

Tribhuvan University

Psychological Decolonization in V.S Naipaul's *In A Free State* and *The Mimic Men*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English

in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master's of Arts in English

By

Dhan Sing Rana

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

March 2017

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Shiva Rijal, Lecturer of Department of English, for making constant supervision and guiding me with regular inspiration, encouragement, and insightful suggestion throughout the study. His vigorous efforts made me present this research work in this form. I'm equally thankful to Raj Kumar Baral, lecturer of Department of English. Likewise, I am also indebted to the Head of the Central Department of English Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi for the precious directions in conducting the research. Similarly, I'm thankful to my respected Professor, Lectures, Prof. Dr. Ram Chandra Poudel, Badri Acharya, for their kind suggestion.

I owe many thanks to my close friends for all their love and valuable companionship over these years, particularly Bhim Lal Acharya for his overall suggestion and help, Bhishma Chalise and colleagues in the Central Department of English and all my well wishers who directly and indirectly helped me to complete this work.

March, 2017

Dhan Sing Rana

### Abstract

This research highlights the psychic decolonization for the proper establishment of the once colonized countries. This research is to present the derogative outcomes of colonization appeared in post colonial period from the perspective of psychoanalysis in V.S. Naipaul's *In A Free State* and *The Mimic Men*. Due to the psychological impact of colonial legacy in postcolonial period, the former colonies try to get absolute freedom. *The Mimic Men* is very useful text which examines how Ralph's sense of alienation, his experiences as a colonial politician, his struggle with a sense of personal identity, and his inability to connect with others are linked with Ralph's sense of loss and disconnectedness. These experiences and reactions also fit into general patterns of colonized persons acting within 'typical' colonial situations. So the people from the former colonies undergo with the series of psychological humiliation in front of the ex-colonizers due to the colonial hangover; which searches the issue of psychological decolonization for the sake of complete freedom.

## CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
I: Naipaul as the Spokesperson of Postcolonial Psychoanalysis in <i>In A Free State</i> and <i>The Mimic Men</i>	1
II: Psychic Decolonialization in Naipaul's <i>In A Free State</i> and <i>The Mimic Men</i>	14
III: Psychological Decolonization for Freedom	45
Works Cited	

**I: Naipaul as the Spokesperson of Postcolonial Psychoanalysis in *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men***

This research work aims in discovering the evils of colonial legacy in V.S. Naipaul's *In The Free State* and *The Mimic Men*. This research reveals psychological impact after this uncovering the research pits on the necessity of the psychic decolonization for the proper establishment of the formerly colonized countries. The purpose of this research is to present the negative effects of colonial hangover in postcolonial period i.e psychologically from the vantage point of Naipaul's *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men*.

Although the characters in *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men* belong to the ex-colonies, they show the series of psychic humiliation in front of the people of former colonizers. This demands the issue of psychic decolonization for the sake of complete freedom in the present world. Due to the psychological impact of colonial legacy in postcolonial period, the ex-colonies undergo the series of domination and humiliation. The research undergoes and demands of the ending of the psychological domination and exploitation of the ex-colonies to encourage the complete freedom. The frame narrative of *In a Free State* presents three stories with the last story bearing the title of the fiction accounts the tale of different individuals who suffer from the evils psychic colonialism.

Thus the research stresses on the fact how there is the necessity of psychic decolonization in order to establish the freedom and decolonization the ex-colonies. Naipaul, who is a Nobel Laureate, is one of the outstanding but most controversial living writers in English literature. Naipaul himself is a rootless, exiled and displaced

person. He felt the pangs of alienation, loneliness, homelessness and fragmented self. His dilemma and the various socio-economic political problems of post-colonial characters are reflected in his fiction and non-fiction. The most important thing is that he has got 'this dilemma' as an ancestral because his father and grandfather both suffered and wrote about this trauma. He himself says that he is unhappy about the cultural and spiritual poverty of Trinidad, West-Indies and feels alienated from India and feels 'Uneasy' in English society. As a diasporic writer, Naipaul has dealt with multifarious crises like the impact of colonialism on the Third World society, its loss of history, social, political and economic ferments and the crisis of split personality and dignity which lead to the problems like homelessness, displacement, loneliness, alienation, identity crisis and schizophrenia which end the post colonials in the fragmentation of their selves.

The plot of novel *In A Free State* has a framing narrative and three short stories. They are *One Out Of Many*, *Tell me Who to Kill* and The last story *In A Free State* stating the tales of three narrators who are being victimized by the evils of psychic colonialism. The first tale is about an Indian servant from Bombay who moves with his master to the USA and experiences the series of humiliations and shame in his relation with the Westerners sometimes witnessing the plight of other Indians suffering from psychic servitude. The second story has an unreliable narrator who also suffers from psychological neurosis from not being rich like his cousins who earned name and fame due to their acquaintance with the westerners. The third story bearing the name of the novel is the tale of an African city recently decolonized but the president of the country is backed by former colonizers to make the king helpless

though; in fact, the king is in the support of psychic decolonization. These three stories in the novel raise the question regarding the ethos of official decolonization which seems the beginning of psychic colonialism. Though being free from the clutches of colonialism, the formerly colonized locations undergo the series of economic, social, cultural and psychological colonialism.

The fragmentation of self in the domestic situation is a common theme in Naipaul's novels. Family denotes a group of people affiliated by common ancestors, affinity or co-residence and blood relationships. We are born into families and even die with family around. Having family is a very comforting sense to anyone. Family members like father, mother, sister, brother; wife and children etc. develop the sense of togetherness and family as a whole. It is the family which gives encouragement, understanding, hope, comforts, advice, values, morals, ideas, love, trust and a sense of security. All these things help to make a 'domestic self'. In addition, an emotional, moral, familial support strengthens this sense of 'domestic self'. An important thing, in relation to post colonial families, is that it is one's ultimate source of identity. It is a family that serves to locate people socially and plays a major role in their culturisation and socialization. All these things lack the Naipaulian characters. The detachment from the family and its members, lack of togetherness and a divided life cause this domestic fragmentation. In *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh feels detached from his family due to the poor position on island. His shift to London results in his homelessness. *Salim* in *A Bend Sinister*, *the River*, detaches himself from his family to make a fresh start elsewhere. Even the socially, culturally and economically colonized characters like Dayo and Santosh feel totally lost when they went to the alien land which was totally unmatched from their

families. Naipaul observes in the prologue and epilogue that ‘the tramp’ never identifies himself with any society and family. The familial imbalance disorients the post-colonials, so they meet loneliness and restlessness. This problem in the text is addressed by the present research emphasizing on the necessity of psychic decolonialism. Postcolonial psychoanalytical theory, concept of mimicry by Franz Fanon is taken as the insights to solve the problem in the text.

Psychoanalytical decolonialisation is one of the burning issues in the age of post-colonialism. So this research is also focusing on psychological decolonization in Naipaul’s fictions. As Naipaul is known as one of the leading postcolonial psychoanalytical thinkers. He stresses on the ending of the colonial legacy from the part of psyche in both colonizers and colonized of which *In a Free State* is an example. Naipaul won Booker Prize in 1971 for *In A Free State*, a collection of fictions. Through three narrators who have certain links with each other, the books explore issues of nationality and identity. Misplaced people can be found in those stories, an Indian chef immigrated to America, a young man from West Indian Island found himself in the alien streets of London, and two white people arrived in Africa – a place full of hostility. Departed from their own roots, they were at a loss and didn’t know what to do. The title of the fiction is ironical because no one could harmonize himself with a strange culture. The freedom they have got is only a freedom to separate themselves from their roots. It is worthwhile to reconsider his stand on postcolonial identity while reading his texts. His works, more or less, are nothing but a struggle for self, a fight for right and a voice against suppression and exploitation. He has stashed his legacy inside him and poured it



in the form of brilliant works where house has more significance than only a place as Gerhard Stilz contends, "A house is a place in space but also in society" (47).

Psychological decolonization is the state of complete freedom. On the occasion of the inaugural issue of decolonization-indignity, education and society. Decolonization is indeed oppositional to colonial ways of thinking and acting but demands indigenous starting point and an articulation of what decolonization means for Indigenous people around the world.

Naipaul's novel *The Mimic Men* is the fictional memoir of main character Ralph Singh. This was written in a boarding house in London, it is a retrospective, first-person account of Ralph's life. He remembers his childhood in the fictional West Indian island of Isabella, when he was in university for his study in London where he meets Sandra and marries, and his somewhat successful business and political careers back in Isabella. Yet with all the particular details, Ralph Singh is also a prototypical character, an intelligent and sensitive person confused by the plural but unequal society he's raised in and for whom identity is a primary objectives or issue. Because the story is related through flashbacks and memories, Ralph has the opportunity to weave in reflection with narrative and self-analysis with exposition. *The Mimic Men* is very useful and this research endeavors to examine how Ralph's sense of alienation, his experiences as a colonial politician, his struggle with a sense of personal identity, and his inability to connect with others are linked as various expressions of Ralph's sense of loss and disconnectedness. These experiences and reactions also fit into general patterns of colonized persons acting within 'typical' colonial situations. Finally, it briefly discusses the novel's dark conclusion and its apparent dismissal of the possibility of transformation.

Naipaul is recognized as the advocator of psychological decolonialisation. He is termed as a West Indian novelist of the colonial experience. As a post- colonial novelist, Naipaul concentrates on major themes related to the problems of the colonized people. As an observer and interpreter of the ex- colonies, he exposes the inadequacies of such societies. In his novels, *The Mimic Men*, *Guerrillas*, *A Bend in the River*, *In a Free State* etc., the themes acquire a universality and observes and presents the fragmentation and alienation happen to be the universal predicament of man in the present day world. Some eminent Third World critics concentrate mainly on Naipaul's development as a creative artist who picks up issues relating to the Third World. His works throw light on the Postcolonial and post- imperial realities that have shaped the contemporary societies and provides important insights relating to them. Naipaul's novels lead to a better understanding of the problems that are faced by the post- imperial generations. Most of the works by Naipaul stress on the necessity of psychological decolonialisation. The present research addresses the issues related to the evils of colonialism in the ex-colonies. Naipaul always represents the denial of the third-world spirit depicting how the third world countries suffer from the evils of psychic colonialism even in the postcolonial era. Naipaul has represented societies that have recently emerged from colonialism. Though imperialism has passed and the colonies have attained an independent status, but these nations of the Third World faces a lot of problems like economic, social and political that ultimately damage the psyche of the formerly colonized people, through the subtle process of cultural colonization .The present research examines the evils of postcolonial in *In a Free State* and comes to the conclusion of the demand of psychic decolonialisation of former colonized locations.

Naipaul's *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men* has received several critical appraisals' since the time of the publication. Different critics have analyzed the novel from multiple perspectives which proves univocal nature of the novel.

Sam Jordison views *In a Free State* as:

Even in those early days a spot of minor controversy flared up because of the book's being a story suite rather than one whole novel. Two short stories, "One Out of Many" and "Tell Me Who to Kill", and the novella *In A Free State* are book-ended by two fragments of travel journal The Tramp At Piraeus and The Circus At Luxor. All concern different people and are in fact, set in very different places and even climates. All five are united, however, as studies of characters who are not in their native countries, of alienation, of racial tension and of sudden unpredictable shifts in power. (4)

Thus, it is proved that the author, an Indian who writes in English, is most successful when dealing with his countrymen, either among themselves or in their hit-and-miss relationships with the English or Americans. The travel journal excerpts seem an irrelevant and slightly arbitrary "frame" for stories lost in the never-never land between allegory and reality, which don't quite explode with the momentous themes they always seem on the verge of revealing.

Karl Miller views the title of the novel is interesting and masterful. Each of the stories is notionally about what people choose to do with freedom, Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* great theme. For him:

The phrase “free state” has meanings in politics, African history, physics and social science. One tribe uses its freedom from colonialism to massacre a different tribe. Santosh uses his freedom to fashion a better life while dimly comprehending his new country. Bobby and Linda choose expat lives where the locals view them as privileged outsiders and their colleagues back home view them as mediocrities who couldn’t succeed in London. (23)

But the stroke was probably Naipaul’s idea of collecting five different stories about travelers and convincing people that they formed a novel. Next thing you know, some band might cobble together a series of singles and claim that it’s a rock opera about a deaf, dumb and blind kid who sure plays a mean pinball.

Derek Wright views that there is the notion of freedom as a scientific metaphor. The reference here is apparently to the random motion around the atomic nucleus of electrons whose speed and position can be measured, but never at the same time, and which are said to be “in a free state” since their movement is impossible to plot exactly. The accidental, unpredictable travel of particles is comparable to that of the book’s characters. He claims:

Santosh, Dayo’s brother, and the tramp in the Prologue seem to move without any clear direction in a space without any gravitational pull or magnetism which would hold them together around a common center.

During the long car journey across Central Africa in the title novella, the ill-matched travelers Bobby and Linda—he a liberal and homosexual, she a racist and . . . seem to have the unconnectedness of free-floating

particles, as indeed do the tribes flung randomly together, without any basis for unity, in the recently formed postcolonial “free state” through which they drive. (21)

These are superficially linked by an abundance of arbitrary plot connections, parallel incidents, and echoing motifs: the characters’ American involvements; the motif of the journey which removes people from their normal surroundings; shifting alliances of the strong against the weak; the scapegoat-victim seeking refuge from freedom in a locked space; personality breakdowns and outbursts of groundless anarchic violence. The narrative’s movement has a roaming, associative kind of logic that invites any number of possibly spurious correspondences between its episodes and, like the erratic progress of the subatomic particles, is finally unplottable.

It's easy to see why contemporary reviewers described this novella as a Conradian tour de force Obsessed with savagery, cruelty, the human facility for violent sadism and unleashing horror, this story of a long drive to a place where there's "nothing to do" undertaken by two British acquaintances in a former African colony, is a worthy heir to *The Mimic Men*. In this respect Jackie French claims:

There's also plenty that is Naipaul's own, however. He inhabits the minds of his protagonists . . . the way they think Africans stink", their own self-hatred, their lack of purpose, the depths to which they will sink in order to survive. There are some superb set pieces (particularly an uncomfortable night in a hotel run by a colonel who bullies and rages at his native staff, but knows they will soon kill him). As the drive becomes a race against

time and impending civil war, the tension is ratcheted up with accomplished skill. (67)

Interestingly, although the writer has recently suggested he has no literary influences, at the time of writing he was happy to acknowledge a debt to Ibsen. There's definitely something of the Scandinavian playwright in the intensity of the dialogue that the two travelling companions engage in, not to mention the air of doom that hangs over the whole.

For Lisa Hill, it's hard to imagine what effect this book might have had when it won the Booker Prize in 1971. The Booker was less well-known then, and it may not have had much impact on the reading public. If a mass audience did know about it, what did they make of it, then, at the end of the Swinging Sixties, after decades of post-colonial independence movements and those endless famines in Africa. She puts:

It's also the strange structure of the book. It's in five discrete parts, though it's not a collection of short stories. There's the main story, *'In A Free State'*, preceded by *'Tell Me Who To Kill'*, in which an African goes to London to support his brother's education. He makes money but loses it in a failed business for which he has neither skills nor understanding of the rules governing health and safety, and resigns himself to a life so dislocated from friends . . . feel the rage he ought to feel. . . Brother has exploited brother, he has been ripped off by the man who sold him a business he couldn't run and vandalism and violence is everywhere. (1)

The situation into which he so naively ventured is too overwhelming, and he is powerless even to identify the acts perpetrated by both institutions and individuals that have ruined his life, much less exact revenge.

Thus, it is evident that different critics have analyzed the novel from multiple perspectives but the issue of the requirement of psychic decolonization has been yet untouched, which proves the innovation of the research. The big brother arrogance from the part of the colonizers always haunts the psyche of the colonized and formerly colonized individuals and the society. The superiority complex psychology of the Westerners is still ruling the relationship between and colonizers and colonized which is evident from the examination of the novel. Thus, the present research stresses on the necessity of the psychic decolonization of the formerly colonized ones. The frame narrative of *In a Free State* presents three stories with the last story bearing the title of the fiction accounts the tale of different individuals suffering from the evils psychic colonialism owing to the hitherto physical and psychological domination from the part of the colonizers. Thus the research stresses on the fact how there is the necessity of psychic decolonization in order to establish the freedom and decolonization in the ex-colonies.

The present research uses the tools of psychological decolonialisation to make the thesis prove the hypothesis. Frenz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask*, Bhabha's *The Location of the Culture* and Said's *Orientalism* are used to make the analysis of the novel in order to prove the point. Fanon transparently show how pervasively dangerous alienation can suffer the colonized populace. Historically, the compartmentalization of the colonial world has been systemically divided into a dichotomous milieu, befittingly placing one group superior over another. As a socially constructed phenomenon within

the colonial world, alienation creates an undying paradigmatic apartheid-based realism. Fanon embarked on a mission to study the situation of the Third World peoples whom were trapped in this world of colonialism, while simultaneously, attempting to politicize those whom were oppressed. According to Judith Butler's book *Violence, Nonviolence: Sartre on Fanon*, "Fanon's work gives the European man a chance to know himself, and so to engage in that pursuit of self-knowledge, based upon an examination of his shared practices, that is proper to the philosophical foundations of human life" (32).

In other words, Fanon wants the European colonizer, the European elite, to see his complicity in systemic violence inflicted upon the colonized. Thus Fanon also pits on the evils of psychological domination upon the ex-colonized. Fanon inflects his medical and psychological practice with the understanding that racism generates harmful psychological constructs that both blind the black man to his subjection to a universalized white norm and alienate his consciousness.

Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most highly renowned figures in contemporary post-colonial studies. Bhabha explores the theme of postcolonialism through the concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, hybridity and translation. Bhabha draws on a range of contexts, including art history, contemporary cinema and canonical texts in order to illustrate the practical application of postcolonialism. Robert Young argues that the theories advanced today about post-colonialism and ethnicity is disturbingly close to the colonial discourse of the nineteenth century. 'Englishness', Young argues, has been less fixed and stable than uncertain, fissured with difference and a desire for otherness. He has been influential in both leftist and anti-racist political movements, and all of his works were translated into



English in the decade following his death. His work stands as an important influence on current postcolonial theorists, notably Homi Bhabha and Edward Said.

The tentative chapter division and allocation of the timeline of the research are as follows. The first chapter is the introduction of the research. The first chapter is the introduction of the author and the theory with the critical appraisals' of the text. The second chapter is the discussion of the tool of postcolonial psychoanalytical theory and the application of the theory in the text *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men*. The last chapter concludes the research. All in all the research is the manifesto on how there is the necessity of psychological decolonialisation for the sake of complete freedom in the ex-colonies.

## II. Psychic Decolonialization in Naipaul's *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Man*

*In a Free State*, Africans are presented in a negative light. It depicts bitter reality of Africa. The characters display racism towards Africa, its *independence* after which Naipaul shows utter chaos and infighting. Naipaul dwells on the primitive culture, lack of civilization, chaos and smell of Africa. Africa is presented as an arena for the futile struggles of the decolonized, mimic men set against a backdrop of irrational, timeless grandeur. Naipaul's text reinforces colonialism.

Colonialism not only radically transformed the political, social, spiritual, economic, cultural and educational landscape of non-western people, but also profoundly altered native psychology, the very essence of being and patterns and ways of thinking that contribute towards a strong experiences and circumstances of one's birth. Ultimately, colonialism denies an individual's humanity. The colonizer and colonized psychology include patterns of domination and submission. It is important to more deeply explore the psychological effects of colonization on non-westerner's mind and then this further address the decolonization of an individual's mind in the context of Naipaul's *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men*.

In 1971 Naipaul attracted worldwide attention as well as heavy censure for his book *In a Free State*, which combined two autobiographical travel narratives based on experiences in Africa and the Caribbean with two short stories and a novella. The work treats the lives of immigrants as they try to assimilate to new environments, exploring the problems that arise because of their own limitations as well as larger societal trends of racial discrimination and cruelty. One short story, "One out of Many" tells of a domestic servant from Bombay who moves with his master to the United States but

whose hopes of freedom and opportunity in the new land are dashed as he finds himself even more alone and imprisoned than he had been in India. The second short story, “Tell Me Who to Kill,” is about a Trinidadian man who lives in London and whose goal in life is to see that his younger brother does not have to endure the indignities that he himself has suffered. This objective is thwarted when the younger brother squanders the money the elder brother has saved for his education, leaves school, and marries a white woman. The title novella in the volume, “In a Free State,” tells of a white couple touring Africa who discovers that behind the veneer of civilization is a culture ripped apart by despotic brutality and tribal savagery. Naipaul won the Booker Prize for this unusual treatise about cultural detachment and alienation, but many commentators denounced the work because of its portrayal of Third World cultures as essentially hopeless.

Naipaul’s short story, *One out of Many*, reflects the world falling apart as Santosh, the narrator and main character, “deals with alienation and fluctuating identities in the post- colonial world where tragic figures, marginalized and frustrated, grope for a sense of identity and meaning in life”. Santosh’s personal identity instantly depleted as he crossed the borders and entered into a new world where he was dissipated into the mainstrea, lost and unable to find his true identity.

Santosh uniqueness vanished in America since his own culture and heritage made him an exile in a “perpetually adrift ‘free state’” (Morris 74). His loss of personal identity is due to the illusion that freedom permeates momentum and thus thrusts individuals into the “unavoidable seepage of despair that spreads...to reach a floodtide” (Morris 75). When first introduced to Santosh, readers are drawn to his innocent content

for life. We are instantly attracted to his self-effacing nature, yet, our attraction is soon turned to shame. This paradoxical desire to be recognized by the colonizer or oppressor has been identified by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He says “as long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is the other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed” (217).

If the dynamics of recognition identified by Fanon hold true, it means that without unpacking how this recognition/misrecognition works on the subjectivity of the indigenous psychologists, the indigenous psychology movement will likely go astray—it will be trapped in the vicious cycle of the pathological searching for recognition rather than become the driving force of decolonization.

Naipaul masters the difficult art that makes his readers “laugh and then feel shame at their own laughter” (373). The use of this skill creates an ironic comedy that depicts a tale of a relatively poor man who sleeps on the sidewalks of Bombay, has cordial friends, a regular job he appreciates, and a position in a basic social system. In many eyes, what he had does not amount to much, but for Santosh, he was proud of his achievements, his ability to liberate himself from the “crippling destitution of his village”. When confronted by his employers call to Washington D.C., Santosh immediately urges him to take him to the capital of the world, Washington D.C. He was not willing to go back to “the limitations of his village as the freedom of America beckons” him onward.

Santosh’s life in Bombay was settled. He had served willingly and had come

to know hard times. Yet, he was unable to feel as if he could start over again. He began to feel hopeless in his impending doom of being left behind in Bombay that would result in the unfathomable of falling to unemployment or worse being forced to return to his old ways of life that were so limiting. However, his naive interpretation of freedom and its limitations offered may have seem more comforting if it was compared to the newly formed concept of freedom he discovered in America. The extreme anxiety he previously held was only a flicker of pain in comparison to the engulfed disparity he was about to undergo. Santosh was unaware of the casualties that freedom purveyed on the bearers of its existence. He unintentionally became a representative of the “self exiled people who had become lost souls” (373). He had abandoned his own country and soon found himself in a strange place without friends, with few loyalties, and with the feeling that he was trespassing. He was trapped in a state of exile and could no longer return home. His existence had become like that of souls in a classical underworld. Santosh was hardly on the plane that took him away from his satisfying life in Bombay into the thresholds of the catastrophic new world, when he began to realize that the freedom he had achieved in Bombay was now being threatened and was irrelevant to the new journey he was embarking upon. When he sat down on the plane he found no one like him but instead people who were dressed “as though they were going to a wedding” (272). He instantly became the outsider and gathered the notice of people around him due to his domestic clothes that were neither dirty nor clean and his appearance that reflected the colour of a corpse. Before his journey began, he was ready for it to end. Upon entering his new home he was cast as a foreigner, questioned for his American deemed peculiar

behavior, and forever enclosed by America's limitations and surroundings. His previous freedom no longer existed since his new voyage for America's freedom had made him a victim of tragedy. Through the use of pathos, Naipaul immaculately portrayed the tragedy of freedom as a limitation that deserves to be seen more as wider prisons in which the characters find themselves trapped. American's freedom was like a prison in which escape was impossible except by death. Yet, actual prisons can prove more protective than freedom in a world which does not understand freedom, a world like the one Santosh has been introduced to. The isolation experienced by Santosh's new freedom is no better than the freedom offered within a prison cell. Despite limitations and forced enclosure, Santosh is able to achieve his personal freedom, escape his employer's ownership, and create his own presence in the new world. He graduated from a cupboard to a real room, to a drab house", where he could no longer easily renounce his free state. Santosh was bond by his newly discovered identity and liberation. Freedom had made him a slave to its liberty.

As a psychological object based on evolutionary thought, gradually became socially undependable in discursive practice. Racial difference had been repeatedly used to provide scientific justification for injustices toward non-whites, which gradually evoked opposition and criticism not only from within the psychology community but also from the public. Unfortunately, Santosh desired to regain his lost identity in an alien country. While undergoing culture shock, he had successfully "escaped the constraints of his own culture" (319) only to discover that he did not belong anywhere. He was lost in an endless maze of discontent as his feelings and actions transpired in different directions. He was a cook, bearer, pavement sleeper, ganja smoker, who was

transplanted in his master's diplomatic baggage to Washington. He was immediately caught off guard and became disoriented in thought and feeling as he meddled in the transition of American life.

At first overjoyed by receiving the empty pantry as a room rather than a small cupboard under the stairs in Bombay, Santosh soon realized that his original way of life was not the norm for America. He was shocked when he was chased from a cafe because he was barefoot, "Can you read? We don't serve hippies or bare feet here" (105). Furthermore, he was dismayed when he learned the value of two week's pay, \$7.50, could only go as far as to the movies and back, bewildered that his smoke attracted weirdoes, and disturbed that a troupe of hippies attempted to chant "Sanskrit words in praise of Lord Krishna" (106) with an unusual accent and pronunciation.

Amongst the black riots and the burning city, Santosh acquired a position as a cook in an Indian restraint and finally found himself too alienated in a world of uncertainty and married to a hubushi woman in order to gain a passport and independence. However, through all his encounters and journey, he gained his freedom only by giving up his real freedom of self.

Naipaul suggests that in one way or another we are all foreign to our surroundings and fighting for our freedom. We are all lost to our culture, our heritage, and our identity. Santosh was utterly appalled and frightened that the hubushis were permitted to roam the streets so freely. Yet, he was shocked to see that happiness was on the faces of the hubushi. They were like people amazed they could do so much, that so much lay in their power.

Underneath the story of Santosh's freedom lies the story of the fight for liberation by the hubushi through acts of violence. Their acts of retaliation against a nation or an oppressor were only temporary successes since they were short lived and futile. Plus, how can you battle the enemy, when the enemy lies within the man? This question was an underlying suggestion implied by V.S. Naipaul.

Santosh proves that the enemy of freedom could be found inside our self and that one must die to their identity and become a casualty to freedom in order to gain their true independence and liberation. Santosh's freedom "had left him to want to dissociate himself from the brotherhood of man" just as the hubushi too were "guilty for stressing a racial rather than a human brotherhood". One must dissociate self from their entity and deny oneself completely in order to be content. However, in order to do this "you [must] accept slavery" and inadvertently condemn oneself to prison.

The new world presented a new field of anxieties and fears to the individual who was marked as an outsider, yet confined to be inside the boundaries of a free state. To be "one out of many" in Bombay, is much different from being "one out of many" in America where the phrase "no longer connotes individuality but consolidation, amalgamation, uniformity, mediocrity at best and at worst- for a confused and frightened immigrant- displacement and anonymity" (Morris 76- 7).

In Naipaul's work, freedom is a fabrication and an illusion that causes individuals to act out and yearn for things only achievable by the dead. Santosh embraced the once unfathomable act of mingling with the hubushi, an act of will that asserted his freedom and independence. The effects of Santosh's sexual escapade



and the horrid oversize green suit, bought from his earning from his weed, led him to discover that “he is now his own man and not a reflection of his employer’s ‘presence’” (Morris 79). It was an assertion of his freedom, but this freedom permitted his exile from the self and his surroundings. Santosh attempted to break away from the shackles of freedom, yet he found himself amongst the casualties of a free state. He stood “looking into a mirror... and realized that he could no longer return to the purity and innocence of his Bombay days” (Morris 79). It was then that he decided he had to escape. But, as previously stated, in order to escape the bondage of freedom is necessary to become a casualty to the cause only those of the tomb can achieve total liberation. According to Naipaul “man should neither reject completely nor embrace the notion of freedom”. The post- colonial world is abhorred for “its lies, its mediocrity, cruelty, violence, and maudlin self-indulgences” (Said 113). In *One Out of Many*, Naipaul lashes out “over the spilt milk of colonialism” (Said 113) as Santosh watched the city burn and blacks run amuck. To his surprise, one of them scribbled “Soul Brother” on his house for protection from the fires and violence. He then mused, “Brother to what or to whom?” he had lost his sense of self and felt as if he no longer belonged to a group as he had in Bombay. He then stated:

I was once a part of the flow, never thinking of myself as a presence.

Then I looked in the mirror and decided to be free. All that my freedom

has brought me is the knowledge that I have a face and have a body, that

I must feed this body and clothe this body for a certain number of years.

Then it will be over. (274-5)

Naipaul had created a fictional story ingrained with truth. Underneath his ironic

overtures, lied the notion that freedom is not freedom after all. To gain freedom is to gain the limitations of society- aresponsibility for “the man in the mirror” and an entirely new dimension of tragedies. It is freedom that creates causalities.

Edward W. Said's definition of "Orientalism" can provide another context for examining Naipaul's propagation of the negative images of Africa, which is connected to the story's thematic development between the collapse of European colonial power in Africa and the susceptibility of postcolonial Africa to self-destruction. According to Said, “Orientalism” sets the “Western style for dominating, restricting, and having authority over the Orient” (3) and derives from the West's assertion of cultural domination of “lower” societies: “a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient” (95). This particular way of viewing the world creates a distinction between the West and Orient, so that "the world is divided into two unequal parts, the larger and 'different' one called the Orient, the other, also known as our world with our values, called the Occident or the West” (Said, “Islam through Western Eyes” 2). Similar to the West and Orient dichotomy, under the principles of Orientalism, the “developed” West tries to legitimize its “superior” position by distinguishing itself from “backward” Africa. Naipaul's accounts of Africa in “In a Free State,” I contend, utilize the principles of Orientalism by constructing a one-sided portrayal of African societies in which there is no possibility of progression without the West's direct control and influence. Ultimately, it can be argued that this story reinforces the West-Africa binary and underscores the failures of African postcolonial societies.

“In a Free State” takes place in a strife-torn and newly independent East African state, during a period which resembles the Uganda State of Emergency of 1966. (6)

While the exact location is unnamed, Naipaul's descriptions of the "topography and politics suggest an amalgam of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Buganda" (Mc Sweeney 184). As the story starts, the country's president is backed by the representatives of white governments and is using his army to destroy the king's people. The king's and president's tribes have also had numerous skirmishes as they battle for the country's control. This conflict is most likely based on the hostility between President Milton Obote and Sir Edward Mutesa II, the Kabaka (King) of Buganda; in which Obote ended Mutesa's rule of the Buganda Kingdom, declared himself President in March 1966, and stayed as the ruler of Uganda until General Idi Amin overthrew him in 1971.

While he situates "In a Free State" in this backdrop of events, Naipaul does not maintain the text's fidelity to historical facts about Africa because he combines the background events of "the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar, (8) and the first stages of 'Africanization' in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania in the late 1960s" (9) with the Mau Mau uprising of the 1950s in Kenya, (10) which resulted in that country's national independence in 1963. This configuring strategy not only creates a more violent portrayal of Africa, but also poses the harm of misleading readers and castigating Africa for its own suffering.

As Edward W. Said asserts in "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals," this technique of writing history involves "the invidious disfiguring, dismembering and disremembering of significant historical experiences that do not have powerful enough lobbies in the present and therefore merit dismissal or belittlement" (34). Such multiple manipulations of Africa's colonial and postcolonial history make visible the ways in which Naipaul improperly represents the complexities of Africa in "In a Free State."

They amount to a certain shortsightedness, a coloring of Naipaul in which Naipaul cannot discriminate between the contempt he has adopted and the accurate arrangement of material.

As the political turmoil between the king and president unfolds in the story, the main characters Bobby and Linda undergo a four-hundred-mile drive from the capital to the Southern Collector ate. During their two-day journey, Naipaul reveals the different reasons why Bobby and Linda came to Africa. Bobby, a gay white Englishman who works as an administrative officer in the central government, traveled to Africa to engage in homosexual relationships. While he suffered embarrassment in England because of his homosexuality, Bobby feels a sense of freedom to engage in sexual encounters with young black men in Africa. He also came to Africa because of his romanticized feelings for the continent. After having a nervous breakdown at Oxford, Bobby believes he has found a kind of salvation by living in Africa: “Africa saved my life” (116), “My life is here” (126), and “I feel we can always do what we really want to do in Africa” (119). When viewed in context, however, Bobby is not just an English person who is looking for personal fulfillment in Africa. Inevitably, he perpetuates the colonial myth of Africa as an exotic land for Europeans and builds upon interpretations of African discourse, which appropriate Africa's exploitation (11).

Married to an official in the central government, Linda is a white Englishwoman with a “reputation as a man-eater” (111). She came to Africa with her husband because he was “putting out rubbish” at the BBC and wanted to have a more prestigious position (125). While Bobby shows a certain sentimentality towards Africa, Linda detests the region and is more akin to the colonial figure who only locates the “savagery” in Africa:

I hated this place from the first day I came here. . . I knew that nothing good was going to happen to me here. And the first day they put us up in a filthy room in the barracks they call a guest-house . . . It's their country. But it's your life. In the end you don't know what you feel about anything. All you know is that you want to be safe in the compound. (217-18)

As the text progresses, Linda presents more reasons for her disenchantment with Africa. She thinks “everybody just lies and lies and lies” in Africa and she abhors the violent conditions, especially when she hears the screams of beaten prisoners at the Southern Collector ate at night (218). Because she has a fixed conviction that Africans are morally and socially low, Linda encourages Bobby to avoid or dominate them: “You should either stay away, or you should go among them with a whip in your hand.” (218). In a letter written to Paul Theroux, Naipaul reveals his similar sentiments about Africans: “You either stayed away from the continent, or you go there and discipline the savages” (322). It would appear that Naipaul has deliberately created a character which corresponds to his personal neuroses regarding Africa and, thereby, suggests the pattern of Naipaul. He seems consumed by this anxiety, so that, in effect, his character Linda is a direct result of his deeply embedded negative perspective on African societies.

As he constructs Bobby and Linda's departure from the capital, Naipaul reminds the reader of Africa's opposing images: Africa represents everything and nothing. In one particular passage when Bobby and Linda gaze at the African sky, they are amazed at the vastness of the land. It appears as if the topography has no bounds, but it can also correspond to the emptiness of a black hole: “This was the openness the sky had been promising . . . .The eye lost itself in the colorless distances of the wide valley, dissolving

in every direction in cloud and haze” (116). Christopher L. Miller foregrounds Naipaul's dichotomous images of Africa as a thread of African discourse, which posits Africa as “favorable and unfavorable” (249). He asserts that since Africa's “void” can be filled with images of a person's fantasy, the continent can be represented as “everything” or “nothing” (248). Naipaul is likely aware of the ambiguity of his representational choices of Africa: the region can be without limits and be an empty space. And, his authorial purpose probably lies in the ultimate rewriting of Africa's landscape--and by extension the construction of Africa in terms of an absence and a void that is prescribed by Naipaul.

The world of an ancient Africa also looms throughout the story, which Naipaul describes as “an unfinished landscape, a scratching in the continent” (144). According to Linda and Bobby, this world seemingly confirms their perceptions of Africa's “timelessness” and its “primal” citizens that are shrouded in literal and figurative “darkness.” One telling incident is when Linda sees some natives walking with leaves covering their heads so that their presence is masked by the trees. She comments to Bobby, “That's the sort of thing that makes me feel far from home. I feel that sort of forest life has been going on forever” (161). Africa here is inextricably linked with a primordial landscape that is excluded from history; the implication is that it will stay stagnant in a “prehistoric” state and the people will be consumed by the “immemorial bush.” This representation of Africa is also explicitly connected to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, as evidenced in Bobby's reply to Linda: “You've been reading too much Conrad. I hate that book, don't you?” (161). Naipaul was greatly familiarized with Conrad's observations of African societies in *Heart of Darkness* and at times adopted his

literary manner: “the African backgrounds-- ‘the demoralized land’ of plunder and licensed cruelty--I took for granted”. In this instance, Naipaul appears to rely too much on Conrad's tradition of positing African societies with a set perspective, which in effect influences his experiences in Africa. As Margaret Cezair Thompson elucidates, Naipaul's “reliance on Conrad's words, and his resorting to an abstraction like 'primitivism,' a word too easily associated with Africa--suggests that he had a set and perhaps limited idea of what he wanted to find in Africa” (191-92).

Naipaul also relates “In a Free State” to *Heart of Darkness* when Bobby experiences an incident that mirrors Marlow's moral descent in Africa. During this event, Bobby sees a wild pack of dogs, the same dogs trained by the white colonials to kill Africans roaming in the town at night, and he becomes full of rage: “I'll kill them. I'm wearing these steel-tipped shoes. I'll kill the first one that attacks me. I'll kick its skull in. I'll kill it” (189). Even though he escapes from the animals, Bobby begins to lose his civility: “the anger stayed with him and was like courage” (189). Thus, the incident represents his vulnerability to succumb to the power of Africa's “primitive” influence and the peril of this new “free state” since its independence. By these means, Naipaul avoids the issue of blaming Bobby for his degradation and shifts the culpability to Africa. He also follows Conrad's discursive strategy of reiterating the charge that Africa has the power to corrupt Westernized moral standards, which Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues sends a powerful message: “He was telling his fellow Europeans: You go to Africa to civilize, to enlighten a heathen people; scratch the thin veneer of civilization and you will find the savagery of Africa in you too” (19). On a similar note, Chinua Achebe asserts in “An Image of Africa” that the writing shows “Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of

all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril” (257). As he falls into the trap of configuring Africa's depravity and its contamination of European purity, Naipaul once again displaces his fear of Africa onto his characters in “In a Free State.” The multiple elements of Naipaulexity are probably the roots of this perspective.

As they travel to the Collector ate, Bobby and Linda see reminders of the previous colonizers' influence in this newly independent African state. For example, the recently educated leaders of the country imitate their white supporters by wearing “English-made Daks suits” (104). They also have “English style” hair (104), which is “scraped together in a high springy mound on one side, with a wide, low parting on the other side” (141). Even with these elements of English characteristics, the native Africans are still savages to Linda: “Somewhere up there they've taken off their nice new clothes and they're dancing naked and holding hands and eating dung. The president probably sent them a nice piece of dung” (165). As Linda sees it, native Africans may outwardly appear “civilized,” but they will essentially regress to their “bush” habits. Naipaul, himself, has echoed this message when he claimed that Africa would revert to a state of ruin: “This will go back to bush. The jungle will move in. Look, already it has started” (Theroux 104). And by doing so, he situates Africa in a double-bind scenario: Africa fails for imitating European modernity or it fails for utilizing its native cultural past.

While he reserves most of his condemnation for Africans in “In a Free State,” Naipaul does criticize white Europeans for failing to be role models for Africans. He particularly notes the poor dining habits of Germans and Belgians at hotels. (13) Moreover, Naipaul parallels the Europeans' low propriety with their lack of hygiene in



the descriptions of Linda's use of a vaginal deodorant (176), and Bobby's lewd sexual habits when he tries to pick up African men (110). The white Europeans also fail because they have not backed the African king who supposedly buttresses economic and social development in the country. Instead, they support the corrupt African president who controls the army and wants to replace the state's king with a military dictatorship. According to Larry David Nachman, the Europeans' actions in Naipaul's texts “encourage the non-Westerner to resist taking the steps required to make real progress.... The European in Naipaul's works always teaches the wrong lesson; it is a lesson of rejection made possible only by success” (75). As Nachman points out, the European characters are in many ways to blame for the demise of African societies and for contributing to their economic, social, political, and cultural problems. Naipaul's story does suggest albeit not as strongly as Nachman argues when he states that Naipaul “reserves his most savage treatment for Europeans” (75) that European stupidity contributes to what Naipaul perceives as Africa's deficiencies. Yet, Naipaul refrains from concerning himself with the crippling damage the Europeans have caused in Africa with material exploitation and cultural displacement. In effect, the story leaves out certain facets of postcolonial African discourse, which indeed speak to the issues surrounding the gross atrocities caused by the European colonizers' carving up of the region like a magnificent cake.

As they end their journey, Bobby and Linda encounter a group of the president's violent soldiers. Still holding on to his romantic ideals of Africa, Bobby attempts to be friendly with them. One menacing stout soldier, who wants Bobby's watch, beats him:

Bobby's arms were twisted harder and he was thrown forward, and when he was on the concrete floor, feeling the boots thump him on the back,

the neck, the jaw, he saw with surprise, that the legs of two soldiers were quite still. It was the fat soldier, grunting as he squatted, tight in his khaki, who was beside him, seizing him by the hair, banging his head on the floor, rubbing his face hard on the floor, now this side, now the other, Bobby knew he was losing skin. (231-32)

Disgraced and humiliated, Bobby now acknowledges that Africa is violent and dangerous. Yet, he still has no desire to leave and expresses no animosity towards Africans. When he returns safely to the compound, Bobby quickly replaces his thoughts of the brutal acts in Africa with the disappointment that he will have to fire his African servant, Luke, because he has been drinking. The story ends with Bobby's remark that he will "have to sack Luke" and his restored position as a colonial master (238). Thus, Naipaul implies that Bobby has accepted his position in this postcolonial state as a victimizer and victim and that nothing in postcolonial Africa will change.

The ending of "In a Free State" can be read as signifying the negation of postcolonial Africa's process, which in turn reinforces certain stereotypes of African societies. Nonetheless, many defenders of Naipaul do not acknowledge that the story contains such a narrow message, but rather they claim that Naipaul demonstrates the "reality" of Africa (14). In particular, Farrukh Dhondy in "The Gutter Inspector's Report?" lauds Naipaul for his ability to foresee violence and chaos in postcolonial Africa: "His view of African societies, whose potential for inter-tribal genocide he foresaw 20 or 30 years before the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda-Burundi killed each other in their thousands and before their child soldiers began to eat the entrails of their enemies, are labeled 'racist' by the nationalist race lobby" (55).

While readers may generously accept the veracity of Naipaul's comments, they are still ultimately presented with his disregard of progress in postcolonial Africa in "In a Free State." This perspective suggests that Naipaul, the man and writer, consciously produces a one-sided representation of Africa filtered in significant degree through his own reading of Africa through the lens of Naipaulexity.

As the narrator of Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh shows himself to be one of the most vividly drawn anti-heroes in Caribbean literature. He is a hapless dreamer, a narcissistic yet self-loathing Caribbean man, a racist, and a womanizer who displays cruelty, disdain and disinterest more than passion. Politically, he is also a failure, having helped found and run a quasi-socialist movement that, in the end, fails to bring about meaningful reform for its disenfranchised base. Rather, his political party helps foment deadly race riots in his native Isabella. In the book's fictional world, our source for all this information is of course Singh himself, who in his middle age, is writing a memoir. The memoir itself is brutally frank, painting an unflattering picture of both Singh and his native island, Isabella. Naipaul portrays Isabella—an obvious stand-in for recently de-colonized West Indian nations such as the author's native Trinidad—as a social quagmire of class and race divisions, petty elites and self-serving insipid politicians. In so doing, Naipaul is displaying his famous willingness—or even *eagerness*—to say things that are unsavory or unpopular. In the early 1960s, at the dawn of the postcolonial era, Naipaul is already airing the Caribbean's dirty laundry and forecasting a gloomy future for the region's newly liberated countries (even as its people are still nursing the hangovers from their newfound independence). For this reason, many critics have focused on the undeniable pessimism that informs *The Mimic Men*. For

example, in *Writers and Their Work: V.S. Naipaul*, Michael Thorpe interprets Singh's story as an “inverted tragedy” (26)—the tale of a small life rendered even smaller by its bearer's large faults. Meanwhile, in an article entitled, “*The Mimic Men* as a Study of Corruption,” Peter Nazareth comes to a wider-ranging conclusion about Naipaul's novel: “A reading of *The Mimic Men* gives rise to the question whether Naipaul has such a narrow vision of life that he can only see the worst in humanity or whether the West Indian society he writes about is so degraded that nothing can be expected of it (143). As justified as these critics' viewpoints are regarding *The Mimic Men*, there persists a story of personal redemption buried deep and cryptically in this novel's pages. Singh's redemption is not of the grand world-saving variety. Rather the change occurs in the narrator's personal sphere. While this change does not lead him to any sort of solidarity with his fellow Isabellans, it does allow Singh to become a more compassionate human being. And importantly, Singh achieves new levels of compassion when, thanks to the process of writing his memoirs, he arrives at new levels of self-awareness. Naturally, before arriving at and dissecting the mechanics of how Singh changes, it would be instructive to first understand his problems.

An obvious starting point would be this book's title: *The Mimic Men*. On one level, of course, a mimic man is one who literally copies the actions and mannerisms of others, as Singh does. About his Jewish landlord, Mr. Shylock, Singh writes, “He had the habit of stroking the lobe of his ear and inclining his head to listen. I thought the gesture was attractive; I copied it” (1). But for Naipaul, the idea of “mimicry” takes on greater psychological and spiritual meaning. As Rob Nixon puts it in *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin*, Naipaul sees “Third World societies as witlessly

derivative and given to grandiloquent, self-delusory, and ultimately self-destructive fantasies” (132). Tellingly, Singh more than fits the description above. He goes out of his way to copy the style of dress, the manner and even the strivings and class obsession of his former British colonizers. “In London... I chose the character that was easiest and most attractive. I was the dandy, the extravagant colonial, indifferent to scholarship. In fact my income was small... But I let it be known that on my island my family were bottlers of Coca-Cola” (25). And of the busiest phase of his life—when he is building Cripple villa and embarking on his ruinous political career—Singh reflects, “When I was most active and might have given the observer the impression of a man fulfilling his destiny, in that period intensity of emotion was the thing I never achieved” (38). What Naipaul makes abundantly clear here is that Singh has no true sense of self. His actions arise not from passion or conviction, but from a desire to approximate what the British have done—amass power and wealth, rule and act the part of the indifferent, insouciant elite.

Of course, Singh's mimicry is itself a symptom of deeper issues. His choosing to adopt the character of the dandy points to a self-loathing tinged with racism. In short, he is a Europhile who looks down upon the very Third World country from which he comes. He views Isabella as a hopeless quagmire of un-resolvable race and class conflict. Take for example his description of the villages he and his father pass during a drive: “We drove along narrow rough roads into the valleys of our eastern hills.... [passing] a small community, exceedingly poor, separate even in slave days and inbred to degeneracy, yet still distinguished by an almost superstitious fear and hatred of full-blooded Africans... They permitted no Negroes to settle among them; sometimes they even stoned Negro

visitors” (146). Interestingly, Singh does not look for the root causes of his island's social ills; nor does he exhibit any sympathetic urges toward the disenfranchised and impoverished. And even more remarkably, Singh seems to suffer from a combination of amnesia and nostalgia. He rushes to excuse the brutalities the British committed in the name of empire: slavery, devastating economic exploitation and more. He sees these atrocities as having been necessary for “order”, because with the dissolution of the empire, there came unseemly “disorder” (38). He even paints those who demand acknowledgement of and redress for these atrocities in unflattering terms. Naipaul puts forth in *The Mimic Men* and other works a “...cynical view of politics, indeed, and a complete contrast to the faith many African writers had in politics at the beginning of the de-colonization phase. Writers and leaders at this point professed the same ideals, and the writer tended to assume that this was the beginning of a new humanist phase” (137).

Singh's list of dysfunctions does not, of course, end at being a stranger to himself, or in his too-easy surrender to the politics of pessimism. On a personal level, Singh is also deeply flawed, and his relationships with women illuminate these flaws. Even his preference of mate is tinged by racism and self-loathing. From his marriage to Sandra to his preferences for European prostitutes, it is clear that Singh has a fetish for not just any white women, but women of fair-skinned Northern European stock. For this reason, he is unable to take Lienì, a Maltese woman who's obviously infatuated with him, seriously as a potential lover; and he professes little interest in his female “compatriots,” “scholarship girls” from the Caribbean studying in London (26). Singh is also emotionally stunted, so much, so that in his early sexual life, he proves a callous, insensitive womanizer, unable to deal with women as a whole, but having to compartmentalize them to body parts. He

also views emotional and physical intimacy as “violation”, as somehow dirty.

Emotionally stunted, a sexual deviant, a self-loathing racist and utterly self-absorbed are the words which describe Ralph Singh suitably. It would be tempting to read the novel as the story of how Singh washes his hands of his past and walks toward his existentially liberated future. But a close reading of Singh's transformation will bring to light a deeper level to this narrative. It will show that Singh does, by novel's end, become a more compassionate person. This sea change is most apparent when Singh hires the overweight prostitute during a layover on his way back to Isabella. The scene is touching, even beautiful and in it Singh displays shocking for him amounts of empathy and kindness.

She was ghastly, tragic, a figure from hell with a smiling girl's face . . . Tormented by flesh, she offered knowledge of flesh. *Fat, fat*, she kept on saying, smiling, tragic; and courtesy and compassion answered for me, *No, no*. I knew I would never touch; and I feared being touched. Yet I never moved. Flesh, flesh, I thought: how could I disdain? How could I even judge (282)? And after, of the encounter, he says:

But, monstrous, she was in despair... I comforted her; *at that moment I was genuine. Fat, fat*, she said, lifting her breasts, lifting her belly; and I said, *No, no...* We talked imperfectly in her language... I was too moved to speak. I watched her re-erect her body for the café, without disdain or judgment; it was all I could offer her. I walked her back to the revolving door. (283)

While his old hang-ups regarding the body and intimacy clearly remain, he shows

signs of finally shedding some of his calloused hide. He attempts to comfort the overweight prostitute.

How this transformation occurs is, of course, an important question to answer. But first, it must be noted that Singh's movement toward compassion is not a foray into uncharted territory. Rather, it is a return to the somewhat kind, even oversensitive child once he was. Naipaul clearly intends the younger Singh to be interpreted as a sentimental or emotionally delicate boy. Take for example his drive with Cecil's Coke bottling-magnate father and the run-in with the loaders on the back of the truck. Initially, Singh writes that he "returned" the scrutiny of the Indian loaders with "the scrutiny of compassion *still*"(120). But the ensuing action does not teach Singh that the island's elite should feel sympathy toward the working class. Instead, Cecil's father explodes at the "indignity" of having to ride behind the lowly truck. And Singh writes that the lesson he took away from this was: "A man was only what he saw of himself in others, and an imitation came to me of the chieftainship of the island. This was my political awakening" (121). And what an embittering realization this must be for a child. On hardscrabble and class-stratified Isabella, of course, such incidents abound. During his visit to his classmate Browne's home, Singh also senses the shame Browne feels about his family's lower-class status: "Browne's father . . . called out 'Bertie!' and sat on the other, sucking at his pipe in old-time Negro fashion and staring at me while he rocked. Bertie! The home name! It was like opening a private letter. I felt Browne wouldn't care for this visit, for the revelation of his father in his flannel vest, which was grimy with rolls of dirt . . . Browne didn't look pleased to see me"(177-8).

Singh is keenly attuned to the divisive workings of class and social hierarchy on



his island. And this idea of social stratification—of there being “better” people and “lower” people—is imprinted in him. It at once becomes part of his worldview, and because it is such a distasteful reality, it pushes him toward an emotional withdrawal that leaves him incapable of intimacy and compassion. These changes in the boy Singh are most evident during the extended family's beach holiday and the drownings at sea. This is the pivotal moment when he not only turns away from sympathy but also begins a process of emotional withdrawal that will extend to all aspects of his life—romance, friendship, etceteras:

There in that infernal devouring element people were drowning. The fishermen were begged to go out and save them. The fishermen sat on the roots of coconut trees and mended their nets and stripped lengths of canes for their fish pots . . . I imagined myself drowning. And in this imagining *I became detached; feeling no anger against the fishermen . . . it was shame for the weakness of the flesh that kept me from telling the story to the women . . . So it was Cecil who brought the news . . . Cecil running far from us through the edge of the foaming water, taking high, splashing steps, an odd celebratory figure.* (13)

It's clear, then, that Singh was born with the emotional hardware for compassion. For Naipaul, it is Singh's upbringing in Isabella that calluses and corrupts him. Another striking aspect of Singh's childhood is his deep sense of geographic and historic displacement. Singh is of Indian descent living in the creolized Caribbean, which culturally, holds England and London as ideals. Therefore, he feels disconnected from the history that shapes his ethnicity i.e Indian history, and he is also disconnected from his

present, for he is living in a society that sees itself as less real, less ideal, than distant England. This is most evident in Singh's comments about his schooling on Isabella: “Anything that touched on everyday life excited laughter when it was mentioned in the classroom: the name of a shop, the name of a street, the name of street-corner foods. The fictitious apple Singh's memory tells him he gave to his teacher speaks volumes about the primacy faraway England holds. The next effect of all this is that Singh grows up “out of time” and with no roots. Singh the boy has, in a sense, no forbearers to tell him how to act, and his island-bound father figures, meanwhile, prove lackluster. His uncle, Cecil's father, is a blustery rich person whose sense of self is eggshell thin. And his father becomes a Hindu fanatic and hapless revolutionary. It is the sense of rootlessness that pushes Singh—first as a child and then as an adult—to research and then daydream about belonging to the Indian Aryan horse-borne conquerors of centuries past. In adopting these stories from his ancestral land, he is attempting to find a sense of *History* for himself.

Unfortunately, Singh's knowledge of the Aryans is only book-deep. It is not a history he feels in his bones, for there has been that colonial rift and uprooting—the geographic displacement of his family by their British masters. Hence, Singh's attempt to graft his very being to an Indian Aryan past becomes a vain and vainglorious enterprise. Critic Michael Thorpe writes of Singh's recurrent Aryan daydreams, “This image is linked with his growing social sense in childhood and youth of himself in the unimportant island of Isabella as 'the picturesque Asiatic': it is both a romantic form of the exceptional individual's desire to soar above 'ordinariness' and also akin to the East Indian's harking back to the unknown, idealized India” (28). Peter Hughes, author of *Contemporary Writers: V.S. Naipaul*, puts a finer point on it. He writes that Singh's father's rise and fall

as cult-leader father does nothing less than “parody Singh's fantasies about his Aryan origins among the horsemen of the high Asian plains” (71). For Singh, there can be no escape or redemption in a harkening back to India. To do so would be to again render Isabella—his native land—secondary to yet another imaginary locale, just as his British-centric education has done. A latching on to the Indian Aryan past would only encourage Singh's withdrawal into himself and make it more difficult for him to embrace the present.

For much of his life, then, it would be fair to say that Singh—of the disastrous political career, of the foot and breast fetishes, and of the grandiose delusions—is (to put it in today's vernacular) a “mess” and not exactly relationship material. He could, in fact, probably exhaust an army of psychoanalysts with the breadth and scope of his self-absorption. All that said, it's time now to insist that in the world according to Naipaul, there is hope even for a fellow as mixed-up and damaged as Singh. As stated earlier, by novel's end, this crass, self-obsessed narrator shows that he is indeed capable of acting with sympathy towards others. Specifically, he acts with uncharacteristic kindness toward the overweight prostitute; he even chastises himself, telling himself not to be so judgmental and petty: “Flesh, flesh, I thought: how could I disdain? How could I even judge?” (282). What, then, accounts for Singh's small redemption, his small step toward wholeness and feeling?

The answer is at once simple and profound: Singh finds salvation in the act of writing. From the start, Singh expresses his wish to write a grand book of history, on the Indian Aryans. But of course, his “grand” project is put on the back burner while he writes his memoirs. Instead of writing a general history, he writes a personal one. Yet it is

through this “lesser” form that Singh finds the key to his small salvation.

One of the keys to Singh's emotional healing is the frankness with which he writes about his life. He does not spare himself or try to paint himself as better than he was. His self-portrait in words is, in fact, downright damning; he comes off as a dysfunctional buffoon. But it is precisely this frankness that enables Singh to get at the root causes of his self-loathing and numbness. For in committing elements of his life story to paper, Singh is able to identify those incidents and influences that made him what he is. He is, in other words, able to gain perspective. Peggy Nightingale, in her book *Journey Through Darkness: The Writing of V.S. Naipaul*, touches upon writing's role in Singh's redemption. She writes:

One of the key words of *The Mimic Men*, 'order,' is used by Singh in a variety of ways reinforcing his perception of a disordered universe. Order may be simply the regularity of life in the hotel, reassuring and anaesthetizing... But another irony operates in that Singh cannot discover the links between events in his life until he writes them out of chronological order; this novel differs from . . . which suggests Singh's internal disorder as he struggles to exorcize his vision of chaos... Singh's method for ordering the parts [of his life] is symbolized by the preparation to eat by the diner he calls Garbage. (102)

Nightingale here hints at writing's liberating power. As she notes, this power comes partly from writing's ability to give new order to Singh's life. But there is more: writing also proves “therapeutic” for Singh because it allows him to *examine* the forces that, in a sense, corrupted and jaded him.

The mechanics of this are clearly present in the text of *The Mimic Men*. As noted, the memoir's shape and structure flit forwards and backwards in time. And just as Garbage goes through the contents of his plate, separating that which he wants to eat at present from the chafe, Singh, too, is breaking down his life to their formative elements. Thus, in a very real sense the novel can be described as a deconstruction of Singh's life. Indeed, the driving logics behind the book's structure are reflection and contemplation. As Singh writes, he is able to get at the root causes of his alienation, intimacy issues and his failures to act with “intensity of emotion” even during the most active part of his life:

*As I write, my own view of my actions alters.* I have said that my marriage and the political career which succeeded it and seemed to flow from it, all that active part of my life, occurred in a sort of parenthesis. I used to feel they were aberrations, whimsical, arbitrary acts which in some way got out of control. But now, with a feeling of waste and regret for opportunities missed. *I doubt whether any action, above a certain level, is ever wholly arbitrary or whimsical or dishonest.* I question now whether the personality is manufactured by the vision of others. The personality hangs together. It is one and indivisible. (219)

Here, Singh is doing nothing less than owning up to his past. He is saying that his political career and marriage to Sandra—both resounding and abject failures—were not exceptions to the pattern of his life. Rather, they fit quite cozily into the pattern of his life. Of his divisive, ruinous political career, he also writes:

To the end I behaved as though [my political life] was to be judged as another aspect of my dandyism. Criminal error! I exaggerated my

frivolity, even to myself. For I find I have indeed been describing the youth and early manhood of a leader of some sort, a politician, or at least a disturber. *I have established his isolation, his complex hurt and particular frenzy.* And I believe I have also established... this lack of judgment and balance, the deep feeling of irrelevance and intrusion, his unsuitability for the role into which he was drawn, and his inevitable failure. *From playacting to disorder: it is the pattern.* (220)

Singh is connecting very significant dots here; he is establishing causal relationships between the elements of his life. Specifically, he sees the causal relationship between his mimic man life to the pain he caused Sandra on a personal, intimate level, and Isabella on a societal level. The very act of writing his memoirs allows Singh to act not as a celestial camera, but as a sort of camera nonetheless, for it enables him to view his life objectively, to gain perspective on it. And it is through this gaining of perspective that he moves toward, first, greater self-understanding, and second, compassion for others. This is what allows him to take his first baby-steps away from withdrawal and self-obsession.

Naturally, this is not to say that the act of writing a memoir leaves Singh irrefutably changed for the better. Traces of his squeamishness regarding intimacy remain. And he does make a heavy sacrifice for his growing sense of peace of mind. He severs, so it seems, all ties with Isabella. Singh writes near the novel's conclusion, "It was time to leave. But there was no need for me to return to Isabella" (278). It can also be argued that while Singh comes to greater self-realization, his personal triumph is accompanied by a selfish cloistering—in his London hotel. Most cheekily, too,

Naipaul throws his readers a curveball at the novel's conclusion. At the brief dinner party that makes up the final scene, Lady Stella, a white woman with whom Singh had one of his dysfunctional affairs, walks back onstage. Singh writes, "Our guest of honour arrived, with his wife. Lady Stella. I pulled my face behind the pillar and studied Garbage bringing his two-pronged knife down on the struggling cheese" (301). Comically and karmic ally, a woman from Singh's past returns, and we are left to wonder whether Singh and Garbage will lose their respective battles with "struggling cheese". No doubt, in sending Singh ducking behind a pillar, Naipaul is both winking and laughing at us and thereby staying true to his provocateur streak. But this bit of playfulness, of muddying up the end, cannot take away from Singh's journey. By novel's end, it is clear that he has taken the first baby-steps toward wholeness and peace. It is also important to note that Naipaul has even left open the possibility that Singh will one day come out of his cocoon and engage the world again. Singh writes near the novel's conclusion, "It does not worry me now, as it worried me when I began this book, that at age forty I should find myself at the end of my active life. I do not now think this is even true" (300).

The end of *The Mimic Men*, then, leaves Singh with no final answers, no final solutions—only greater levels of self-awareness and compassion. And Naipaul clearly does not want us to extrapolate one universal truth or philosophy or remedy from Singh's story. Hence, *The Mimic Men* does not take the shape of a grand, sweeping history—claiming to see a specific historical period with 20/20 hindsight. Rather, *The Mimic Men* is a memoir—a small, imperfect recording of a life, part creation, part imagination and part reflection. Yet the memoir is the very, and perhaps only, literary

form that could have allowed Singh to take his first steps toward wholeness. And despite the tragic, nearly elegiac tone of *The Mimic Men*, this movement toward healing is definitely a pivotal part of the gripping, brutally honest and at times comic story Singh tells.



### III: Psychological Decolonization for Freedom

In the domain of postcolonial literature, different ethnic groups, based on their different original cultural heritages, have their ethnic, cultural, and historical specificities. This study aims to explore the construction of subjectivity and/or otherness, complexity of colonial predicament, rupture of identity definition, sense of alienation of diaspora, among other things, reflected in V. S. Naipaul's *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men* through postcolonial cultural perspectives. V. S. Naipaul plays a paramount role in the postcolonial writings. He has an urge to articulate his fluid, multiple and unstable identities in terms of his unique postcolonial cultural perspectives. *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men* record exiled life and manifests the ruptures among subjectivity, geography, and language toward multicultural and fluid identity.

The present research examines the evils of postcolonial in *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men* and comes to the conclusion of the demand of psychic decolonialisation of former colonized locations. The big brother arrogance from the part of the colonizers always haunts the psyche of the colonized and formerly colonized individuals and the society. The superiority complex psychology of the Westerners is still ruling the relationship between and colonizers and colonized which is evident from the examination of the novel. Thus, the present research stresses on the necessity of the psychic decolonization of the formerly colonized ones. The narrative of *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men* present stories with the

last story of different individuals suffering from the evils psychic colonialism owing to the hitherto physical and psychological domination from the part of the colonizers.

Thus the research stresses on the fact how there is the necessity of psychic decolonization in order to establish the freedom and decolonization in the ex-colonies.

The devastating forces unleashed on these expatriate protagonists constitute a powerful argument to remain securely within the folds of one's own culture. Yet the lure of freedom and justice, along with the incessant siren song of the global media American films figure prominently in each of the stories make expatriation as irresistible to the discontented of the world as are the sandwiches thrown by tourists in the epilogue to the Egyptian desert children.

### Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill; Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, Helen. *The post colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Ashcroft, Bill. *The Key Concepts of Postcolonial Studies*. New Delhi: Diamond Publication, 2001.
- Bhabha K. Homi *The Location of Culture*. New York: Verso Books, 2002.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life, The Power Of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Violence, Non-Violence: Sartre on Fanon*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin White Masks*, New York: Grove press, 1967.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth (Les damnés de la terre)* Trans. London: Mac Gibbon & Ke, 1961.
- French, Jackie. *Somewhere Around the Corner*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. Macmillan, 1995.
- Hill, Lisa. *An Intellectual History of Political Corruption*. New York: MacMillan, 2013.
- Hughes, Peter. *Contemporary Writers: V. S. Naipaul*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Jordison, Sam. *Looking back at the Booker: VS Naipaul*. London: The Guardian News and Media, 2007.
- Macaulay, T.B. *Minute On Indian Education*. Culcutta: Superintendent, 1965.
- Miller, Karl. *In scorn and Pity*. New York: The New York review of Book, 1975.
- Morris, Robert K. *Paradoxes of Order: Some Perspectives on the Fiction of V. S. Naipaul*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 1975.
- Naipaul, V.S. *In A Free State*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1971.

- Naipaul, V.S. *The Mimic Men*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1967.
- Nightangale, Peggy. *Journey Through Darkness: The Writing of V. S. Naipaul*.  
St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 1987.
- Nixon, Rob. *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul Postcolonial Mandarin*. New York: Oxford  
University Press, 1992.
- Said, Edward. *Islam Through The Western Eyes*. New York: The Nation, 1980.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism. Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Penguin, 1998.
- Stilz, Gerherd. *Australia: Making Space Meaningful*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2006.
- Theroux, Paul. *The Enigma of Friendship*. New York: The New Yorker, 1998.
- Wright, Derek. *Autonomy and Autocracy in V. S. Naipaul's In A Free State*. **Darwin,  
Australia**: International Fiction Review, 1998.
- Young, R. J. C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford,  
England: Oxford University Press, 2003.