

### Consciousness and Representation

Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* documents the experience of various West Indies immigrants in London during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For a further analysis of their experiences, two maps are provided, generated by ScribbleMaps. Figure 1 offers an initial, insightful glance of the general route across the Atlantic Ocean for these immigrants, where they are greeted by the rightfully-named Moses Aloetta at Waterloo Station, a messiah in their eyes. However, what is lacking in Figure 1, which is an understanding of the characters' psyche in the new city, can be seen represented in Figure 2, where the viewer is offered a focused, more localized glance of the immigrants' experience. Waterloo Station can be found in the right-hand corner of the map, encircled in yellow, where the journey commonly starts for newly-arrived immigrants. It is at this station where new arrivers come to London, fueled with hope, believing that "the streets of London are paved with gold." (Selvon 2) Regretfully, the immigrants are soon met with the discrimination ridden nature of their reality, as they derive more and more from the core of London near Waterloo Station. They live on survival and hardship as their journey heads westward, all the way to Harrow and Portobello Roads. Their naive, hopeful views of London slowly wither as their journey becomes sparser on the map. At first glance, the sparseness in between markers on the map may indicate a sense of mobility and freedom present in characters such as Moses Aloetta, however, it is their marginalization in London society that causes this sparseness to be viewed as immobilized. Upon further study, consciousness comes to mind when examining the distance in between markers, as the narrative displays not only completely

separate thought spheres but also distinct, individual stories concerning each character, without the presence of collective consciousness as will be furtherly discussed.

For a thoughtful comparison of London's geographical representation with character psyche in mind, one has to look no further than Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Upon first glance of the London represented in Figure 3, the first element that comes to view is the narrower, more focused view of the city. The locations are not as numbered as in Figure 2, as characters in the novel, such as Clarissa Dalloway, tend to remain in a narrow geographical area, which in her case remains the Westminster neighbourhood. The insights of only a few single characters are presented in this map, as opposed to the plethora of immigration narratives found in *The Lonely Londoners*. Their narratives, concentrating more on their own thoughts rather than the geographical allocation of London, creates this focus in the map. For example, in Peter Walsh's perspective "life itself, every moment of it, every drop of it" (Dalloway 79) can be found in Regent's Park. This view, that life can be centered on a single location, is a common element in the thoughts and lives of the characters in the novel, and it is evident in Figure 3. The consciousness of the characters also plays an effect when this point of focus is concerned, and the fluid transitions from one character's thought sphere to another in *Mrs. Dalloway* evokes a unified, collective consciousness and character disposition.

It is interesting to note, when comparing both Figure 1 and 2, the presence of famous London landmarks in each. Both novels incorporate the landmarks in their maps as well as their narrative, however, the manner in which they are represented differs. In *The Lonely Londoners*, landmarks such as the Big Ben are only mentioned in passing, in an air of disillusion, illustrating the characters' distance from a grand life in London. Mentions, and representations, of the landmarks are more evident in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and are underlined in Figure 2, with the Big Ben,

for example, being a prominent figure throughout the novel. These mentions represent the characters' proximity to the British Empire and their higher position in English society, if compared to the marginalized immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners*.

Figure 1



Figure 2

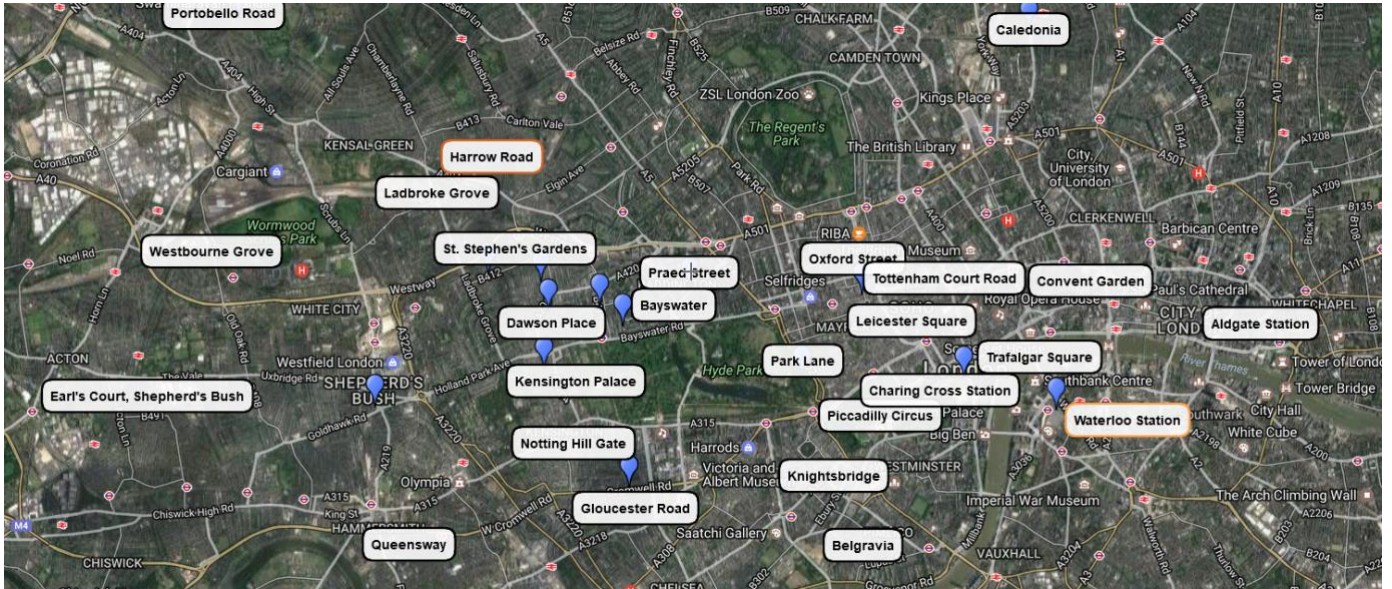
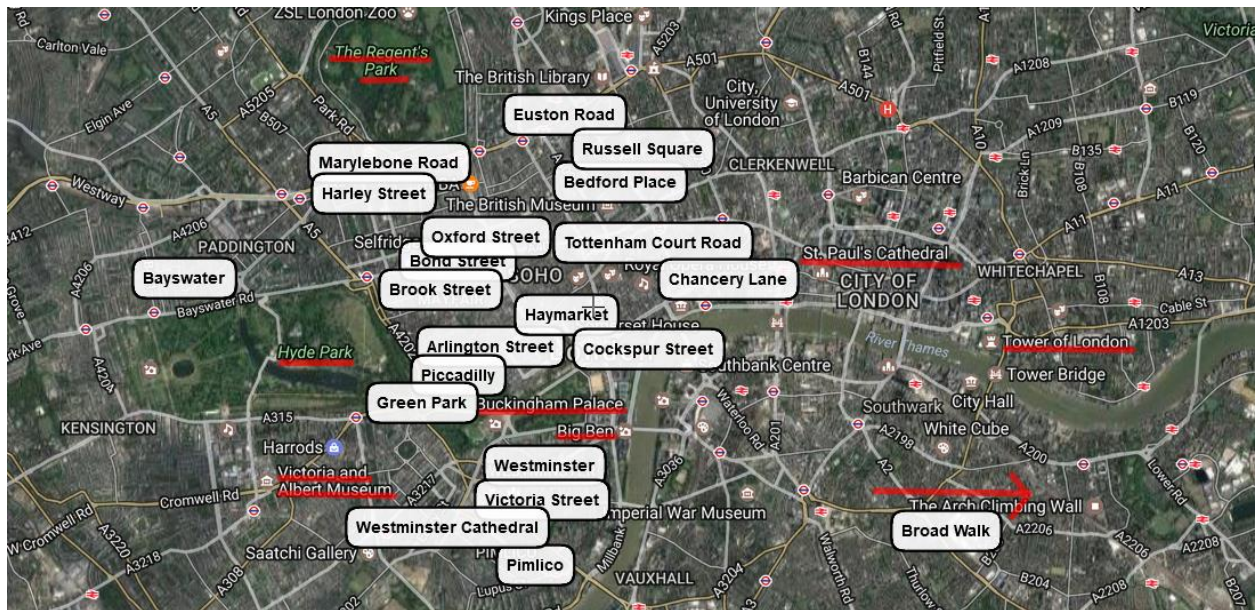


Figure 3



Works Cited

Selvon, Sam. *The Lonely Londoners*. Penguin Classics, 1956.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Harcourt, Inc, 1925.