

On Quadrophenia (2001)

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Welcome

On the 22nd of June, 1948, *The Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks, East London. Along with heralding the death of colonialism as one-way traffic,¹ it has come to symbolise the beginning of a modern black presence in the British Isles. No longer could Britain remain the sacred motherland, ostensibly untouched by the influence of others. The colonised were here, rubbing shoulders with the colonisers, wearing away the patina of mystery and power.

Wole Soyinka, illustrates this demise of mystique, through Jane Pilkings and Olunde Elesin conversing in *Death and the King's Horseman*:

Jane: (After a moment's pause) Perhaps I can understand you now. The time we picked for you was not really one for seeing us at our best.

Olunde: Don't think it was just the war. Before that even started I had plenty of time to study your people. I saw nothing, finally, that gave you the right to pass judgement on other people and their ways. Nothing at all.²

With this awareness came the need to recognise the phenomenon of black people becoming a sizeable part of the indigenous population. Indigenous, being more than possessing a British passport, but being able to claim their benefits of colonialism.

The Second World War created the need for an influx of European and Commonwealth immigrants into Britain, to meet the national labour market shortfall. An antecedent to independence for many, colonised people from Africa and India also chose this period to arrive in Britain, The arrival of commonwealth immigrants was not without resistance

¹ Phillips, Mike; Phillips, Trevor. Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain Harper Collins, London 1999. p. 3.

² Soyinka, Wole. Death and the King's Horsemen Eyre Methuen, London. 1975 p. 54. The mystique is well put by Chinua Achebe, through Chike: Port Harcourt is second to Lagos, Lagos is second to London, and London is second to Heaven. (paraphrase)