crime, in the eyes of the British public, is not merely killing a pigeon, but transgressing the unwritten rules of Britishness. His presence and the cultural practices he brings with him are perceived as an affront to the normative values of the dominant group. Through this lens, Selvon vividly portrays the harsh and often absurd dynamics of race, class, and cultural prejudice in post-war Britain, highlighting how the colonial subject is systematically dehumanised, even as he attempts to assimilate and survive.

The immigrants depicted in the novel exhibit a clear and unwavering determination to withstand the formidable challenges that confront them in their day-to-day existence in the United Kingdom. Their endurance, often in the face of relentless hardship, speaks to an inner resilience born not only of necessity but also of hope for a better life. Yet, despite their perseverance and the contributions they make to British society, they are frequently subjected to suspicion, hostility, and misjudgement by segments of the white British population. These negative perceptions are not grounded in any substantive evidence, but rather stem from flawed reasoning such as zero-sum thinking, whereby the success of migrants is mistakenly perceived as a loss for the native population and fears that are fuelled by sensationalist media narratives. This ignorance, combined with a lack of empathy or willingness to comprehend the migrants' lived realities, results in an unfair questioning of their work ethic, moral character, and place within British society.

As a consequence, Caribbean migrants are forced to grapple with a deeply uncomfortable duality: they reside in Britain and contribute to its economic and cultural life, yet they are persistently treated as outsiders. They exist in a liminal space, caught between inclusion and exclusion, presence and invisibility. They inhabit a city that is, in effect, fractured one composed of parallel worlds that rarely intersect in meaningful or equitable ways.

What the novel accomplishes, however, is a vital act of narrative reclamation. It gathers the fragmented experiences of individual migrants and weaves them into a coherent and collective story one that challenges dominant perspectives and offers a truthful portrayal of migrant life. Through its interlinked character portraits, the novel gives voice to those who have long been marginalised or silenced, allowing their stories to be seen, heard, and understood on their own

terms. It asserts the humanity of the Caribbean migrant experience and insists on its rightful place within the broader narrative of post-war Britain.

2.3.2.2 Helon Habila's *Travellers*

Helon Habila has published four novels, *Waiting for an Angel* (2003), which won the Commonwealth Literature Prize 2003 for the best novel by an African, *Measuring Time* (2007); *Oil on Water* (2010); *Travellers* (2019); and non-fiction, *Chiboks Girls: Boko Haram kidnapping and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria* (2016). His novels have engaged scholars and critics' attention both at home and abroad. On October 3, 2013 a boat carrying African migrants sank at the in the Mediterranean and over 360 migrants drowned. In an effort to offer an African perspective to this tragedy, a German newspaper commissioned Habila to write an article on the incidence. The result of that article, birthed Habila's fourth novel, *Travellers* (2019).

Helon Habila's *Travellers* is a novel about the experiences of refugees and migrants in Europe. It weaves together different stories from individuals whose lives intersect in complex and meaningful ways. The novel is split into several sections rather than traditional chapters, with each section focusing on different characters and their journeys. *Travellers* is a diasporic narrative that illuminates the experiences of immigrants, particularly those fleeing conflict-ridden regions of Africa and the Middle East, as they attempt to forge new lives in Europe. Set against the backdrop of various European cities including Berlin, Basel, London, and the island of Lampedusa the novel follows an unnamed narrator who comes into contact with a range of migrants. Through these encounters, he listens to their personal accounts, which reveal not only the harsh realities of life as an immigrant in Europe but also the often perilous and dehumanising journeys they are forced to undertake in order to reach the continent. The narrative presents a

mosaic of voices, each shedding light on themes of displacement, identity, survival, and the search for belonging in a world that frequently marginalises the stateless and the dispossessed.

“His face was lined, prematurely old...those lines, each one of them an eloquent testimony to what he had left behind, to the borders and rivers and deserts he had crossed to get to Berlin.”

These were the first lines that really caught my attention. The use of the word “lines” reminds of a map; each line a border, the beginning and end of a new culture, language, and tradition.

The story starts out with Gina; an American artist and her unnamed Nigerian husband moving to Berlin for a residency. The narrator’s reluctance can be seen in his thoughts “...every departure is death, every return a rebirth. Most changes happen unplanned, and they always leave a scar.” Through Gina’s Travellers project of painting Immigrants, Mark was introduced, a Malawian born to a pastor father. A student with an expired visa and his rioter friends; Stan, Eric, and Uta. After Mark falls to his death during one of the police attacks at the Heim, his friends move out of Berlin.

We are introduced to Manu; a Libyan Surgeon turned bouncer, whose wife and son was washed away when the ship conveying them to Europe capsized leaving him with a daughter, Rachida; and a Sunday ritual of visiting Checkpoint Charlie in search of his wife and son. In the wake of the narrator’s breaking marriage, and Stan, Eric and Uta moving out of Berlin, they leave behind an apartment for the narrator to clean up and live in for free until the lease is over. In the new apartment, the narrator meets Portia, a Zambian in search of answers and closure for her grieving mother over the death of her son in the hands of his German wife; Katharina. Portia invites the narrator to accompany her to visit Katharina in Basel which he agrees to.

On his train ride back to Berlin from Basel, he meets Karim Al-Bashir; father of five born to Northern Sudanese father and Somalian mother in Somalia. Al-Bashir, during the course of the train ride, narrates his ordeals across Somalia, Syria, Turkey, and Germany. The narrator realises he took Al-Bashir's bag instead of his while transferring trains. He tries to rectify his wrong by getting on a train after seeing someone that looks like Al-Bashir through the window. The train is headed to a prisoner-of-war camp where immigrants were deported from. At the camp, the narrator meets Matteo (who at some point was married to Basma Manu's wife). Matteo sneaks the narrator on a boat to Tunisia from where he makes his way back to Nigeria.

The narrator after successfully returning to Virginia to complete his Ph.D. and divorcing his wife, is in London meeting with Portia who at this time is looking for answers about her father in diaries, letters, and notes kept by her father's newly deceased lover. Helon Habila's *Travellers* is a novel of interwoven narratives, with each character's journey shedding light on different facets of migration, exile, and survival. The novel captures the emotional and psychological toll of displacement and the diverse ways people respond to the trauma of being uprooted from their homes.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Psychoanalysis Theory

Sigmund Freud (6 May 1856 – 23 September 1939) is widely regarded as the founding figure of the psychoanalysis approach within psychology a school of thought that seeks to explain human behaviour through unconscious drives and internal conflicts. Freud posited that the human mind governs both conscious and unconscious decisions, driven largely by deep-rooted psychological forces¹⁴⁵. Central to Freud's theory is the tripartite model of personality, composed of the id, ego,

and superego. These three elements are believed to interact in complex ways, shaping an individual's thoughts, behaviours, and emotions. The id represents primal desires and instinctual impulses; the ego mediates between the id and reality; while the superego functions as the internalised moral conscience¹⁴⁶. In this framework, human beings are portrayed as participants in the intricate theatre of their own minds pushed by unconscious desires and pulled by the coincidences and constraints of life. Beneath the surface of our behaviours lies a continual power struggle, a psychological conflict that defines the nature of personality¹⁴⁷.

Freud also explored the notion of a metaphysical or supernatural force predisposing individuals to behave in particular ways, although he approached this idea with scepticism. The id, in particular, helps explain irrational or impulsive behaviours that contradict socially acceptable norms dictated by the ego and superego¹⁴⁸. He challenged traditional religious beliefs, arguing that religion is, in fact, an illusion, its appeal rooted in the human tendency to project unconscious desires onto symbolic systems¹⁴⁹. According to Freud, religious belief satisfies instinctual needs and provides psychological comfort in the face of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. Rather than being divinely ordained or metaphysically revealed, religion is a mental construct a product of human psychology rather than a source of moral authority¹⁵⁰.

Freud consistently emphasised the decisive role of the mind in shaping human behaviour, both on an individual and collective level. He dismissed the idea that religion is necessary for moral conduct, asserting instead that no external force be it divine or institutional can ultimately control human action. Rather, it is unconscious drives and repressed desires that govern behaviour. In his exploration of social dynamics, Freud also undertook considerable research into how individuals behave within groups¹⁵¹. He observed that people often adapt their behaviour in accordance with

the emotional demands, expectations, and constraints of the group context. Freud argued that group life is essential to curbing innate narcissism in individuals. Through the formation of libidinal ties emotional and psychological bonds formed with others groups promote a sense of unity and equality among their members. These connections help to level the psychological playing field, encouraging cooperation and a diminished focus on self-interest¹⁵⁶.

Psychoanalysis, a school of psychological thought and therapeutic practice, was founded by Sigmund Freud. At the heart of Freud's theory was the belief that individuals could achieve psychological healing by bringing unconscious thoughts, memories, and motivations into conscious awareness. Through this process, individuals gain insight into the underlying causes of their emotional difficulties. The primary aim of psychoanalytic therapy is to uncover and release repressed emotions and experiences in essence, to make the unconscious conscious¹⁵⁷.

This therapeutic approach is particularly associated with the treatment of conditions such as depression and anxiety disorders. Freud maintained that true psychological healing could only occur through a cathartic experience a process whereby repressed material is brought to the surface and emotionally processed. Only by confronting these hidden internal conflicts can the individual begin to recover. A central concept in Freud's psychoanalytic theory is the id, which he defined as the part of the unconscious mind that operates according to the pleasure principle. The id is the reservoir of humanity's most primitive drives and instincts, functioning on an impulsive and unconscious level. It seeks immediate gratification of desires, with no consideration for morality, social norms, or potential consequences. It is entirely self-serving and lacks an awareness of external reality¹⁵⁸.

Freud posited that the id explains why individuals sometimes behave in ways that defy social acceptability or moral reasoning particularly when such actions conflict with the more rational ego or morally-guided superego. In some individuals, the id may exert a dominant influence, driving them to pursue instinctual gratification without regard for what is socially or ethically appropriate¹⁵⁹. In such cases, behaviour is governed not by logic or conscience but by unconscious impulses demanding instant satisfaction. Freud likened the id and the ego to a horse and its rider the id being the horse, driven and guided by the ego, the rider. While the ego is meant to regulate the id, both are in constant interaction, influenced by the ego's impulses. The id comprises two key instincts: Eros (the life drive) and Thanatos (the death drive)¹⁶⁰. To function realistically in the world, the ego must strike a balance between pleasure and pain. It understands that not all of the id's desires can be fulfilled, yet it still seeks satisfaction where possible. Operating on the reality principle, the ego works to meet the id's demands in a realistic and socially acceptable manner¹⁶¹. Though it doesn't distinguish between right and wrong, the ego takes into account moral and cultural values to manage the id's urges. Both the id and ego are largely unconscious, but the ego maintains closer ties to perception and is chiefly concerned with self-preservation, enabling it to moderate the id's instinctual pressures¹⁶².

The superego, which emerges around the age of four or five, embodies the moral standards of society. Freud believed it enables the mind to restrain impulses that are socially or morally unacceptable. Often seen as the mind's conscience, the superego helps distinguish between right and wrong, as well as between reality and impulse. Without it, Freud argued, individuals might behave aggressively or immorally, lacking an internal sense of ethical judgement¹⁶³. The superego, acting as the moral compass of the personality, can suppress the instinctual urges of the id. Freud divided the superego into two parts: the conscience and the ideal self. The

conscience reflects societal rules and values that curb inappropriate desires, while the ideal self represents an internal image of how one should behave according to cultural and moral expectations¹⁶⁴.

Freud argued that the unconscious mind, rather than conscious thought, governs much of our daily behaviour contrary to views that see human actions as entirely deliberate. He regarded religion as an illusion, shaped by the mind to manage internal psychological conflict. For Freud, gaps in consciousness and unexplained behaviours could be traced to the workings of the unconscious, which is active at all times, whether one is awake or asleep. Though often unaware of its influence, the unconscious mind subtly shapes our actions¹⁶⁵.

Freud believed human behaviour could be better understood through an analysis of mental processes, giving importance to phenomena like dreams and verbal slips often called Freudian slips which reveal hidden thoughts. Traumatic or unacceptable ideas are repressed from consciousness but may resurface through such slips, exposing true inner feelings¹⁶⁶. He also asserted that sexual instincts, deeply embedded in the unconscious, drive much of human behaviour. These instincts provide the psyche with energy and purpose. Freud categorised them into two: Eros, the life instinct linked to survival and erotic pleasure, and Thanatos, the death instinct, associated with self-destruction and an unconscious desire to return to a state of non-existence. For Freud, sexual drives were present from birth and remained a central force throughout life¹⁶⁷.

Through psychoanalysis, Freud sought to illuminate these inner conflicts and help individuals gain mastery over the unconscious forces shaping their behaviour. His work laid the foundation for modern psychotherapy and continues to influence contemporary understandings of human

psychology¹⁶⁸. Freud's psychoanalysis theory presents a profoundly influential, if controversial, view of human behaviour: one driven less by conscious rationality or moral codes, and more by unconscious impulses, internal conflict, and the psychological pressures of both individual and collective life¹⁶⁹.

2.4.2 Coping Mechanisms Theory

According to Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984), coping is the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. Coping Mechanisms refers to the conscious thoughts and behaviours individuals use to manage both internal and external sources of stress. Unlike defence mechanisms which are unconscious responses coping involves deliberate and voluntary actions aimed at reducing or managing stress. When confronted with stressors, people employ different 'coping styles,' which are relatively stable traits that influence how they typically respond to stress across various situations¹⁷⁰. Coping strategies are generally classified into two types: reactive coping, which occurs after a stressor has appeared, and proactive coping, which aims to prepare for and mitigate future stressors. Proactive individuals tend to perform better in stable environments due to their structured and less reactive nature, whereas reactive individuals adapt more effectively in unpredictable settings¹⁷¹.

Coping mechanisms may be adaptive, such as seeking social support or engaging in problem-solving, or maladaptive, like avoidance, substance misuse, or risky behaviour. While effective coping promotes psychological resilience and well-being, overreliance on maladaptive methods can have long-term negative effects on mental health¹⁷². Ultimately, coping mechanisms serve as conscious strategies that help individuals deal with emotional pain, stress, or trauma. Coping

mechanisms play a crucial role in helping individuals adapt to life's stressful experiences while preserving their emotional well-being. Whether the source of stress is positive or negative, it can exert significant psychological pressure¹⁷³. Major life changes such as divorce, miscarriage, bereavement, or the loss of employment are commonly recognised as distressing events that can trigger grief, anxiety, or emotional turmoil. However, even experiences traditionally viewed as positive such as getting married, becoming a parent, or purchasing a home can also be major sources of stress¹⁷⁴. These events require adjustment, and individuals often respond through a combination of behaviours, thoughts, and emotional responses tailored to the nature of the situation. Coping strategies are therefore employed not only to manage stress but also to deal with a variety of emotional states including anger, loneliness, anxiety, and depression¹⁷⁵.

Coping mechanisms can be broadly divided into two major styles: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping sometimes referred to as instrumental coping involves directly addressing the source of stress in order to mitigate or eliminate it. This may include planning, taking action, or seeking practical solutions. Emotion-focused coping, by contrast, aims to regulate the emotional distress that arises from the problem rather than solving the issue itself. Strategies in this category include practices such as emotional expression, acceptance, seeking comfort, or reframing the situation in a more positive light¹⁷⁶.

In addition, coping strategies can be classified as either active or avoidant. Active coping involves a conscious recognition of the stressor and a deliberate effort to reduce its impact, often through constructive and problem-solving behaviours. Avoidant coping, on the other hand, entails ignoring, denying, or distancing oneself from the problem. While avoidance may offer temporary relief, it rarely leads to resolution and can sometimes exacerbate the issue over time.

Maladaptive coping falls under this latter category and includes behaviours that may bring short-term comfort but ultimately harm emotional health such as substance abuse, emotional suppression, or disengagement from responsibilities¹⁷⁷.

Coping mechanisms are also categorised into four principal types¹⁷⁸:

Problem-focused coping, which targets the source of stress directly through methods like active coping, planning, and suppressing distractions.

Emotion-focused coping, which seeks to manage the emotional fallout of stress and may involve acceptance, humour, religious faith, or positive thinking.

Meaning-focused coping, which uses cognitive strategies to find meaning or purpose in the face of adversity, thereby fostering resilience.

Social coping (support-seeking), which involves turning to others friends, family, or community for emotional reassurance or practical help.

Each of these coping types can be beneficial depending on the nature of the stressor and the individual's psychological makeup. Some studies suggest that problem-focused coping is particularly effective when the stressor is within the individual's control. However, there is also evidence that some coping methods, especially avoidant or maladaptive ones, are linked with poorer psychological outcomes¹⁷⁹. Maladaptive coping refers to responses that are ultimately detrimental to mental health and may include emotional suppression, avoidance, or reliance on harmful habits such as substance use. For instance, while alcohol consumption might temporarily ease stress or anxiety, habitual reliance on alcohol or other substances as a coping method can lead to dependency and long-term psychological harm¹⁸⁰.

Developing effective coping skills is essential for maintaining emotional balance and mental resilience. Individuals who are able to adapt to distressing or traumatic circumstances using constructive strategies are less likely to suffer from conditions such as depression, anxiety, or prolonged emotional distress¹⁸¹. Conversely, those who struggle to employ effective coping strategies or who default to maladaptive responses may experience a gradual decline in emotional well-being. Ultimately, cultivating healthy coping habits is vital for navigating the challenges of life while maintaining psychological stability and personal growth¹⁸².

2.5 Review of Empirical Studies

2.5.1 Displacement, Identity, Coping Mechanisms and Migration

The discourse on displacement, identity, coping mechanisms and migration has become a prominent subject across sociology, psychological literature, anthropology and migration studies. In recent decades, substantial evidence that migration, whether voluntary or forced, does not merely signify the physical movement of people across borders; it also entails profound psychological, social and cultural transitions that demand new ways of understanding the human condition¹⁸³. Displacement particularly in the context of refugees and internally displaced persons is repeatedly portrayed in empirical literature as an experience that generates ruptures in continuity. Loss of home, land, and community produces what researchers have described as ambiguous loss, in which migrants and refugees grieve for places and identities that are simultaneously present in memory yet absent in daily life. Studies on Syrian refugees, Bosnian migrants, and displaced African communities underscore that this sense of place-loss often persists even after resettlement, manifesting in feelings of nostalgia, alienation and the difficulty of locating oneself within the unfamiliar social and spatial structures of host societies¹⁸⁴.

Alongside displacement comes the reconfiguration of identity. It has demonstrated that identity among migrants is not static but rather fluid, situational and contested. For instance, interview-based research with forced migrants in Europe and North America reveals how individuals adopt multiple and sometimes contradictory identities depending on social context. Some emphasise national identity when confronted with xenophobic attitudes, while others strategically conceal certain aspects of their heritage to avoid discrimination¹⁸⁵. Still others create hybrid identities that combine elements of their origin culture with host-society practices. Such hybridisation, as shown in studies of Bosnian and African migrants, can act as a resource for integration, allowing individuals to forge belonging without entirely abandoning their cultural heritage. Yet the process is not uniform: while some experience empowerment through identity reconstruction, others encounter identity fragmentation and disorientation, particularly when host societies are unwelcoming or when legal precarity keeps them in prolonged states of liminality¹⁸⁶.

Coping mechanisms are central to understanding how migrants and displaced persons manage the pressures of adaptation and the strains of disrupted identity. Empirical journals consistently categorise coping strategies into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and socially embedded mechanisms¹⁸⁷. Problem-focused coping, such as seeking employment, learning the host-country language or navigating bureaucratic systems, is often linked with positive long-term integration outcomes. Emotion-focused coping, including religious practices, acceptance, and cognitive reappraisal, provides short-term relief from stress but may be less effective in overcoming structural barriers. Social support emerges as one of the most vital coping resources: studies highlight how migrants draw upon family, diaspora networks, community associations and religious groups to buffer the negative effects of displacement and marginalisation. In contexts

where formal structures fail, these informal networks often sustain resilience, offering emotional comfort, practical help and cultural continuity¹⁸⁸.

Systematic reviews published in psychology and public health journals further demonstrate that coping strategies function as moderators between migration stressors and mental health outcomes. For instance, refugees who adopt adaptive coping methods report lower rates of depression and anxiety despite enduring economic hardship and discrimination. Conversely, avoidant coping styles, such as withdrawal or substance use, are repeatedly associated with poorer well-being. Importantly, coping is not only an individual act but also shaped by structural and policy contexts¹⁸⁹. Legal insecurity, unemployment, and hostile migration policies significantly restrict the ability of migrants to engage in problem-solving strategies, thereby forcing them to rely on passive or survival-based mechanisms. This dynamic illustrates that coping cannot be understood in isolation from the broader socio-political environment in which migration unfolds.

The intersection of displacement, identity and coping thus reveals a complex empirical picture. Displacement erodes place-based anchors and provokes identity instability; identity, in turn, influences how migrants perceive stress and which coping strategies they employ; and coping mechanisms shape adaptation trajectories, either mitigating or compounding the effects of displacement. Across contexts from Syrian refugees in Europe, to internally displaced populations in Africa, to rural migrants in Asia journals consistently stress that resilience and adaptation are not automatic outcomes but contingent processes. They are dependent on

individual agency, social capital, cultural continuity and, most critically, the receptivity of host societies¹⁹⁰.

The persistent challenges such as discrimination, legal limbo and socio-economic exclusion highlight the structural barriers that undermine coping and identity reconstruction. On the other, evidence of resilience, creativity and adaptation among displaced populations suggests that migrants actively negotiate their realities in ways that challenge the narrative of victimhood. Journals reviewing these processes emphasise the need for policies that provide stability, promote inclusion and strengthen community networks, thereby creating conditions in which adaptive coping and positive identity reconstruction can flourish. Ultimately, the empirical literature makes clear that displacement and migration are not only movements across space but also deeply human journeys of loss, negotiation, resilience and survival.

2.5.2 Cultural Displacement in Literature

Displacement can be broadly understood as the condition or act of being moved away from one's original or customary place whether physical, cultural, or emotional. It encompasses a wide spectrum of experiences such as migration, exile, diaspora, desertion, banishment, imprisonment, travel, discovery, eviction, and forced exodus. Each of these represents a distinct yet interconnected form of being uprooted or dislocated from one's established sense of home or identity. Whether by choice or under coercion, displacement disrupts the continuity of life as it was once known and compels individuals or communities to adapt to unfamiliar settings and systems of meaning¹⁹⁰.

Cultural displacement, in particular, emerges when individuals or groups are severed from the traditions, values, and daily practices that have shaped their understanding of the world and

themselves. This type of displacement may occur either deliberately through processes such as assimilation, colonisation, or modernisation or forcefully, as seen in war, slavery, economic exile, or ethnic cleansing. In many instances, cultural displacement is not merely an accidental consequence of movement but a calculated outcome of systemic policies or historical upheavals. It often leaves individuals grappling with a fractured sense of self, suspended between the old world they have lost and the new environment in which they must forge a place¹⁹¹.

In the realm of postcolonial literature, displacement is a central and recurring theme. It is most frequently portrayed as a forced or involuntary condition brought about by the brutal mechanisms of colonialism, imperial conquest, or political oppression. Characters in such narratives are often shown fleeing, hiding, or being exiled from their homelands in a desperate bid to survive or to resist the domination of foreign powers. These stories reflect a deeper existential crisis one that involves negotiating a new identity amidst cultural alienation, historical loss, and political marginalisation.

Displacement, thus, becomes emblematic of the postcolonial condition. It is a lens through which writers explore the psychological, social, and cultural disorientation of colonised subjects and their descendants. The displaced individual is typically caught in a liminal space neither fully belonging to the past nor comfortably settled in the present. This ambivalence gives rise to what is often referred to as a "crisis of identity," wherein the subject must confront their fractured selfhood and the cultural void left by the collapse of familiar narratives and institutions¹⁹².

Postcolonialism, as a theoretical and literary framework, is deeply concerned with the enduring consequences of colonial domination from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. It seeks to examine and critique the political, economic, aesthetic, social, and historical implications of that

rule, while also highlighting the resistance and resilience of formerly colonised peoples. Within this discourse, displacement is not merely an unfortunate by-product of colonial history, but a fundamental reality that continues to shape lives, communities, and nations. The struggle with displacement is both a source of trauma and an impetus for creative transformation, as postcolonial subjects strive not only to survive but also to redefine and reclaim their identities.

Moreover, while displacement often implies loss, it can paradoxically offer the displaced individual or group certain opportunities for growth and self-renewal. In many postcolonial texts, characters evolve through the very process of dislocation discovering new perspectives, reimagining cultural identities, and sometimes finding strength in hybridity and cultural fusion. In this way, displacement is not solely a condition of suffering but also a space of possibility, where marginalised voices can articulate new forms of belonging, resistance, and empowerment¹⁹³.

Postcolonial writers frequently engage with metanarratives, a literary technique that draws deliberate attention to the construction of narratives themselves, highlighting the idea that stories are never neutral or objective. Instead, they are invariably told from specific viewpoints, shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological influences. In postcolonial literature, this approach is particularly significant as it allows writers to interrogate dominant historical accounts often written by imperial powers and to expose the ways in which these narratives have marginalised, silenced, or distorted the experiences of colonised peoples¹⁹⁴.

Given that the vast majority of countries across the globe have been subjected to some form of imperialism or colonisation, history plays an indispensable role in the formation and evolution of cultural identities. Imperialism and colonisation are not only historical realities but also deeply

embedded human experiences that have left enduring marks on literature. These phenomena have impacted societies on political, economic, and psychological levels, and postcolonial literature seeks to uncover, critique, and sometimes rewrite these historical legacies from the perspective of the formerly colonised¹⁹⁵.

Both imperialism and colonisation have had a profound influence on race and culture, reshaping social hierarchies, altering languages, and imposing new systems of governance and belief. Culture, in this context, refers to the complex web of language, humour, interpersonal relationships, customs, values, and worldviews that characterise an individual or a community. While culture is inherently dynamic and can be shared, borrowed, and adapted across different groups, such processes become problematic when they are the result of force or coercion as was often the case during colonisation. When a culture undergoes a complete transformation due to external imposition or internal disintegration, it experiences cultural displacement¹⁹⁶. This refers to the removal or disruption of traditional ways of life, often as a result of colonial influence, warfare, forced migration, or socio-economic upheaval. In its broadest sense, displacement is the act of moving something from its original place or position. In human terms, it signifies the involuntary departure of individuals or entire communities from their homes and homelands, typically prompted by war, persecution, environmental catastrophe, or political instability.

The psychological and emotional toll of such displacement can be considerable. Its impact varies depending on the nature of the displacement whether economic, geographic, ethnic, or cultural and on the resilience or vulnerability of the individual experiencing it. Economic displacement may involve the loss of livelihood or social status, while geographic displacement results in disconnection from one's homeland. Ethnic and cultural displacement, often intertwined with

racial oppression, can lead to a deep sense of alienation and identity crisis, especially when individuals are forced to assimilate into dominant cultures that reject or devalue their heritage¹⁹⁷.

In this light, postcolonial literature does more than merely recount stories of loss and trauma it challenges the grand narratives that justified and perpetuated colonial domination. Through self-reflexive storytelling, fragmented structures, and the elevation of subaltern voices, postcolonial authors reclaim agency, affirm indigenous knowledge systems, and redefine cultural identity. By exposing the constructedness of dominant histories, they open space for multiple truths and alternative ways of remembering the past. Cultural displacement, thus, becomes not only a theme but a narrative strategy an instrument through which the postcolonial subject resists erasure and reclaims the power to narrate their own story¹⁹⁸.

2.5.3 Coping Mechanism from Cultural Displacement

Coping can be broadly understood as the continuous process involving both cognitive and behavioural strategies that individuals employ in response to challenges or pressures perceived to surpass their available personal resources. This concept encompasses a range of actions and mental efforts aimed at navigating and managing particular demands that are interpreted as overwhelming or distressing. In essence, coping reflects a dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment, wherein the person engages in deliberate attempts to handle, mitigate, or adapt to external or internal sources of stress or adversity¹⁹⁹.

Specifically, coping refers to an individual's conscious and unconscious efforts to evaluate and respond to negative stimuli whether those are emotional, psychological, or physical in nature. These efforts are often triggered by experiences that the individual judges to be potentially

threatening, harmful, or demanding beyond their normal capacity to manage. The process involves assessing the nature and severity of the perceived difficulty, followed by the formulation and implementation of strategies to counteract or come to terms with the problem. It is important to recognise that coping is not a one-time action but rather an evolving response that may shift over time as circumstances change or as the individual gains new insights, resources, or perspectives²⁰⁰.

Coping mechanisms may be broadly understood as essential survival tools that individuals adopt to handle stress, emotional pain, and the adverse situations that life inevitably presents. These psychological and behavioural responses serve as means through which people seek to maintain a sense of stability and well-being in the face of various forms of hardship. Importantly, the way individuals engage with these coping mechanisms tends to vary considerably, influenced by the nature of the stressor, the person's psychological resilience, personal history, cultural background, and the perceived intensity of the trauma or difficulty being faced.

Coping responses are typically categorised as either positive (adaptive) or negative (maladaptive). Positive coping mechanisms are constructive in nature and often involve the ability to remain optimistic, seek social support, practise mindfulness, or engage in problem-solving behaviours that reduce the impact of stressors. These methods promote healing and help individuals to move forward in a healthy and productive manner. On the other hand, negative coping strategies can be harmful or destructive, both to the individual and to others. Such maladaptive responses may include acts of violence, substance abuse, denial of reality, self-harming behaviours, or other compulsive and escapist tendencies. While these may provide temporary relief or distraction,

they typically worsen the situation over time and prevent effective emotional processing or recovery.

In psychological literature, coping strategies are often classified into three primary categories, each reflecting a distinct approach to managing stress. The first is problem-focused coping, which involves direct engagement with the source of stress. Here, individuals make deliberate efforts to address, modify, or eliminate the stressor itself this may include planning, seeking information, or taking practical steps to resolve the issue at hand²⁰¹.

The second category is emotion-focused coping, which is primarily concerned with managing the emotional response to a stressor rather than the stressor itself. In situations where the individual perceives that the problem cannot be changed such as the death of a loved one emotion-focused strategies help regulate the accompanying feelings of sadness, frustration, or fear. These methods might include seeking emotional support, practising relaxation techniques, or reframing the emotional experience in a more manageable way.

The third and often less discussed category is appraisal-focused coping (also referred to as cognitive coping). This approach centres on the individual's interpretation or perception of the stressor. Appraisal-focused strategies involve altering one's mindset or reevaluating the situation so that it is no longer viewed as overwhelmingly negative. For instance, a person might choose to see a job loss not as a failure but as an opportunity for reinvention or personal growth. Such reframing helps to reduce emotional strain and empowers the individual to regain a sense of control²⁰².

Together, these strategies reflect the multifaceted nature of coping, showing that individuals not only react to stress on a practical and emotional level, but also cognitively reinterpret their experiences in ways that either hinder or enhance psychological resilience.

2.6 Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed

The literature reviewed in this study reveals a considerable gap in comparative analyses of migration and coping mechanisms within postcolonial literature, especially as it pertains to Caribbean and African migrants. While there has been extensive exploration of migration from single perspectives often focused on either Caribbean or African experiences, there is a lack of studies that bridge these experiences within the same framework. Most research has examined each region's migration experience independently, addressing themes of alienation, identity struggles, and cultural adaptation, but without a cross-regional comparison. This oversight has limited our understanding of the distinctive yet interconnected nature of the challenges faced by migrants from these regions, particularly in the postcolonial urban context. By juxtaposing the experiences of Caribbean and African migrants in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers*, this study addresses this gap, seeking to reveal nuanced insights into their shared and differing struggles in coping with displacement.

Another significant gap lies in the limited application of psychological frameworks within postcolonial literature on migration. Existing studies often emphasise themes of identity, cultural hybridity, and alienation, which are central to postcolonial discourse. However, there is little focus on how psychological coping mechanisms specifically influence the migrant experience within these narratives. Although scholars have discussed general themes of resilience and adaptation, they have not delved into specific coping strategies such as the use of social support

networks, personal resilience, and adaptive versus maladaptive mechanisms that migrant characters employ in response to the psychological stress of displacement. By incorporating psychological theories, this study enriches the understanding of how these migrants manage their mental and emotional health, presenting a fuller picture of the psychological aspects of migration beyond cultural adaptation.

Additionally, while identity is frequently discussed in migration literature, there is a notable lack of focus on how migrants navigate identity crises within the transitory spaces they inhabit. Migration literature has examined identity primarily through the lens of colonial power dynamics and cultural loss; however, it rarely explores the fluid and hybrid identities that migrants often assume within their diasporic communities. Particularly in works like *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers*, which depict migrant characters negotiating their identity in a setting that is neither entirely home nor fully foreign, there is an opportunity to analyze the complexities of identity formation as a dynamic process. This research thus aims to address this gap by exploring the psychological effects of alienation and coping mechanisms among Caribbean and African immigrants as depicted in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*.

Furthermore, the literature review indicates a gap in examining the coping mechanisms employed by migrants and the role of narrative techniques in conveying the psychological aspects of migration. Although both Selvon and Habila use distinctive narrative approaches to portray the lives of their migrant characters, little attention has been paid to how these techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, fragmented narrative structures, and shifts in perspective enhance the reader's understanding of the migrant psyche. Current studies have predominantly analyzed thematic content without considering the narrative devices that shape how these themes

are experienced by the reader. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the specific narrative methods that these authors employ to express the psychological impact of migration, offering insights into how literary form influences the portrayal of migrant experiences.

In summary, the literature reviewed highlights a multifaceted gap in the study of migration and coping mechanisms within postcolonial narratives. There is a need for more comparative analyses that bridge Caribbean and African perspectives, a deeper incorporation of psychological coping strategies, and a focused exploration of identity crises in transitory spaces. Additionally, an analysis of narrative techniques in conveying the migrant experience remains underexplored. By addressing these gaps, this study intends to offer a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the ways in which migrants in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers* cope with displacement, navigate identity, and adapt to new socio-cultural landscapes, thus contributing significantly to the discourse on postcolonial migrant literature.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative research design, using a content analysis approach to explore the themes of migration and coping mechanisms in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*. This design was chosen because it allows for a deeper analysis of the themes, characters and narrative techniques used in both novels. The theoretical frameworks that will be used are Coping mechanisms theory and Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis theory to examine psychological effects of migration on the characters and how they cope. This design is appropriate for understanding the complex experiences of migration as depicted in these literary works, allowing for a deeper exploration of the characters' psychological coping strategies. This design is effective for addressing the aim of this study and research questions.

3.2 Population of the Study

Several works have been written by Samuel Selvon and Helon Habila. Samuel Selvon has written twelve novels which include *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *Moses Ascending* (1975), *A Brighter Sun* (1952), *Moses Migrating* (1983), *An Island is a World* (1955), *Foreday Monday* (1989), *Turn Again Tiger* (1959), *A Meap Story* (1954), *I Hear Thunder* (1963), *The Housing Lark* (1965), *The Plains of Caroni* (1970), *Those Who Eat the Cascadura* (1972), a short story collection, *Ways of Sunlight* (1957) and two plays which include *Eldorado West One, collected one-act plays* (1989), and *Highway in the Sun and Other Plays* (1991). Also, Helon Habila has

published four novels which include *Waiting for an Angel* (2003), which won the Commonwealth Literature Prize 2003 for the best novel by an African, *Measuring Time* (2007), *Oil on Water* (2010), *Travellers* (2019), and non-fiction, *Chiboks Girls: Boko Haram kidnapping and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria* (2016). Though the two writers have written many works, the population of this study will consist two primary texts, Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila's *Travellers* because they both capture the theme of the research being understudied.

Both novels capture universal themes like isolation, nostalgia, homesickness, alienation, resilience, and identity formation, showing continuity and change in migration experiences across time and space. Also, it offers more insight on Migration studies by demonstrating how migrants from former colonies navigate identity and cultural hybridity in foreign countries. Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* shows an in-depth exploration of Caribbean experiences in postcolonial London, what they go through and how they cope. Also, Habila's *Travellers* shows African postcolonial experiences in foreign countries.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample will be purposive, consisting of specific excerpts and passages from the two novels that are rich in themes of migration and coping mechanisms. These excerpts will be selected based on their relevance to the research questions, focusing on key moments in the narratives where characters confront challenges associated with migration and the ways they cope with these challenges.

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

The primary research instrument will be a content analysis approach developed for the purpose of this study. This approach will consist of specific excerpts, dialogue, narrative techniques and themes related to migration e.g., identity, displacement, cultural alienation and coping mechanisms e.g., resilience, adaptation, community and social support. These categories will be used to carry out the analysis of the study.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data will be collected through the analysis of the selected excerpts from Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*. The researcher will analyse the texts, using selected identifying and categorizing instances where characters experiences of migration, psychological effects and their coping mechanisms are depicted. The process of data collection involves a close reading of the novels where instances of migration and the psychological effects it has on the characters and how they cope in both novels.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study involves the examination of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila's *Travellers*. The data consists of excerpts, narrative techniques and dialogue from the novels, using content analysis approach. Freud's Psychoanalysis theory and Coping mechanisms theory as the theoretical frameworks. The specific excerpts and dialogue will be used in analysing instances of migration, its psychological effect, coping mechanisms and narrative techniques in both novels. This allows for an in-depth analysis of migrants' life and its implication as regards psychological effects of migration on people and how they cope in the society.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the qualitative analysis conducted on migration and coping mechanisms employed by migrant characters in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*. This chapter will focus on how migration, displacement, and identity crises are navigated by the characters and what strategies they use to cope with the various challenges they face in their new environments. The chapter will begin by establishing a framework for analysis, drawing on text summary and key themes of migration literature such as alienation, adaptation, and the search for belonging. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon depicts the struggles of Caribbean migrants in post-war London, who confront racism, poverty, and loneliness. Also, Habila's *Travellers* portrays a more contemporary perspective, focusing on African migrants in Europe dealing with war, exile, and identity loss. By analysing these texts, the chapter will explore both practical and psychological coping strategies employed by the characters, such as forming community networks, humor, nostalgia, and personal resilience. This analysis will draw from postcolonial and migration theories to demonstrate how literature reflects real-world migrant experiences and offers insight into the emotional and psychological dimensions of displacement.

4.1 Presentation of Data

4.1.1 What instances of migration and its psychological effects on character are depicted in the selected novels?

In Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* explores the lives of West Indian immigrants in post-WWII London. Migration is the novel's central theme, not only as a physical relocation from the

Caribbean to Britain, but also as a metaphor for displacement, identity struggles, and cultural negotiation.

It look to Moses that every ship bringing a new load of spades to the country. It only have to have a big newspaper story about how England need workers and right away a thousand spades will come flocking. (p. 23)

This reflects the mass migration from the Caribbean to the UK during the Windrush era, driven by Britain's demand for labour. Moses, an experienced migrant, expresses frustration and cynicism about the influx of newcomers. The term “spades,” though now derogatory, is used within the context of the novel to reflect how the migrants were both racialized and commodified as labor. The quote captures the push-pull forces of migration, economic opportunities in Britain versus the harsh realities awaiting migrants.

“When Galahad first come, he was so full of hope and expectation, walking up and down the city with a big smile on his face, taking in all the big buildings and the white people and the cars. (p. 29).” Galahad’s arrival signifies the optimism that often accompanies migration. Like many immigrants, he initially romanticizes London, expecting a land of prosperity. However, this hope is quickly undermined by racism, alienation, and economic hardship. The contrast between Galahad's early wonder and his later disillusionment reflects the emotional trajectory of migrants who confront the disparity between myth and reality. Galahad was full of hope and expectation of moving around in London and enjoying its beautiful scenery but his expectation was cut short when he realises that he has to battle with a lot of things such as the ‘white people’ he so adored.

“But is one thing to understand these things in your mind, and another to feel them in your heart. And all of we who come to Brit’n is only a little speck in this big city...” (p. 125). This moment

occurs during a stream of consciousness section where Moses reflects on his place in London. The quote captures the psychological dimension of migration: the feeling of invisibility and insignificance in a foreign land. Despite their physical presence, the migrants feel marginal. The phrase "only a little speck" captures the existential alienation and search for belonging that many migrants experience. This novel portrays the psychological toll of migration on Caribbean migrants in post-war London. The characters in the novel face profound alienation, loneliness, and the sense of being outsiders in a city that views them with suspicion and hostility. The psychological effects are evident in the way the characters struggle to find their place in a world that often rejects them.

One of the most pervasive themes is the deep sense of isolation felt by the characters. The protagonist, Moses, has been in London for ten years and yet still feels like an outsider, faces a sense of dislocation. Despite his familiarity with the city, he is unable to feel at home, as Selvon writes, Moses sit down on his bed and start to count how long he in Brit'n. It more than ten years now since he living in the country, and yet he still can't get accustom to the life in London" (p. 23). This highlights the psychological burden of living in a place that never feels like home. The passing of time doesn't bring comfort but rather an increasing sense of alienation. The fact that Moses still "can't get accustom" to London reflects the emotional weight of his migrant experience, where belonging remains elusive.

Moses represents the long-term migrant who becomes disillusioned. He came to London with hope but, after years of racial discrimination, economic hardship, and isolation, he experiences emotional fatigue. Migration in this instance leads to existential disillusionment, as Moses reflects on the futility of his efforts and the unchanging hardships he faces as years go by.

“When you living in London you have to plan your life. In the summer, you could live, but in the winter, you must die (p. 52).” This reflects the psychological impact of climatic and cultural alienation. For Caribbean migrants, the harsh British winter contrasts sharply with the warmth of home, both literally and emotionally. The phrase “you must die” may be hyperbolic, but it expresses the mental and emotional struggle of enduring an environment that feels hostile and unnatural. The homesickness is not just for weather but for belonging, familiarity, and community, leading to a sense of exile and a longing for cultural rootedness, which ultimately results to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

“Harris always so English, always talking in an English accent and drinking tea at four o’clock (p. 66).” Harris attempts to assimilate by mimicking British customs, but his behavior is viewed as artificial by other migrants. This reflects the psychological strain of dual identity and cultural dislocation. Harris’s identity performance reveals the pressure to conform in order to gain acceptance, leading to internal conflict. His rejection by both British society and fellow West Indians shows how migration can produce identity fragmentation and feelings of inauthenticity, which also leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Another way the characters cope with their dislocation is through nostalgia for their homeland. Moses and others frequently reminisce about the Caribbean, longing for the warmth and familiarity of home. This nostalgic attachment to the past serves as both a comfort and a reminder of what they have lost. Moses, for example, dreams about the past, “Sometimes when he lay down there, the whole place quiet, and he think about the boys and the liming and the old talk back home (p. 76).” This shows that even in the midst of the busy and impersonal city, the characters retreat into memories of home to momentarily escape their present realities. This act

of mental escapism is a coping mechanism to deal with the harsh psychological realities of migrant life in London.

In Freud's model, the unconscious holds repressed memories and unresolved desires. In Travellers, migration awakens deep unconscious fears and losses that the characters try but fail to suppress. The unnamed Nigerian narrator, a scholar living in Berlin, becomes emotionally estranged from his wife and himself. His migration to Europe triggers an identity crisis, his ego (the rational self) struggles to balance between his id (the desire for belonging and stability) and his superego (the moral and social constraints of his environment).

He feels psychic fragmentation caught between his African past and his European present. This state of "in-between-ness" manifests as anxiety, insomnia, and emotional detachment, classic Freudian symptoms of repressed trauma. Migration forces him to confront the unconscious realisation that he no longer belongs anywhere, which disturbs his sense of self and security.

The psychological effects of racial discrimination are also prominent in *The Lonely Londoners*. Characters like Galahad encounter racism daily, and this constant prejudice takes a toll on their sense of self-worth and belonging. When Galahad touches the snow for the first time, the joy is quickly overshadowed by the realization of his racial difference:

He start to think about his colour, how the colour of his hand look so against the white of the snow. And is the first time he really get to find himself in this country, in the big city where he was so far from the sun and the trees and the hills and the rivers.
(p. 87)

This reveals how the physical environment of London amplifies Galahad's sense of otherness. The stark contrast between his skin and the snow serves as a reminder of his racial difference, further entrenching his feelings of exclusion and displacement. A disassociation from skin colour

is also apparent in Galahad's attempts to come to terms with white attitudes to Caribbean immigrants, as he addresses his colour as though it were something separate from himself:

And Galahad watch the colour of his hand, and talk to it, saying, 'Colour, is you that causing all this, you know. Why the hell you can't be blue, or red or green, if you can't be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world. Is not me, you know, is you! I ain't do anything to infuriate the people and them, is you! Look at you, you so black and innocent, and this time so you causing misery all over the world!' (p. 77).

This is a rare reflective moment for Galahad, a character with a surer sense of self than most in the novel. That even he is affected in such a way as to try to divorce himself from his colour is indicative of the insidious power of racism. As time progresses, the psychological exhaustion of life in London becomes more apparent. Selvon illustrates how the repetitive and unchanging nature of the migrant experience wears down the characters. Moses, in particular, becomes disillusioned with the constant cycle of new arrivals, all with high hopes, only to face the same struggles he did. Selvon captures this mental fatigue in Moses' reflection:

Every Sunday morning, finishing work, Moses does watch the sun rise and it make him sad, and yet happy that he is still alive to see it, and to see the boys...but at the same time it give him a feeling of hopelessness. (p. 103)

This reflects the psychological complexity of the migrant experience. While Moses is glad to be alive and in the company of friends, there is an underlying sense of hopelessness, as though nothing in their situation will ever change. The cyclical nature of their lives, marked by struggle and survival, takes a psychological toll, leaving Moses with a sense of resignation.

In *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon vividly captures the psychological effects of migration which are alienation, nostalgia, racial anxiety, and humor, illustrating how the characters navigate a world that is both physically and emotionally hostile. Through vivid descriptions and the inner

thoughts of characters like Moses and Galahad, Selvon portrays the psychological strain of living in a place where one is never fully accepted, forcing the migrants to develop their own methods of psychological survival.

In Helon Habila's *Travellers*, the characters face the psychological effects of migration in profound ways, shaped by their individual experiences of displacement, unbelonging, trauma, and identity loss. As they move through Europe, often as refugees or exiles, their journeys reveal deep emotional and psychological struggles. One of the most prominent psychological effects in *Travellers* is the sense of disorientation and loss of identity experienced by the migrants. The narrator himself is a Nigerian academic living in Berlin, and though he is not initially a refugee, he increasingly finds himself questioning his identity and place in the world. This growing sense of displacement is evident when he encounters other migrants and refugees, and he becomes more aware of the fragility of his own position in Europe. In this excerpt, Habila writes:

I stood there, looking at the travelers. These people moving through the streets, from country to country, city to city, from place to place. They were not at home, they had no home, but they carried their homes with them, inside them. I felt a bond with them, though I was still in my apartment. But I, too, had begun to lose my moorings. (p. 134)

This highlights the shared sense of homelessness and internal displacement felt by many migrants in the novel. The psychological toll of constantly being on the move and the loss of a stable identity weighs heavily on the characters.

Trauma is another psychological effect that surfaces prominently in *Travellers*. Several characters are haunted by memories of violence, war, and loss. The character Mark, for example,

has been separated from his family in Libya and experiences deep psychological distress as a result of his traumatic journey. The unnamed narrator describes Mark's inner turmoil:

Mark never slept through the night. He would wake up at odd hours, disoriented, afraid that he was still in that dark, damp detention center in Libya. Sometimes he would mistake the crack of a door or the clink of a spoon for the sound of a gunshot or a beating, and his body would freeze up, his mind replaying the horror. (p. 210)

This description brings out the post-traumatic stress that Mark endures, illustrating how migration for many is not just a physical journey but also an ongoing psychological battle. The memories of past violence continue to shape the way characters interact with their present realities.

Isolation is another key psychological effect that is evident in the novel. Many of the characters in *Travellers* find themselves isolated, both physically and psychologically, as they struggle to connect with their new environments. This isolation leads to a sense of profound loneliness, which further exacerbates their psychological distress. For the narrator, his initial sense of detachment from the plight of refugees becomes more personal as he faces his own isolation in Berlin. An excerpt that captures this isolation is when the narrator reflects on his experience in Europe:

I began to feel as if I was invisible, like the refugees I passed every day but never really saw. No one saw me, and I no longer knew how to see others. I was fading away, becoming a shadow of myself. (p. 175)

The sense of invisibility and fading identity speaks to the loneliness that many migrants experience in foreign lands, where they often go unnoticed and feel disconnected from both their past and their present.

We were at the detention center in Tripoli for four months. Every day we would be beaten, kicked, starved... When we were released, we had no choice but to take the sea. That was our only way out. (p. 76)

This reflects the harrowing experience of forced migration faced by many African migrants. Mark and his brother Manu are Eritrean refugees who flee persecution in their home country and end up detained in Libya, a common waypoint for migrants trying to reach Europe. Their eventual decision to cross the Mediterranean despite the risks underscores the desperation and lack of options that characterizes much of contemporary African migration. The narrative critiques the inhumane conditions of detention centers and the geopolitics that push migrants into dangerous journeys.

I left Lusaka for Baltimore thinking I was going for school. I ended up cleaning houses. When I moved to Berlin, it wasn't to escape, but to find something—maybe myself. (p. 98)

Portia's story is one of voluntary migration initially framed as an academic pursuit but shaped by economic hardship. Her trajectory from Zambia to the U.S., and then to Berlin, showcases how dreams of mobility can be undermined by systemic inequalities, forcing migrants into underemployment. Her journey also raises questions about identity and self-discovery, as she seeks meaning and belonging in a city filled with others like her, transients and outsiders.

I am from nowhere. I was born in a refugee camp in Sudan. My parents are from Eritrea. I have never been to Eritrea. I have never been to Sudan since we left. I am a ghost wherever I go. (p. 152)

Karim's narrative above emphasises the generational impact of displacement. As someone born in exile, Karim lacks a stable national identity, feeling stateless and unanchored. His condition reflects the bureaucratic and emotional limbo that many second-generation refugees face. The

use of “ghost” illustrates how invisibility and marginalization mark the migrant experience, even in so-called safe havens like Europe.

Unbelonging is another psychological effect of migration in the novel. The narrator, Mark, Stan, Eric and Uta went out for May Day protest. This protest is to show their grievances against the way they were been treated in Germany. They were often treated like an outsider and they do not have a sense of belonging due to racial discrimination.

We passed through parks and back streets,
avoiding cruising police vans and large congregations.
Our destination was the Berlin-Turkish café,
whose owner had been turning away black people,
claiming they were all illegal immigrants and drug dealers (Pg 24).

Another instance of unbelonging in the novel is the stereotype Mark slightly experienced while having a conversation with Anna, a journalist from Frankfurt, when he was narrating his ordeals in the hands of the immigration officials. Anna asked him, “Are you going to seek asylum then? It will be easier for you, no? ‘Mark is a student,’ I said joining them. Mark said, ‘Why do white people always assume every black person travelling is a refugee’ (Pg 42).” Mark also went further to narrate his ordeal to Anna about people perceive him in Berlin when he said ‘Even in Berlin I miss Berlin’ and Anna asked if she could quote him but Mark said,

Before you quote me, let me add... I have also noticed this,
the women always hug their bags when I am in the vicinity,
without fail. Like this, he demonstrated. With both hands, I didn’t notice at first
but then it became so obvious I couldn’t ignore it.’ (Pg 43).

In *Travellers*, Helon Habila captures the psychological effects of migration, from identity loss and trauma to isolation. It is such traumatic knowing that you could be accused of something you are not guilty of. Through the experiences of his characters, he shows a detailed portrayal of the psychological toll that migration takes on individuals, while also highlighting their enduring

strength and capacity for hope. These excerpts reflect the ongoing struggles of migrants as they attempt to navigate their displacement and forge new identities in foreign lands. Both novels capture the instances of migration and its psychological effects on the characters.

In Freud's model, the unconscious holds repressed memories and unresolved desires. In *Travellers*, migration awakens deep unconscious fears and losses that the characters try but fail to suppress. The unnamed Nigerian narrator, a scholar living in Berlin, becomes emotionally estranged from his wife and himself. His migration to Europe triggers an identity crisis, his ego (the rational self) struggles to balance between his id (the desire for belonging and stability) and his superego (the moral and social constraints of his environment). He feels psychic fragmentation, caught between his African past and his European present. This state of "in-between-ness" manifests as anxiety, insomnia, and emotional detachment, classic Freudian symptoms of repressed trauma. Migration forces him to confront the unconscious realization that he no longer belongs anywhere, which disturbs his sense of self and security.

Freud emphasises the ego's role in maintaining a stable sense of identity. For migrants in *Travellers*, this stability collapses as they struggle to integrate their past selves with their new realities. The narrator, for instance, initially sees himself as an observer, not part of the refugee experience. However, as he interacts with other displaced people, his ego boundaries blur, he begins to identify with their pain. The moment he loses his passport symbolizes the disintegration of ego identity. He becomes what he once pitied: a man without a home, without definition.

This loss of personal identity and social belonging mirrors the Freudian concept of ego fragmentation, a mental state in which the self no longer feels coherent. Migration thus

destabilises his psychological equilibrium, forcing him to confront the unconscious fear of nonexistence and invisibility.

4.1.2 What coping mechanisms and resilience strategies do the characters employ to navigate their psychological challenges?

In Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoner*, community and social support is a crucial theme. As West Indian immigrants face racism, isolation, and economic hardship in post-war London, they form informal networks of friendship and solidarity. These relationships become essential for survival and identity formation in a hostile environment.

Moses did like he always do when a fellar new come to London: he meet the test and talk and sympathise and say 'Things will work out, man, don't worry too much. You just have to learn the way of the city' (p. 23).

This shows Moses taking on a mentor role for Galahad, a newcomer from the Caribbean. Moses regularly meets immigrants at Waterloo Station, helps them find lodging, and offers emotional reassurance. His actions reveal a pattern of solidarity, where more experienced migrants support others despite their own struggles. The phrase "learn the way of the city" reflects the transmission of survival knowledge and cultural adaptation. Moses's role as a guide underscores the importance of informal support networks among the West Indian community in navigating life in a foreign and often unwelcoming society.

"Everybody start to laugh and talk, and a kind of happiness come in the fete, even though is only a Sunday afternoon in the park with not much to eat or drink (p. 96)." This describes a rare moment of collective joy among the men during a picnic in Hyde Park. Despite poverty and marginalization, they find comfort in each other's company. The laughter and conversation

signal a sense of belonging, a temporary escape from the alienation they experience in everyday life. These gatherings are acts of resistance against social exclusion and highlight how community and social support help the men sustain their identity and spirit in the diaspora. This gives them a sense of reassurance that they're not alone and that help is around them.

Moses, the central character, serves as a guide for newcomers, helping them acclimate to the harsh environment of London. The characters often gather in spaces like Moses' room or cafés, forming an informal support network that mitigates their sense of isolation.

But when he get to Moses room, Harris and Cap and Gallows and Five all there, and that was when they start to make joke and laugh, and for a little while, they forget their troubles. (p. 70).

The laughter and the sense of belonging to a group offer a temporary escape from the harsh realities of their lives. The group that they form serves as a support and home to them, knowing that they belong to a group and that they're not alone. They joke and laugh together, and in that moment, they forget their troubles.

The migrants form a quasi-family community, especially around Moses, who acts as a mentor or older brother figure. This problem-focused coping strategy helps them share experiences, find jobs, and navigate London together. Social connections reduce the sense of isolation and create emotional safety. For example, when new arrivals like Galahad come, Moses guides them through the challenges of finding housing or dealing with discrimination. The group's collective resilience helps them survive the harshness of migration.

Through a psychoanalytic lens, we can also see the migrants' shared experiences as a collective unconscious of the Caribbean diaspora. They share collective trauma, poverty, racism,

displacement and collectively cope through communal bonding, storytelling, and humor. Moses becomes a symbolic “father figure,” trying to stabilize others who are emotionally adrift. Yet even he feels psychologically trapped, showing how migration reshapes the unconscious of an entire group, not just individuals.

In *Travellers*, Helon Habila explores not only the pain of displacement but also the solidarity and social support that emerge among migrants, often forming makeshift families and communities in exile. Amid the instability and alienation, characters frequently rely on one another for psychological support.

“I said to Mark, ‘You know what, come to my place, you can crash there for a day or two before moving on. Mark shrugged wordless (p. 36).” The unnamed narrator offers shelter to Mark, a Malawian refugee struggling after his brother Manu's detention. This act of generosity demonstrates how migrants often become each other's support systems, even across cultural or national divides. Though the narrator is initially an outsider to the migrant experience, his empathy leads him to step in. The word “wordless” shows the weight of being shown kindness in a world that routinely denies dignity to refugees. This moment initiates a bond that deepens throughout the narrative.

“Every Thursday we met in that small room above the church. We talked, we sewed, we laughed, sometimes we cried. It was our little world, where we were seen, where we mattered (p. 105).” Portia finds communal support through a group of African women migrants in Berlin. These weekly meetings serve not only as therapy but also as affirmation of identity and humanity in a society that often renders them invisible. The emphasis on being “seen” and “mattering” illustrates how social support among marginalised people becomes a form of resistance and

healing. Their mutual support combats isolation, showing that even in exile, community can be rebuilt.

The relationships the characters form with other exiles, migrants, and locals are crucial to their survival. These bonds provide support, practical help, and a sense of belonging in an otherwise hostile and foreign environment. Whether through friendships or romantic relationships, these connections act as an anchor in the turbulent sea of displacement. In Berlin, the narrator forms a close bond with a Somali refugee, Juma, whose unwavering optimism and resilience inspire the narrator to keep going, despite the overwhelming sense of despair around them. Their friendship becomes a lifeline, offering both men moments of joy and relief from their loneliness. "In the end, it was the people we met and the connections we made that kept us afloat, not the places we had hoped to reach."

Despite despair, social support functions as an emotional coping mechanism. Characters like the narrator, Manu and Mark cling to the belief in human connection even amidst loss. The narrator's journey across Europe shows that solidarity, listening, helping, remembering, can ease existential anxiety. This reflects emotion-focused coping through meaning-making, finding purpose in relationships and compassion rather than despair.

Humour in both Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila's *Travellers* acts as a powerful coping mechanism for characters grappling with alienation, racism, and the harsh realities of migration. In both novels, humour allows characters to preserve dignity, assert identity, and form solidarity in the face of adversity.

One of the strongest coping mechanisms among the West Indian migrants is humour. The men, Moses, Galahad, Cap, Tolroy, and others often joke about their struggles, poverty, and romantic failures. Humour acts as a defense mechanism, allowing them to laugh instead of despair. It's an emotion-focused strategy, relieving tension and building solidarity. The narrative voice itself, filled with Caribbean dialect and irony, reflects a collective emotional release. Through storytelling and laughter, they transform suffering into something bearable. Their jokes about racism or cold weather mask deep pain and alienation.

In Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses Teasing Galahad about His "Englishness," Galahad says, 'Is English weather.' Moses say, 'Is not English weather, is rain and fog, and don't try to come too English with me, you know (p. 70).' Moses teases Galahad for trying to rationalize the dreary London weather by calling it "English." This humorous exchange reflects how migrants try to adapt by mimicking their host culture. Moses' sarcasm both exposes the futility of trying to assimilate fully and affirms Caribbean identity through playful critique. Humour here protects Galahad from the deeper pain of cultural dislocation and reminds readers of the absurdity of forced assimilation.

Cap's humorous "economical" dating style, "Cap is a old veteran in the old city. He know how to take a girl out and spend not a cent... he does even make the girl pay the taxi back (p. 59)." Cap's humorous exploitation of his dates is exaggerated for comic effect. While ethically dubious, this scenario reflects his resourcefulness in a hostile economic environment. Humour allows Selvon to highlight the survival tactics of Caribbean migrants without moralising. It offers comic relief while subtly critiquing how poverty forces characters into questionable strategies.

"Big city, big life. And yet the boys don't mind. They still laughing and making joke, and it look like nothing could touch them (p. 104)." Humour acts as a buffer against the alienation and poverty they face in London, allowing them to take control of their narrative in a way that gives them dignity.

"Galahad say, 'Man, you see the ballhead that pass just now? Boy, if I had that head, I would be wearing a hat 24 hours (p. 91).'" Galahad's ballhead jokes among the men represent a ritual of male bonding. They laugh at each other's appearances to lighten the burden of marginalisation. While these jokes may seem trivial, they demonstrate how banter becomes emotional armor, masking deeper insecurities about being seen as outsiders in a racially biased society.

In Helon Habila's *Travellers*, the narrator's first impressions of Berlin, "Berlin in summer felt like an inside joke the city was playing on itself... as if it wanted to pretend it was Mediterranean (p. 9)." The narrator humorously critiques Berlin's sudden burst of warmth and energy in summer, likening it to a city pretending to be Mediterranean. This ironic observation helps mask his cultural disorientation. By making fun of the unfamiliar, he temporarily regains a sense of control and perspective, using humour to bridge the psychological gap between the foreign and the familiar, that's home and Berlin.

Mark makes dry sarcasm about Europe, "He laughed. 'You think Europe is paradise? It is just another prison. Only the bars are invisible (p. 77).'" Mark's dark humour turns the idealization of Europe on its head. His sarcastic comparison of Europe to a prison with "invisible bars" is a way to cope with the disappointment of failed expectations. This gallows humour critiques the false promises of migration and reflects the disillusionment many refugees feel, even after reaching "safety."

“I should get a T-shirt that says: Made in Sudan, Born in Exile, Currently Homeless (p. 153).” Karim uses self-deprecating humour to articulate his complex identity. By making a joke out of his statelessness, he attempts to normalise the absurdity of his situation. It becomes a way to disarm both himself and others, allowing him to speak painful truths without succumbing to despair. Humour here is a survival tool in the face of erasure.

In both novels, humour serves as a psychological coping mechanism against trauma, alienation, and marginalization. While *The Lonely Londoners* uses humour to depict community and resilience among Caribbean migrants in 1950s London, *Travellers* employs it more sparingly, often with biting irony or dark sarcasm that underscores the emotional and bureaucratic labyrinth faced by African refugees in contemporary Europe. In both cases, laughter becomes an act of resistance, a language of survival, and a shared code of endurance.

Nostalgia and Memory is another coping mechanism adopted by migrants in both Samuel Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila’s *Travellers*. This explores how memory and nostalgia act as vital coping mechanisms for migrants navigating alien, often hostile environments. Through recollections of home, family, and past identities, characters maintain a sense of self and continuity despite the fragmentation of migration.

Moses, a veteran Caribbean migrant in London, uses memory to anchor himself to a past where he had status, joy, and belonging. “Moses remember when he was a young fellar in Trinidad, how he used to go to dances in Belmont and Woodbrook, how he used to have big times with the girls (p. 15).” His nostalgic reflections contrast sharply with his current life of alienation and economic hardship in London. This personal history helps him retain his identity amid racial

discrimination and cold weather. Memory acts here as psychological refuge, softening the harshness of the present.

"She sit down in the kitchen and start to talk about the mango tree in the yard, and the neighbours back home. All kind of old talk (p. 48)." Tolroy's mother, newly arrived in London, evokes sensory and social memories of Jamaica as a way of coping with the isolation of the immigrant experience. Her references to nature and community reflect what she has lost and what sustains her in absence. This reveals how nostalgia becomes a cultural survival strategy, allowing migrants to recreate the warmth of home in memory.

"Sometimes when the sun shining, you could close your eye and remember the hot sun in the country, and you forget you in London (p. 93)." This describes how even natural elements like sunshine can trigger memory and offer temporary escape from London's dreariness. The "summer sequence" in the novel is lyrical and dreamlike, standing in contrast to the gritty realism of London life. Through collective nostalgia, characters reimagine their Caribbean identity and find solace in shared cultural memories. Remembering home from time to time is a form of coping mechanism to the characters.

The characters frequently reminisce about life back home, contrasting it with their current struggles. Nostalgia serves as a mental escape and a way to preserve their sense of identity in the face of a city that often dehumanizes them. "Sometimes, when the cold and the loneliness get too much for a man, he sit down and remember about the warm days in the Caribbean, and it does help him to keep going." (p. 55). While life in the Caribbean wasn't perfect, memories of warmth, familiarity, and community offer emotional sustenance in the cold, impersonal streets of London.

Freud's concept of the return of the repressed applies to the migrants' constant nostalgia for home. Although they try to adapt to London life, memories of the Caribbean keep resurfacing in their thoughts and dreams. The Caribbean homeland becomes a symbol of psychic comfort, the place where their identities were whole. London, in contrast, triggers existential loneliness, a kind of unconscious mourning for lost identity, culture, and belonging. Their laughter, parties, and camaraderie are temporary escapes from this psychological loss.

In Helon Habila *Travellers*, the narrator remembers Nigeria, "I remembered the harmattan in Jos, the fine dust coating everything, the cracked lips, the distant sound of gospel music from radios (p. 43)." The narrator recalls sensory experiences from Nigeria, harmattan dust, cracked lips, music which evoke home as a full-bodied memory. This nostalgic moment arises as he feels increasingly unmoored in Berlin, caught between cultures and identities. Memory here is identity-affirming, reminding him of a time and place where life felt coherent and rooted.

Also, Portia reminisces about her childhood in Zambia, "There was a time I thought of Lusaka every night before I slept... the jacaranda trees, my grandmother's voice singing hymns in the kitchen (p. 101)." Portia's memory becomes a nightly ritual, a soothing mechanism to deal with the emotional toll of exile. Her recollections of her grandmother and the landscape of Lusaka provide spiritual nourishment and emotional connection. This reflects how nostalgia is not just about longing but about preserving one's sense of self across geographical and psychological boundaries.

In Habila's *Travellers*, Karim's memory of his mother serves as a coping mechanism for him, "She used to tell me stories from Eritrea, from before the war. I don't know if they were true, but they made me feel like I belonged somewhere (p. 154)." Karim, born stateless in a refugee camp,

constructs a sense of homeland through inherited memory. His mother's stories offer a surrogate identity, reinforcing the power of intergenerational memory in coping with rootlessness. For migrants born in exile, nostalgia becomes a borrowed, yet essential, form of psychological grounding.

Freud's idea of wish-fulfillment helps explain the migrants' persistent longing for home. Even though returning is impossible, the unconscious mind continues to desire it, creating a cycle of hope and despair. Throughout *Travellers*, characters dream of home or imagine reunions that never happen. These fantasies act as temporary psychic escapes, unconscious efforts to restore the lost sense of safety and identity. Yet, the more they dream, the more they realize that home itself has become an imaginary construct, an unfulfilled desire that exists only in the unconscious.

By the end of the novel, Habila's characters embody Freud's idea that unresolved conflict leads to psychic disintegration. The narrator's emotional numbness, Manu's melancholia, and Mark's obsessive art all point to the deep psychological scars of displacement. Migration becomes a mental labyrinth, a struggle between memory and forgetting, hope and despair, belonging and alienation. The psyche, in Freud's terms, remains trapped in a cycle of repression and repetition, unable to find closure. Through the Freud's psychoanalysis theory, *Travellers* reveals that migration is not merely a physical or political condition, it is a psychological experience marked by repression, nostalgia and identity loss. Habila's migrants live in a constant dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, haunted by the past yet unable to fully belong to the present. Freud's psychoanalysis helps us see how migration fractures the self: it awakens repressed fears, destabilizes the ego, and forces the mind into endless negotiation between survival and meaning.

In *Travellers*, Habila exposes the inner wounds of exile, the silent psychological cost of being perpetually in transit.

In both novels, memory and nostalgia serve as survival tools. While Selvon's characters use memory to resist assimilation and preserve Caribbean identity in a cold, indifferent London, Habila's characters displaced across Europe and Africa rely on nostalgia to cope with fragmented identities and existential loss. These recollections are not passive reminiscences but acts of resilience, reinforcing the idea that in migration, memory is both anchor and lifeline.

Adaptation to new identities is a key coping mechanism in both Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*. Migrants in these novels grapple with the alienating experience of displacement by modifying, negotiating, or performing identities to survive emotionally, socially, and economically.

In Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses as the Veteran Foreigner, "After living in London for ten years Moses come to know that there is no place like home, and he have it in mind to go back home one of these days (p. 24)." Moses copes with the alienation of London by cultivating the identity of a "seasoned migrant" someone who knows how things work in the metropolis. He uses this status to guide new arrivals and assert a sense of control in an otherwise hostile environment. While he claims to want to return home, this imagined future acts as a psychological buffer, helping him endure the daily racial and social exclusions he faces in Britain. His identity as a "guide" helps him survive psychologically.

Galahad's reinvention through language and dress, "He even begin to talk to the English people like a Englishman, saying things like 'cheerio' and 'bloody' and 'I say' (p. 76)." Galahad (Henry

Oliver) adapts to London by performing Englishness—changing his accent, using British slang, and dressing sharply. This reinvention is an attempt to claim social visibility and acceptance, but it also masks his inner vulnerability and disorientation. Language becomes a tool for crafting a socially acceptable identity, even if it feels inauthentic. This coping strategy illustrates how identity adaptation serves as a survival tactic in an exclusionary society.

Cap's hyper-masculine persona as a shield, "Cap was a fellar who would rob you with one hand and slap you on the back with the other (p. 42)." Cap, the Trinidadian womanizer, uses a charismatic and hyper-masculine identity as a means to navigate London's racialized social landscape. His exaggerated persona helps him mask economic insecurity and emotional dislocation. Through humor, bravado, and seduction, Cap copes with his marginal status and crafts a life of performance that allows him momentary empowerment in an alien city.

According to Freud, the psyche is divided into the id (instincts and desires), ego (reality and reason), and superego (moral conscience). When migrants like Moses, Galahad, and Bart leave their homelands, they experience a split within the self, their id desires freedom, pleasure, and success in London, while their superego constantly reminds them of social limitations, racism, and cultural inferiority.

Moses Aloetta, the central figure, is caught between optimism and despair. His ego tries to mediate between the Caribbean dream (id) and London's harsh reality (superego). This results in psychological exhaustion and emotional detachment, he often hides his pain behind humor and cynicism. His repeated thought that "London is not like what they tell you" shows the collapse of illusion, creating cognitive dissonance, a psychological discomfort caused by conflicting beliefs and experiences.

Another coping strategy is simply adapting to the harsh realities of London life. Characters like Galahad learn to navigate the job market, manage the systemic racism, and become "street-smart." This gradual adaptation is a form of resilience as they become less vulnerable to the emotional toll of their environment. "When Galahad first come to London, he was all innocence, but now he learning the ropes. He getting used to the way things work here, and it not easy, but he managing (p. 81)." By adjusting their behavior and expectations, the characters build a form of psychological resilience that allows them to survive in London.

Moses represents acceptance as a coping mechanism. After years in London, he realizes the cyclical nature of struggle but chooses endurance rather than despair. His acceptance is a mature, problem-focused coping approach, he understands that survival requires emotional balance. He neither fully assimilates nor rejects London; instead, he endures, which becomes his quiet form of resistance. In the end, Selvon shows that coping does not mean overcoming, it means learning to live within the tension of displacement and still find meaning.

In Helon Habila's *Travellers*, the Narrator's shifting ethnic identity, "I had always claimed I didn't see myself as African, or black even. I was Nigerian, middle class, educated (p. 19)." The unnamed narrator initially sees himself as different from "migrants," identifying instead with privilege and education. But as he interacts with refugees and undocumented Africans in Europe, he is forced to reassess and adapt his self-identity. This transformation toward accepting a shared Black and African identity serves as both a coping mechanism and a form of solidarity, helping him to emotionally process the injustices he witnesses.

"Now I have no one. Manu is dead. But I must continue, become someone else someone stronger (p. 91)." After losing his brother during their migration, Mark copes by shedding his former self

and adopting a hardened, survivor persona. This identity shift is not just grief processing, it's a psychological survival strategy. In a world where migrants are constantly dehumanized, changing the self becomes a way to keep going, to endure trauma, and to maintain agency in the face of helplessness. Karim's stateless identity as defiance is a form of adaptation to his new identity, "I am from nowhere... But I am still here. That must mean something (p. 153)." Karim was born in a refugee camp and has no official nationality. Instead of letting this break him, he reclaims his statelessness as a form of existential strength. Adopting the identity of a "man from nowhere" is his way of asserting resilience and defying the systems that render him invisible. This existential adaptation enables him to build a sense of purpose and dignity despite the lack of formal belonging.

By the novel's end, the characters learn to accept life as a continual journey, neither fixed nor anchored. Acceptance becomes their final coping mechanism, similar to Moses's in *The Lonely Londoners*. They learn that belonging is not a place but a state of mind, and survival means living with uncertainty rather than resisting it.

In both *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers*, identity is not static but malleable, continuously reshaped by environment and circumstance. Characters use adaptation as a psychosocial defense, a way to assert control over their lives and resist erasure. Selvon presents this through the lens of postwar Black British immigrants, while Habila explores it within the context of African displacement in Europe's refugee crisis. Despite differences in era and geography, both novels show that reinventing the self is often the first and last line of defense against disintegration in the face of displacement.

The migrants in *Travellers* constantly struggle with their sense of identity, as they are forced to adapt to new cultural, social, and political contexts. While this process is painful, it also fosters resilience. As they face who they were and who they are becoming, they learn to navigate their new realities with a fluid sense of self. For instance, the narrator undergoes a transformation as he moves from being a passive observer of others' struggles to actively engaging with his own sense of belonging and displacement. This shift in identity, while difficult, allows him to reconcile the different aspects of his life. "I was not the person I had been when I left home, nor was I yet the person I would become. Somewhere in between, I was learning to live with my fragmented self." This adaptability is a key survival mechanism for characters grappling with the pressures of migration.

Dreams and aspirations serve as psychological coping mechanisms in both *The Lonely Londoners* by Samuel Selvon and *Travellers* by Helon Habila. Characters in both novels, often displaced or marginalized, turn to imagined futures, idealized identities, or hopeful visions to endure their hardships.

Moses' dream of returning to Trinidad, "Every Sunday morning he lie in bed and dream about going back home. He tell himself he only spending one more summer in this country (p. 29)." Moses, a veteran of the migrant experience, clings to the dream of returning home as a way to justify staying in London despite his disillusionment. These dreams offer mental escape from the cold, racist, and alienating city. By promising himself "just one more summer," he defers the pain of permanence, giving structure and hope to his otherwise stagnant reality. This internal narrative shields him from the despair of admitting he might never return.

Galahad's aspiration to integrate and succeed, "Galahad say he going to be a big man in London. He dressing up in the latest fashion, talking proper English, and reading the papers regular (p. 75)." Galahad's aspiration to become a "big man" in London represents a classic immigrant dream of upward mobility and assimilation. His efforts to mimic English culture provide him with a sense of control and purpose. Though society continually rejects him, this performance of success acts as a buffer against racism and failure, offering a psychological counterweight to the degradation he experiences daily.

Harris's fantasy of respectability, "Harris is the kind of fellar who always talking about respectability. He like to dress up and go to meetings, telling people how to behave proper (p. 58)." Harris copes with marginalization by cultivating an image of moral and social superiority. His aspiration for respectability is both a defense mechanism and a means of separating himself from the stereotype of the 'uncivilized' immigrant. By playing the role of the refined gentleman, he attempts to psychologically reclaim dignity in a society that devalues him.

In Helon Habila's *Travellers*, Mark and Manu's Dream of a New Life in Europe, "We used to talk every night about what we'd do when we got to Italy, maybe open a bar, go back to school... just live like normal people (p. 72)." For Mark and his brother Manu, dreams of life in Italy are survival tools that carry them through the trauma of detention and the uncertainty of their journey. These shared fantasies provide hope and a sense of agency when external conditions are bleak. Dreaming of a bar or school is not about extravagance but about normalcy, a psychological balm against their dehumanizing experience.

Karim's dream of reclaiming identity through art, "I want to be a photographer. I want to show the world what it means to be invisible, to not belong (p. 150)." Karim's artistic aspiration is a

way to reclaim his narrative and assert his existence. Born stateless, he uses the dream of photography to combat erasure and find meaning. His art becomes a form of self-therapy, a space where he can transform pain into visibility. This creative vision helps him cope with his fragmented identity, making him have a sense of purpose and meaning.

The narrator's romantic dream of love as redemption, "In Gina I saw an anchor, a reason to believe that life could still be beautiful, despite everything (p. 43)." The unnamed narrator finds temporary psychological refuge in his romantic relationship with Gina. His dream of emotional fulfillment and intimacy acts as a stabilizing force amid cultural dislocation and internal disillusionment. Gina represents a fantasy of home, not as a place but as a person, and through her, he tries to cope with his alienation.

Dreams and aspirations in both Selvon's and Habila's works largely align with emotion-focused coping, they serve as emotional buffers that help migrants maintain hope, meaning, and self-identity in hostile environments. However, in certain instances, they also lead to problem-focused coping, where characters take proactive steps toward improving their conditions. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Caribbean immigrants such as Moses, Galahad, and Harris grapple with the harsh realities of post-war London, racism, poverty, loneliness, and unfulfilled expectations. Yet, despite their grim conditions, their dreams and aspirations provide emotional escape and psychological survival.

Galahad dreams of success and social mobility in London. His imagination of prosperity, owning fine clothes and gaining acceptance, acts as an emotion-focused coping mechanism. Though his life contradicts these dreams, they allow him to momentarily transcend the pain of marginalization and maintain hope. His fantasies are not naïve but necessary tools of endurance

within a society that constantly devalues him. Moses, the veteran migrant, has learned to balance hope with disillusionment. His reflections about “the boys” and their endless struggles reveal a deeper cognitive reappraisal, a coping technique within Lazarus and Folkman’s model. Although he accepts the futility of certain dreams, his continued mentorship of newcomers represents a subtle form of problem-focused coping: he manages stress by finding purpose in helping others. The migrants’ shared dream of returning home symbolizes emotional escape. This nostalgic yearning operates as an emotion-focused strategy that keeps them psychologically grounded. It mitigates feelings of exile and displacement by preserving an imagined connection to their homeland, even if the return never happens.

Helon Habila’s *Travellers* extends the discussion of migration from the Caribbean experience to a contemporary African and global context. The novel follows African migrants in Europe, exploring displacement, identity crises, and the search for home. Here too, dreams and aspirations function as crucial coping strategies aligned with Lazarus and Folkman’s framework. The unnamed narrator initially migrates for intellectual and artistic fulfillment but becomes emotionally displaced. His dream of self-discovery and purpose transforms into an emotion-focused coping strategy—a way of reasserting control over his fractured identity. As he encounters other migrants, he uses their stories to reconstruct his sense of self, thus turning his aspirations into both emotional and cognitive healing. Manu’s aspiration to reunite with his wife, Gina, gives his suffering meaning. Despite being stateless and traumatized, his dream sustains him, exemplifying emotion-focused coping through hope and perseverance. The dream does not eliminate his hardship but allows him to manage emotional pain.

Many of Habila's migrant characters dream of documentation, freedom, or simply recognition as human beings. These dreams are collective coping strategies—a shared emotional mechanism that transforms despair into solidarity. Like Selvon's characters, they survive through imagined futures.

Using Lazarus and Folkman's coping mechanism theory, dreams and aspirations in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers* emerge as essential forms of emotion-focused coping that mitigate psychological distress, and at times, evolve into problem-focused coping through action and creativity. For Selvon's Caribbean immigrants, dreams preserve dignity amid alienation; for Habila's African travellers, aspirations reconstruct identity amid statelessness. Both authors reveal that the migrant's ability to dream is not a sign of denial but an act of psychological resistance and survival.

4.1.3 What narrative techniques were deployed by the Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila in *Travellers* to convey psychological effects of migration on their main characters?

In *The Lonely Londoners*, Samuel Selvon uses several narrative techniques to show the psychological struggles Caribbean migrants face in London.

Creolized English (Dialect Narrative Style) is one of the narrative techniques used in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. The use of Trinidadian Creole throughout the narration and dialogue mirrors the characters' internal dislocation and alienation. "Is not that I have anything against English people, mind you, but you see the way they does behave when you around (p. 92)"

Is not me who make me self-black," Galahad tell them,
"is you who make me black. But look at me now, I
can't get work, I can't get a place to live, and all

because I'm black! That's why I say I hate you all. (p. 95)

Moses spends much of his time in the novel trying to find a stable work. This is a major reflection of the economic hardship many Caribbean migrants face. "Sometimes when he walking the streets and he see the 'No Vacancies' sign in a shop window, he does feel like he would go in and tear down the sign and beat up the manager and tell him he come all the way from Trinidad to work and he not going back (p. 29)." The language shows a divide between the migrants' cultural identity and the dominant English society, emphasizing isolation and alienation.

"Is not that I don't like work, man, but the kind of work you getting in this country, it just don't make sense. You working like a dog and when weekend come you so vex you spend all your money to get a little pleasure (p. 29)." This reflects the creolized English Selvon uses to authentically capture the speech patterns of Caribbean migrants. The syntax and grammar mirror Trinidadian dialect rather than Standard English, conveying a strong sense of oral culture and identity. It also highlights the frustration and alienation of migrants doing dehumanizing labor in London while trying to retain some joy through fleeting pleasures.

"But is one thing with the English people, they don't really like you, and if you go in a place where they have English people and they see you, they will move out to another seat (p. 71)." Selvon uses creolized grammar structures like "is one thing with..." to ground the narrative in the migrant's perspective. The simple, repetitive structure shows a painful psychological truth, racial exclusion and everyday microaggressions. This language makes the alienation feel personal, as if spoken directly from the character to the reader.

Stream of consciousness is also used to show the psychological impact of migration, particularly on Moses, the central character. Selvon sometimes lets thoughts flow loosely to mirror the confusion and drifting mind of migrants. Sometimes he gets so melancholy that he doesn't even want to eat or talk to anyone, just lie down in the room and think about home (p. 24). This captures deep loneliness and depressive states caused by displacement.

"It looks to Moses sometimes that he hardly lives in the world. That is to say, it is like a sort of unreal life... Like when he is walking on the street he is seeing all these people and it is just like a picture he is watching...(p. 153)." This stream of consciousness shows Moses dissociating from reality, his alienation in postwar London is profound. The disjointed and reflective style mirrors his psychological detachment, a direct result of the disorientation migration has caused.

...every man jack feeling it, thinking oh Lord, this is life,
this is something else, this is another world... and is
something how boys does move in the summer,
everybody happy, everybody laughing...(p. 105).

This long, flowing, almost breathless passage, without punctuation or paragraph breaks, is a collective stream of consciousness yet Moses is embedded in this too. The technique captures moments of fleeting joy, contrasting the deeper undercurrents of loss and rootlessness. It reflects the internal tug-of-war between temporary pleasure and persistent isolation. Moses sits down in the room and he is thinking, what is it that makes me feel this way?... It ain't nothing in particular, just that I feel I can't take it no more... (p. 44). The stream of consciousness technique here shows Moses' depression and weariness. His thoughts meander, reflecting confusion and a sense of being overwhelmed. Migration has not offered the fulfillment he imagined.

Fragmented Structure and Episodic Plot is another narrative technique deployed by the author. Each of them have a different story to tell, and some of them wouldn't tell you even if you ask. (p. 27). The lives of Moses, Galahad, Cap, and others not as a unified narrative but in standalone vignettes, reflecting their fragmented migrant experiences. Moses floats among these stories, further showing his own lack of rootedness or continuity. Sometimes he get so melancholy that he don't even want to eat or talk to anyone, just lie down in the room and think about home (p. 57). This moment isolates Moses from the other narrative threads. His mental withdrawal from London life is emphasised by the episodic cut as though even he no longer fits the community he once anchored.

"It have times when Galahad frighten to go in a shop and buy something, he frighten somebody accuse him for thief (p. 84)." Though focused on Galahad, the detour from Moses' narrative shows how all characters carry psychological scars in isolated pockets of experience. Moses is often the quiet observer, building the sense of emotional fragmentation.

"Cap in a different mood, laughing and talking with a next woman (p. 49.)" Cap's episodes of hustling and womanizing interrupt the mood and thread of Moses' reflection. This fragmentation mirrors how migrants use distraction to cope with deeper emotional instability and lack of continuity.

"When the boys gone, Moses sit down on the edge of the bed and turn things over in his mind (p. 126)." A quiet, standalone moment at the novel's end. The fragmented plot leaves Moses unchanged, still alone, mirroring how migration often leads not to resolution but emotional limbo.

"One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, Moses was waiting... (p. 1)." The novel opens in media res, with no setup. The episodic form drops us into an arbitrary

moment in Moses' life, suggesting a life that lacks narrative arc or cohesion, like many migrant journeys. The fragmented structure reflects the fractured identity and unstable emotional lives of the migrants.

Imagery is also deployed by the author in the novel. "When it come to winter, is something to behold, that miserable cold (p. 20)." The repetition of "cold" mirrors emotional isolation. Winter becomes a metaphor for the internal bleakness migrants like Moses feel in a foreign land where they are neither accepted nor at peace. This shows an image of cold and emotional numbness. "The fog sleeping restlessly over the city, the dirty old buildings hunching together, frightened (p. 22)." The personification of the city as frightened and the fog as restless evokes a hostile, oppressive London. Moses's world is alien, dark, and filled with psychological suffocation. This shows an image of darkness and despair.

"Sometimes it look to Moses that the boys only laughing to hide the misery in their heart (p. 25)." Imagery here shifts inward: the "misery in their heart" is a powerful emotional image. Moses sees beneath the surface, revealing the deep emotional toll of migration. They hide their sufferings, sadness and turmoil behind their jokes and laughter. "The Thames is a cold old river, indifferent like the people in the city (p. 70)." The river is imagined as cold and indifferent, mirroring Moses's feeling of being unwanted and emotionally adrift. It's not just physical distance, but a psychological separation from a sense of belonging. Also, a haunting image of the city as a ghost, this directly parallels Moses's inner emptiness. His environment reflects his emotional numbness and loneliness, "London is a lonely ghost of a place in the wintertime (p. 87)."

Every day the same thing. And the days go by, and the weeks go by, and the months, and the years (p. 127)." This is not just repetition, it's an image of stagnation and psychological erosion. Migration hasn't brought progress; instead, Moses feels stuck in a grey, unchanging cycle. Moses has sink into a state of hopelessness.

Internal Monologue is another narrative technique deployed by the author. This is used to show the internal thoughts and struggles of the characters. "He sit down in the room and wonder what it all about, why he come to London in the first place (p. 57)." The internal monologue reveals here regret, doubt, and disillusionment. Moses is emotionally lost, trapped between the dream of success and the reality of struggle. Moses has spent ten years in London but still believes that he hasn't achieved anything. Sometimes, he regrets coming to London and reminisces about the Caribbean.

"Ten years now since he hit this town, and still the going hard. Still working like a dog and catching hell... (p. 90)." This inner reflection shows Moses's resentment and exhaustion. Despite his time in London, there's no reward or comfort, just endless hardship. The phrase "catching hell" speaks to deep emotional and economic frustration. Moses reflects on the futility of his long stay in London. In the same manner, he battles about leaving London or staying, he couldn't resolve this inner crisis, "he could pack up and go back home, but what he would do in Trinidad? He was too old to start over now (p. 114)."

This internal debate reflects psychological entrapment. Moses feels stuck in London, but also disconnected from home. This split identity causes emotional paralysis and despair. Moses sometimes watches the boys and reflects on life, "It have times when he sit down quiet and watch the boys, and wonder if life not passing him by... (p. 102)." Moses's monologue here

shows melancholy and alienation, even among his friends, he feels a sense of distance, like he's on the outside looking in. He feels so alienated from his environment. He also suffers from the pain of routine, "So the old veteran get up and put on the kettle for a cup of tea, and he say, 'Lord, what a life (p. 134)." A powerful, understated moment. Moses's quiet lament reveals emotional weariness and resignation. This closing monologue brings the theme full circle, migration has left him psychologically depleted.

In Helon Habila's *Travellers*, the use of the first-person narrative perspective is a central technique that allows readers to enter the inner psychological world of the unnamed narrator, a Nigerian academic living in Berlin. His reflections and experiences capture the emotional fragmentation, alienation, and evolving identity crisis caused by migration. Migrants' often feel foreign and unstable, "I was a migrant too, but unlike Manu and his family, I had the luxury of a passport and a visa. Still, I couldn't help feeling as rootless as they were (p. 22)."

The narrator's first-person admission reveals his inner conflict: legally privileged, but emotionally displaced. Migration causes him to question where he belongs. His internal monologue exposes how migration has affected his personal relationships. He's emotionally unmoored, struggling with identity and guilt. He feels so disconnected from his wife, Gina, and his past life. "Maybe Gina had left me long before she physically did. Maybe I was the one who had first left, emotionally. (p. 39)." He begins to lose his identity, "I began to feel like a shadow of myself, someone else pretending to be me. (p. 55)". The first-person voice allows readers to see the narrator's psychological unraveling, he feels like a ghost in his own life, a result of cultural and emotional dislocation.

On absorbing other migrants' stories, "Their stories overwhelmed me. They became my stories. (p. 106). "His narrative voice merges with the migrants he interviews — showing how his identity is breaking down under the emotional weight of other people's trauma. The narrator's first-person reflection emphasises the constant anxiety that define the migrant experience, even when he is technically legal, "Every checkpoint, every border crossing, reminded me how fragile my identity was (p. 132)." Sometimes, he tries to escape himself. "Perhaps I wasn't running from Gina, or Berlin, or even from Germany. I was running from myself. (p. 186)." The first-person confession is crucial. Migration has triggered a deep internal crisis the narrator is in search of self, not just a place.

In Habila's *Travellers*, the use of a non-linear narrative structure is also a powerful technique that reflects the psychological disorientation and fragmentation experienced by the unnamed narrator and other migrants. The novel does not follow a straightforward timeline; instead, it shifts between past and present, between the narrator's personal journey and the stories of other migrants. This disrupted chronology mirrors the mental and emotional fragmentation caused by migration, statelessness, and identity loss. The narrator flashbacks into his arrival in Berlin, "It had been just a few months since Gina and I arrived in Berlin, but it already felt like a lifetime ago (p. 11)." The narrative jumps backward from a tense present to the initial arrival, showing how time feels distorted. The dislocation in the narrator's life is mirrored in the structure, he can't hold on to a stable timeline or emotional continuity.

Then, he shifts to childhood memory in Nigeria, "I remembered the day I was taken to the river by my father... (p. 29)". This unexpected flashback pulls us deep into a personal memory, disrupting the flow of the present. These moments emphasise how migration fractures identity,

forcing the narrator to confront older selves he's lost or abandoned. He also juxtaposed his past relationships, "I sometimes saw her in my dreams, Gina, or at least a version of her from when we first met... (p. 47)." Time folds in on itself. The narrator's dreams and memories intersperse the present, revealing how unresolved emotional trauma bleeds through the migrant experience, preventing emotional closure. Then he makes a sudden shift to Manu's story, "Manu's story was the first I recorded. It came suddenly, interrupting my own narrative. (p. 76)." The structure becomes episodic, non-linear, and interrupted. The narrator's attempt to piece together others' lives reflects his struggle to maintain a coherent self. The blurring of other stories with his own reveals psychological absorption and identity breakdown. "I remembered the man running through the streets, shirtless, bleeding... (p. 227)." The novel circles back to an early image, showing how trauma persists and past and present become indistinguishable. There's no forward resolution, only recurring psychological wounds. He often returns to earlier image of escape.

Intertextuality is another narrative technique deployed by the author to reflect the psychological effects of migration on the unnamed narrator. By referencing other texts, histories, and works of art, Habila emphasises how the migrant's identity is shaped not only by personal experience but by a broader cultural memory of displacement, exile, and trauma.

He made a reference to James Baldwin, "I remembered reading Baldwin's essay on being a black man in Paris, and how he talked about loneliness and liberation in the same breath (p. 19)." By invoking James Baldwin, a writer who also explored Black identity in Europe, the narrator positions himself in a long tradition of Black diasporic thinkers. The intertextual echo reveals his effort to make sense of his own emotional contradictions between freedom and alienation. In the same manner, he also makes reference to Kehinde Wiley's Paintings, "His portraits are like an

answer to historical erasure. Black men in the poses of European aristocrats. But who sees them? Who recognizes them? (p. 35)."

The narrator's reflection on Wiley's work becomes a meditation on visibility and erasure. He sees himself in the intertextual tension between representation and invisibility, a common psychological wound for migrants who are both hyper-visible and unseen. He makes literary allusion to Homer's *Odyssey*, "Like Odysseus, I had no idea where my travels would end, or whether home still existed (p. 61)." The comparison to Odysseus underlines the mythic scale of migrant wandering, turning the narrator's disorientation into a universal condition. This allusion emphasises his emotional loss of anchorage and fear of return. He wonders if he will ever be able to return to his homeland, he's lost in the journey.

Also, he makes historical allusion to Colonial Archives, "The university library held files on African students who had studied here in the sixties, their letters, grades, visa applications (p. 80)." The narrator's access to the archival traces of earlier African migrants forces him to confront a long lineage of colonial displacement. These records act as intertexts, shaping his understanding of his psychological inheritance of exile and impermanence. He also quotes W.H. Auden, "We must love one another or die,' Auden wrote though he later disowned that line. Maybe because he realized love wasn't enough. (p. 126)." This ironic use of poetry suggests the narrator's loss of faith in idealism, a result of witnessing migrant suffering. It reflects a growing emotional numbness in the face of overwhelming trauma.

Also, he reads Fanon's philosophical intertext, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, "Reading Fanon again, I understood the violence of assimilation, the way language, dress, and even love became tools of erasure. (p. 154)." This allusion shows how postcolonial theory frames his

psychological condition. The narrator feels the emotional violence of trying to “fit in,” echoing Fanon’s insight into the internal damage of colonial and racial displacement. He also made reference to Flaubert, showing how the narrator has accepted the status quo. He saw no reason in protesting, he believes that everyone should just accept how things are.

Even in my tipsy, sedated state, I sensed how ephemeral this moment was.
How long before they saw the world as it is, vile and cruel and indifferent, and
there is really no changing it; how long before they moved out of their crumbling
ivory tower and joined the rest of the humanity swimming in what Flaubert
described as a river of shit relentlessly washing away at the foundation of
every river built (pg 21).

The narrator also made a reference to Plato when he thought of Gina in her studio alone all day, immersing herself in her work, “I often thought of gina in her studio, alone all day, battling with colours and lines and fear and hope, coaxing the brushstrokes into shapes, a limb, a face, hair, eyes, and sometimes despairing, a Plato once said, of ever capturing that ideal form she saw in her mind (Pg 47).”

Symbolism is also used as a key narrative technique to convey the psychological effects of migration on the unnamed narrator and other characters. Objects, places, and even people become symbols of displacement, identity loss, longing, and trauma. These symbols help externalize the internal psychological turmoil migrants often face. The disappearing wife, Gina, as a symbol of disconnection, "Gina was always a few steps ahead of me, in the streets, in the museums, in our marriage. (p. 12)." Gina becomes a symbol of emotional distance and the narrator’s inability to maintain connection. Her gradual disappearance reflects the psychological unraveling caused by migration, the erosion of intimacy and identity

The Train is also used as a symbol of in-between-ness, "As the train crossed the border, I felt suspended between places, between selves. (p. 27)." The train symbolizes liminality, the in-

between state of the migrant. It's not just a mode of travel, but a space of psychological suspension, reflecting the narrator's loss of stability and rootedness. The map in his notebook, "I kept a small notebook, drawing maps of the cities I passed through — Berlin, Basel, Zurich... I marked only the places I slept. (p. 49)." The map is a symbol of both order and isolation. While it tries to impose structure, it also highlights how transient and fragmented his life has become. It's a cartography of alienation.

Also, the masked portrait (at an art gallery), "A woman in a veil stood facing a portrait — the face on the canvas was partly masked, only the eyes visible (p. 81)." The masked face symbolizes the hidden or erased identities of migrants. The veil and obscured expression reflect the narrator's emotional concealment and the difficulty of being truly seen. Also, the broken mirror in the refugee camp, "He pointed to the broken mirror nailed to a wall. 'That is all I have. (p. 163)." The mirror reflects a shattered self-image. It becomes a metaphor for the psychological fragmentation migrants experience. The narrator sees in it the fragility of identity and survival.

Dialogue and Silence are another narrative technique employed by Habila in *Travellers*. These are important narrative techniques used to explore the psychological effects of migration on the unnamed narrator and other displaced characters. Through spoken exchanges, hesitations, and notable absences of speech, Habila conveys alienation, cultural disconnection, and the deep trauma associated with exile and statelessness. In the narrator's conversation with Gina, she asked him, "Are you happy here?" she asked suddenly. I didn't answer immediately. 'I don't know,' I said at last. (p. 16)." The pause and hesitation in the narrator's dialogue illustrate his emotional numbness and uncertainty. Migration has disrupted his inner clarity and relationship with Gina, creating distance. Gina is passionate about her work and ideals, particularly regarding

race, justice, and artistic expression. However, her activism often comes across as intellectualized and distant, lacking the lived complexity that defines the narrator's migrant experience. Her detachment reflects a gap in empathy, she understands race as theory, while the narrator lives it daily.

Also, in his interview with Manu, he asked him, "And what do you miss the most?" I asked. He looked at me, then looked away. 'My brother. They shot him in front of me. (p. 74)." Manu's stark, direct statement following a moment of silence exposes the trauma migrants carry. The narrator's role as listener burdens him with others' pain, intensifying his own emotional dislocation. When attempting to speak with Mark, he asked, "Where are you from?" I asked. He shook his head and walked away without saying anything. (p. 98)". Silence as refusal becomes a powerful indicator of psychological withdrawal. Mark's lack of speech signals a loss of trust and identity, a response shaped by his migratory trauma.

Additionally, Aisha's reluctant revelation is also a form of dialogue which is embedded with meanings, "I don't want to talk about it," Aisha said. 'There are things better left in the past.' (p. 122)." Withholding dialogue becomes an act of survival. Aisha's refusal shows how migrants protect themselves from emotional collapse by suppressing memory, revealing internalized trauma. The narrator confronts himself through dialogue, "Why are you even here?" I asked my reflection. No answer came. Just my face, staring back at me. (p. 141)." This internal "dialogue" illustrates the narrator's identity crisis and growing alienation. The silence of the reflection symbolizes a loss of self and emotional disconnection. When he was at a Refugee station, he met a lady who couldn't speak English or German, "She didn't speak English or German. She just looked at me with wide, desperate eyes, as if speech itself had abandoned her. (p. 170)." The

absence of dialogue here highlights how language barriers dehumanize and isolate. Silence reflects voicelessness, a condition many migrants endure under systemic and emotional pressure.

Habila's use of dialogue and silence powerfully captures the damage and identity fragmentation experienced by migrants. Where words fail or are withheld, the psychological scars of migration become most visible.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The Lonely Londoners by Samuel Selvon and *Travellers* by Helon Habila reveals shared and divergent themes regarding the psychological impact of migration, with both texts exploring key aspects such as isolation, homesickness, alienation, identity fragmentation, and resilience. Though set in different historical and geographical contexts, both novels shed light on how migration affects mental health, focusing on the emotional and psychological struggles of migrants in hostile or unfamiliar environments. By examining the findings from these texts, we gain a deeper understanding of how migration's psychological impact remains a persistent and evolving issue across time and spaces.

Both *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers* examines the psychological effects that accompanies the migrant experience. However, while Selvon's characters face the emotional burden of racial discrimination, alienation, and marginalization in post-World War II London, Habila's characters deal with more immediate forms of trauma, including violence, war, and forced displacement.

In Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, the characters suffer more from a psychological "slow burn" of alienation, where over time, they lose hope and become resigned to their situation. Moses, for example, feels an emotional weariness after years of struggling to integrate into London, symbolizing a form of long-term trauma brought about by systemic racism and exclusion. His

gradual realization that his dreams of success in the “Mother Country” are unattainable reveals the emotional cost of migration in a supposedly inclusive society. The more time pass, the more Moses get tired. It look like London does take the heart out of a man... (p. 102). This highlights a subtler, long-term form of trauma that stems from systemic oppression and the cumulative toll of not belonging.

In Habila's *Travellers*, characters like Manu and Juma experience more overt and acute forms of trauma linked to war, political persecution, and dangerous journeys. Manu's loss of his family is a clear marker of this trauma, a wound that defines his interactions with the world around him. His silence and his inability to speak about his loss suggest unresolved PTSD, a condition highly relevant to contemporary refugee populations. Manu never spoke of his family... The silence was his way of keeping the pain locked away... (p. 146), The characters experience trauma more directly related to immediate life-threatening situations, emphasizing the severe mental health challenges refugees face in fleeing violence. This contrasts with Selvon's characters, who face the trauma of prolonged marginalization and exclusion in the host society.

Alienation is a central theme in both novels, though it manifests differently depending on the specific migrant experiences of the characters. In *The Lonely Londoners*, alienation arises primarily from racial discrimination and exclusion from the dominant white society in London. In *Travellers*, alienation is exacerbated by displacement from one's homeland, compounded by the host country's xenophobia, bureaucracy, and social rejection.

In Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, the characters experience isolation, homesickness, alienation as Caribbean immigrants in a predominantly white society. Galahad's discomfort and shame when being watched by white Londoners highlight the daily alienation and "othering" they face,

emphasizing the emotional toll of racism. "When he feel them white eyes on him, he get a feeling of shame, like he don't belong." (p. 77) Alienation here is tied to race, class, and social hierarchies, showing how systemic exclusion fosters psychological harm. This reflects the long-term effects of living in a society that doesn't accept or validate the migrant's identity, which has implications for today's conversations on race and integration.

In Habila's *Travellers*, the characters experience alienation in a different sense—rooted in their status as refugees who are displaced from home and caught in limbo in foreign lands. Juma, for example, feels like a "ghost" walking the streets of Berlin, invisible to the locals, capturing the emotional weight of being a refugee with no sense of belonging anywhere. "Juma walked the streets, feeling invisible, like a ghost in a city full of life but with no place for him" (p. 68). The portrayal of alienation underscores the disconnection felt by refugees in contemporary Europe, where they are viewed as "outsiders" and left in legal and social limbo. This highlights how bureaucratic and social exclusion in contemporary migration contexts contribute to a deep sense of emotional isolation.

Both novels discuss the identity crises experienced by migrants as they navigate between their home cultures and their new, often hostile, environments. This struggle leads to a fragmentation of self, where the characters experience a sense of dislocation and displacement from their former selves and their sense of belonging.

In Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, the characters, particularly Moses, face an identity crisis in which their dreams of becoming successful in London are thwarted by the realities of exclusion. Moses' ongoing sense of not belonging, despite his years in London, illustrates the psychological fragmentation that results from migration, he is neither fully Caribbean nor fully British. "Moses

thinking, how after all these years in London, he still don't belong." (p. 120). The narrative speaks to the challenges of cultural identity that persist for many migrants today, particularly those caught between maintaining their cultural heritage and adapting to new cultural contexts. This tension is often linked to feelings of alienation and depression in contemporary migrant populations.

In Habila's *Travellers*, the characters face an even more pronounced identity crisis, particularly the narrator, who is caught between being an African expatriate and a witness to the refugee crisis. His personal sense of loss and confusion mirrors the existential displacement of the migrants he meets. The shifting narrative perspectives in *Travellers* further underscore the fluid, fractured identities that migration often produces. "I had no country, no home...I was just drifting, like the others, trying to latch on to something to give me a sense of self." p. 47. The exploration of identity reflects contemporary discussions about how migration complicates and destabilizes a person's sense of self, leaving many migrants feeling adrift and disconnected from both their past and present identities. Despite the heavy psychological burdens, both novels also highlight the resilience and coping mechanisms that migrants use to navigate their difficult circumstances. This resilience can take many forms, from humor and community in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* to survival instincts and hope in Helon Habila's *Travellers*.

In *The Lonely Londoners*, the characters cope with their psychological trauma through humor, community and social support, and collective experience. While their jokes and laughter mask their underlying pain, they provide a temporary reprieve from their hardships. This demonstrates the power of community and shared experiences in helping migrants cope with exclusion. Even when the boys laugh and joke, you could still feel the heaviness in the air, like life was a thing to

endure, not enjoy (p. 68). Humor and social support act as essential coping mechanisms in migrant communities, showing how shared experiences can mitigate feelings of isolation. This is a key point in contemporary discussions of resilience and coping mechanism, emphasizing the role of social networks in supporting migrant mental health. In Habila's *Travellers*, the characters demonstrate resilience through their determination to survive despite immense trauma. For example, the narrator observes the ways in which people, even in refugee camps, find ways to hope, love, and dream, suggesting a deep well of human resilience despite seemingly insurmountable odds.

This shows that in the midst of such hopelessness, people found the strength to laugh, to love, to dream (p. 190). Habila's focus on resilience speaks to the strength migrants and refugees show in the face of adversity. In today's discourse on migration, the emphasis on migrant resilience highlights the importance of supporting their psychological well-being through community engagement, support networks, and access to mental health services.

In *The Lonely Londoners* and *Travellers*, Selvon and Habila use narrative techniques to show psychological effects of migration on the characters. Selvon uses Creolized English, Stream of Consciousness, Fragmented structure and episodic plot, Imagery and Internal monologue while Habila uses First person narrative, Non-linear structure, Symbolism, dialogue and intertextuality. Both novels provide rich, multifaceted portrayals of the psychological impact of migration. Both novels highlight how trauma, isolation, alienation, identity fragmentation, and resilience shape the migrant experience. While the contexts differ, Selvon focusing on post-war Caribbean migration to London and Habila on contemporary African refugees in Europe, the psychological struggles faced by the characters resonate across both time periods. The findings from these texts

contribute to contemporary discussions on migration and mental health, emphasizing the need for greater social support, mental health resources, and policies that recognize the psychological toll migration takes on individuals. The novels serve as reminders that the psychological challenges migrants face are not new but have persisted across generations, calling for urgent attention to their mental health needs today.

Endnotes

1. S. Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*. Penguin Classics, 1956.
2. H. Habila, *Travellers*. W.W. Norton. New York City, 2019.

Chapter Five

Summary of Findings

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study evaluated the psychological effects of *The Lonely Londoners* by Samuel Selvon and *Travellers* by Helon Habila reveals how both novels explore the psychological effects of migration on individuals from formerly colonized regions. Selvon's characters, especially Moses

and Galahad, display emotional numbness, identity confusion, and disillusionment caused by racial marginalization and economic hardship in post-war London. Habila's unnamed narrator in *Travellers* grapples with existential displacement, survivor's guilt, and identity loss, exacerbated by encounters with African refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. Selvon uses episodic plot structure, internal monologue, and vernacular voice to mirror the fractured identities of his characters.

Habila employs non-linear narrative, intertextuality, and first-person introspection, highlighting the mental instability and dislocation migrants experience. Selvon's characters rely on community bonding, humor, denial, and mobility (constantly shifting jobs and homes) to cope with alienation. Habila's protagonist seeks understanding through story collection, intellectual reflection, silence, and transient relationships. Other characters cope through forgetting, resistance, or dissociation. In both novels, language becomes both a bridge and a barrier. Selvon's use of creolized English affirms Caribbean identity but also highlights exclusion from British society. In *Travellers*, silence and failed communication reveal deeper traumas and the emotional limits of speech in expressing migrant suffering.

5.2 Conclusion

Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers* both depict migration as a disruptive force that fractures identity, belonging, and personal relationships. However, they also illustrate that migrants develop adaptive strategies, albeit imperfect, to survive and make meaning in hostile or indifferent environments. While *The Lonely Londoners* leans towards

collective resilience among Caribbean men, *Travellers* emphasises internal struggle and philosophical reflection in the face of more contemporary and globalised forms of migration. These narratives serve not just as literature but as human testimonies, revealing the psychological interiorities often excluded from mainstream migration discourse. The theoretical frameworks of psychoanalysis theory and coping mechanisms theory, along with conceptual models like acculturation, coping strategies, Postcolonialism, Caribbean literature, African Literature provide a comprehensive lens to analyze migration and coping mechanisms in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Helon Habila's *Travellers*. These frameworks and models highlight the complex interplay of identity, culture, and resilience in the experiences of migrants, shedding light on their struggles and strategies for coping in new, often challenging environments.

The themes of migration, isolation, loneliness, displacement, and coping mechanisms are central to Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila's *Travellers*. Both novels explore the lived experiences of migrants, though they emerge from different cultural and historical contexts. Caribbean literature is deeply intertwined with themes of displacement, identity, and the legacies of colonialism. The Caribbean, shaped by the forced migration of the transatlantic slave trade, later became a site of voluntary migration, particularly to former colonial powers like the UK. Caribbean literature often reflects this duality of belonging and alienation, exploring the identities of people caught between worlds. Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* is a seminal text within Caribbean literature, capturing the experiences of West Indian migrants in 1950s London. The novel is often noted for its use of creole language, which not only asserts the characters' cultural identity but also challenges the linguistic hegemony of Standard English. The narrative style mirrors the fragmented, disjointed lives of the characters, who struggle to navigate the harsh realities of post-war Britain.

Migration in *The Lonely Londoners* is portrayed as both a physical journey and an existential one. The characters, like Moses and Galahad, are in search of better economic opportunities but encounter racial discrimination, isolation, and disillusionment. Their coping mechanisms include forming tight-knit communities where they can share stories, food, and cultural practices from back home. These acts of solidarity are essential for their survival in a society that marginalises them. In *Travellers*, Habila shifts the focus to contemporary African migrants in Europe, dealing with the complexities of identity, asylum, and the often invisible, transient nature of migrant lives. The characters in *Travellers* navigate a world of shifting borders, where the concept of home is fluid, and their journeys are marked by a constant search for belonging. Coping mechanisms in *Travellers* are more fragmented, some characters resort to denial, while others find solace in storytelling or art. The novel explores not just the physical dislocation but also the psychological trauma that accompanies it.

In analysing migration and coping mechanisms in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Habila's *Travellers*, the theoretical frameworks and conceptual models that address migration, identity, and coping strategies within diasporic contexts. The novel critiques the British colonial legacy and its impact on immigrants' identities. Key concepts such as hybridity and mimicry can be applied to understand the characters' struggles to navigate between their Caribbean heritage and the pressures to assimilate into British society. In Helon Habila's *Travellers*, the novel examines contemporary African migration to Europe, highlighting the political, economic, and social factors driving migration.

In Coping mechanisms theory, this framework examines how individuals deal with stress and adversity. Coping strategies can be categorised as problem-focused (addressing the problem

directly) or emotion-focused (managing emotional responses to the problem). *The Lonely Londoners* characters use various coping mechanisms, such as forming close-knit communities, engaging in social activities, and maintaining connections to their homeland through letters and remittances. In *Travellers*, the novel depicts diverse coping strategies, including activism, building new social networks, and creative expression through art and storytelling. These strategies help characters manage the trauma of displacement and the challenges of integration.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Inclusion of Migrant Voices in Policy and Media: Use literary insights to advocate for a more humane portrayal of migrants, integrating their stories and coping strategies into public policy and media narratives.
- ii. Mental Health Interventions: Policymakers and NGOs should consider the psychological dimensions of migration including trauma, identity loss, and loneliness when designing support services for migrants and refugees.
- iii. Education Curricula: Incorporate postcolonial migration literature like Selvon's and Habila's into academic syllabi to foster empathy and cross-cultural understanding.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by Identifying the psychological effects of migration and categorising literary coping mechanisms that can be used by migrants to adjust to and cope with foreign environments. The exploration of migration and coping mechanisms in Samuel Selvon's

The Lonely Londoners and Helon Habila's *Travellers* makes a valuable contribution to scholarship on postcolonial literature, migration studies, and identity formation. Both texts represent different historical moments of African and Caribbean migration but converge in their portrayal of the migrant's search for survival and belonging in hostile environments. By examining these works, this work not only illuminates the continuities in migrant experience across time but also underscores the shifting dynamics of displacement and adaptation in the context of globalisation, colonial legacies, and contemporary migration crises.

One of the most significant contributions of this study is its interrogation of coping as a literary and psychological strategy. While much has been written about alienation, exile, and identity in migrant literature, fewer studies explicitly situate coping mechanisms as a critical lens for literary analysis. Through Selvon's depiction of Caribbean migrants in 1950s London, coping emerges in forms such as humour, communal bonding, storytelling, and the ability to detach from harsh realities. In contrast, Habila's *Travellers* situates coping in more fragmented, modern contexts: asylum seekers navigate precarious legal systems, displaced Africans in Europe struggle with invisibility, and characters attempt to make meaning through art, memory, or withdrawal. This study therefore adds to knowledge by extending psychological theories of coping into literature, showing how literature encodes strategies of endurance and resilience that mirror real-world migrant experiences.

Finally, this work shows migrant realities and demonstrates the emotional textures, ambiguities, and silences among migrants. In summary, this work advances knowledge on several fronts: it integrates coping mechanisms as a theoretical lens for literary analysis, situates migration within a long historical trajectory, reconceptualises identity as a coping strategy, bridges literature and

social science, and amplifies postcolonial voices in migration discourse. This insight strengthens our understanding of migration not merely as movement across borders but as a profound, ongoing negotiation of self, survival, and belonging.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

The limitations of this study offer opportunity and suggestions for future study.

- i. Comparative Studies with Female Migrant Narratives: analyse how gender influences coping mechanisms in postcolonial migration literature.
- ii. Trauma Theory and Migration: explore both novels using trauma theory frameworks to unpack repressed memory, dissociation, and healing.
- iii. Afro-European Identity in Literature: Investigate how African migrants in European literature grapple with postcolonial identity differently than Caribbean migrants.
- iv. Role of Religion and Spirituality in Coping: Neither Selvon nor Habila foregrounds spirituality; future research could focus on its role in migrant resilience.
- v. Narrative Therapy and Literature: examine how literary storytelling itself becomes a form of narrative therapy for both characters and readers.

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This is to certify that the thesis by Deborah Oyindamola TADESE with the matric number LCU/PG/005258 in the Department of Languages and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State is in full compliance with the approved University Format and Style.

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Signature

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Date

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