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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**SCEPTICISM AND CYNICISM IN V.S.  
NAIPAUL'S *A BEND IN THE RIVER***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English in Partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree**

Candidate:

**Ms. Fadila AMEUR**

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**2020**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that except where due acknowledgement is made; this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted previously.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Praise to Allah who gave me the will and ability to achieve this work. For him, I owe all the blessings I enjoy every day. I ask him to accept this work as an offering to help others.

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## DEDICATION

*“Gone from our sights, but never from our hearts”*

*To the bird of paradise, Adam..*

—

*To My Parents..*

## ABBREVIATIONS

*A Bend: A Bend in the River*

## ABSTRACT

In his works, V.S. Naipaul discusses the enduring debate of postcolonialism. He seeks to address questions of decolonization, Eurocentrism, and identity. Hence, the present study examines Naipaul's scepticism and cynicism about the newly independent African nations and their capability to forge an independent political and social identity. It endeavours to analyse V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* in the light of the postcolonial theory. The study employs Bhabha's postcolonial theories of Hybridity, Mimicry, Ambivalence and the concept of the Unhomely. The first chapter presents the socio-historical context and the theoretical framework. The second chapter examines the writer's scepticism and cynicism towards the newly independent African nation in the novel.

**Keywords:** postcolonial Africa, scepticism, cynicism, Bhabha, *A Bend in the River*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction ..... 1**

## CHAPTER ONE

### **SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

1. The Postcolonial Sphere: Literary Turn.....8  
2. Bhabha's Unhomeliness in a Neo-colonial World.....14  
3. V.S. Naipaul and Postcolonialism: An Image of the Third World.....20  
4. Darkness Narratives: *A Bend in the River*.....26  
5. Writing as Influence: Naipaul and Conrad .....29

## CHAPTER TWO

### **THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN NAIPAUL'S *A BEND IN THE RIVER***

1. Neo-colonial Politics and Social Realities.....35  
2. Representation of Postcolonial Identity.....48  
3. Traumatic Experiences of a Postcolonial Home.....58  
4. Naipaul's Symbolic Tinge.....64  
**Conclusion.....73**  
**Selected Bibliography.....75**

## INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism commonly refers to the continuous process of resistance and reconstruction deals with the effects of colonization on the former colonized communities during the independence period. Many authors, writing during this time, and even during the colonial time, saw themselves as both artists and political activists, and their writings reflected their concerns regarding the political and social conditions of their and other countries.

Sir Vidiadhar Syrajprasad Naipaul is one of the highly acclaimed writers in the English language and one of the most known novelists that have dealt with the postcolonial and Caribbean literature. His career and achievements can also be seen as a part of the worldwide political and cultural changes that resulted in such important writers as Chinua Achebe, Joseph Conrad, Wole Soyinka and others. He is a part of a generation that had to face the problems that resulted from the withdrawal of imperial order.

Naipaul has been influenced by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. He has formed these existential views through his own observation and experiences of the world. Naipaul, however, in terms of writing about Africa is much more influenced by the English-Irish writer Joseph Conrad. This latter is one of Naipaul's literary predecessors as Coetzee states "Joseph Conrad [...] is one of Naipaul's masters. For good or ill, Naipaul's Africa comes out of Heart of Darkness" (10). Naipaul knows Africa well because he travelled through Zaire, Ivory Coast and Uganda. Also, he lived and worked in the East Africa. Later on, he published several works about the African continent among, *A Bend in the River* (1979) which considers as a sequel to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

*A Bend in the River* is set in an unknown African country after gaining its independence. The author centres his plot on discussing the clash of two distinct cultures, Western culture versus native culture. He tends to demonstrate the ambivalence and contradiction in the postcolonial world throughout the narrator's perspective. The novel portrays four types of characters or groups. Salim, Indar, Shoba and Mahesh represent 'the diasporic Indians'. Father Huismans and Zabeth represent 'the native African civilization and history'. Ferdinand and his friends represent 'the New African Men'. Yvette and Professor Raymond represent the 'Big Men's White Men'. All these characters represent the African nation.

Many writers presented the concept of postcolonialism in their works from different perspectives. V.S. Naipaul writes and analyses many of the main events of decolonization in the Caribbean, India and Africa. He reported on the social, political and cultural problems of the other part of the world, especially the newly independent African nations. Nevertheless, V. S. Naipaul's presentation of the postcolonial situation in his works offers a little hope to the former colonised communities. *A Bend in the River* deals with one of those African states after getting independence, it captures this side of Naipaul's pessimism who casts doubt on postcolonial liberal certainties.

Therefore, this study investigates how V.S Naipaul depicts the reality of postcolonialism witnessed in the newly independent African nation in *A Bend in the River*. The research will also focus on the effect of Western culture on ex-colonized African nation, and examines its impact on the characters sense of unhomeliness.

It is worth noting that V. S. Naipaul is one of the selective writers to win the Booker prize and the Nobel Prize in literature. He has a sense of vocation; he needs to be understood as a writer before being seen in other contexts. As his writings have

become more familiar, he has revealed more about him and his past; therefore, many of his works can be seen as autobiographical reflection of his own life. Naipaul's display of a powerful and independent literature is an important Post-war cultural development. Hence, it is really important to explore such works of V.S. Naipaul. The notion of Africa in *A Bend in the River* is not dissimilar from that found in the disillusioned postcolonial novels of Achebe, Arinah, Ngugi WA Thiong'o and others. Unlike the African novelists, However, Naipaul does not have a similar commitment to Africa and he is sceptical of its future. Indeed, Naipaul's sceptical and cynical vision of the postcolonial African nation that has resulted from the collapse of imperial order is what makes *A Bend in the River* worthy to be analysed and discussed.

The study aims to provide an insight into the reality of the ability of the newly postcolonial African nation to forge an independent political and social identity in *A Bend in the River* underlining the writer's potential in presenting a sense of scepticism and cynicism. The work is going to examine the clash between Western and native cultures through the analysis of the characters and events that closely related to themes of identity and Bhabha's theories of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and unhomeliness.

V.S. Naipaul's writing on the postcolonial Africa have been a subject of interest for countless writers, especially his work *A Bend in the River*. This novel in particular is acknowledged for its profound vision of issues related to postcolonialism.

Among the researchers who attempted to discuss Naipaul's literary work is Erica. L. Johnson in her article "Provincializing Europe: The Postcolonial Urban Uncanny in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*". Johnson confirms that Naipaul's commitment to postcolonial feedback and related work or globalization come full circle in his

portray of the country state which epitomizes European political innovation as a flawed vehicle for flexibility and self-determination within the postcolonial world (223). Through this, the writer highlights Naipaul's postcolonial world as being coloured with this European touch.

Another one who tackled Naipaul's ideas is Ann. B. Dobie in her book, *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Critics*. Dobie clearly elucidates that colonizers not solely physically conquer territories. They also exercise cultural colonization by exchange the practices and beliefs of the native culture with their possess values, governance, laws, and beliefs (188). The culture colonization is what Naipaul wants to show. Colonised people may get rid of the physical domination of western people but they could never get away of spiritual one.

In his book *Fiction and the Independence of History: Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, and Ben Okri*, Zhu Ying states that Naipaul has certainly painted a convincing but disturbing picture of a postcolonial African country caught up in the violent conflict of its own past and tradition against western culture. Moreover, the novel expresses the need to wash the past and re-create oneself again because the past does not exist in real life but in one's mind cause of cultural clash and conflict (110). She also sees that the rejection of the past and the start of a new life in post-independent Africa is not easy, undergoing rapid social and political changes after the collapse of an imperialist order.

The former has a great support from the writer Veena Singh in her essay "Paradox of Freedom". Singh insists on the same point, by confirming that there is no doubt that Naipaul's voice rings with scepticism and contempt, he uses Africa to preach upon the sickness of a word which has lost touch with its past. In addition, she indicates that the independence and freedom in Naipaul's works are always associated with the killing, decay, and chaos, and such contradictions are focused through the novel's

narrator Salim. He is both a detached outsider and a part of the civilization there. He emphasizes the need for the individual and society to know their history in order to make sense of their present (125).

Imraan Coovadia in his work, “Authority and Misquotation in V.S Naipaul’s *A Bend in the Rive*” affirms that “A Bend in the river is psychological in its concerns and post imperial in its setting”(2). The narrator shares his homesickness with the author himself who never found his home after he left his family security. In the article “Black Desires, White Beauties, ”Mushira Habib states that Salim is the displaced postcolonial subject in the heart of Africa; always feeling alienated and conflicted. He is resentful and pessimistic about everything around him throughout the book. The novel awaits his progress and success that is not achieved and he seems to be trapped within a continuous halo of dissatisfaction and despair. He becomes the embodiment of the vacuum Naipaul (133).

In this review and according to the works discussed above, it is remarkable that all of them state a side in Naipaul’s novel approaching the political, social and cultural issues after independence. This dissertation will conduct a specific literary work *A Bend in the River* stressing Naipaul’s scepticism and cynicism concern the newly independent nation of Africa; its ability to forge an independent political and social identity, represented through the narrator’s view.

This dissertation attempts to answer the following main question: How does the novel show Naipaul’s scepticism and cynicism about the capability of newly independent postcolonial African nations to constitute an independent political and social identity in *A Bend in the River*? The study will also attempt to answer the following sub-questions: What is the nature of African social and political context of the neo-colonial world? How does V.S. Naipaul portray the characters’ postcolonial

identities? How does V.S. Naipaul depict the traumatic experience of belonging and home?

For the purpose of answering the earlier stated questions, the novel *A Bend in the River* will be thoroughly analysed. Therefore, the work is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter dedicates to socio-historical context, shedding light on the field of postcolonialism as a literary turn. It also discusses V.S. Naipaul as one of the postcolonial writers; his vision on the so called Third World, and discussing one of his major influencers Joseph Conrad. In addition, it takes an overview about the corpus of this study as a darkness narrative. On the other hand, the theoretical framework deals with the postcolonial theory and its major features particularly Homi Bhabha's concepts Hybridity, Mimicry, Ambivalence and the concept of the Unhomely.

Moreover, the second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novel from the postcolonial perspective in order to unveil the reality of the political and social identity in postcolonial Africa. It attempts to examine the impact of western culture and thought on the African characters' cultural identity and the sense of unhomeliness. It mainly relies on Homi Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry, Ambivalence and the concept of the Unhomely.

The choice of V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* as the corpus of this study supports the area of investigation and provides an insight into the real political and social situation witnessed in the postcolonial African nations. So, this dissertation inspects the author's sense of scepticism and cynicism towards the ability of the newly postcolonial African nation to build an independent political and social identity.

## CHAPTER ONE

### SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. Fanon, *The Wretched*, 1961, 36

The new politics, the curious reliance of men on institutions they were yet working to undermine. The simplicity of beliefs and the hideous simplicity of actions, the corruption of causes, half-made societies that seems doomed to remain half made; these were the things that began to preoccupy me. V. S. Naipaul, *CD*, 1974, 223

Generations of ex-colonized suffer from the consequences and effects of colonization; they are politically, culturally and psychologically maimed. Postcolonial discourse represents these excluded ex-colonized people who have been alienated and displaced in multicultural societies, who are in search for identity and home and who develop a postcolonial identity that based on cultural interactions.

V.S. Naipaul is one of those postcolonial writers presenting an ambiguous African identity. He provides historical documents on postcolonial confusion, and represents these scenes of ideological confusion on African communities and individuals as a result of neo-colonial intervention.

In a neo-colonial world, *A Bend in the River* is Naipaul's African work that offers his incredulous perspective of this timeless phenomenon of postcolonialism and this ambivalent view on the new African independent nations who cost doubt about their future.

This chapter will give a general background about the postcolonial field, its literary concerns and theoretical attempts, besides to some conceptual frameworks in postcolonial theory highlighting Bhabha's concepts as a way to analyse the novel. The chapter also attempt to present V.S. Naipaul as a postcolonial writer, his image

on the third world and giving an insight on the corpus of this study. In addition, the chapter discusses one of the most influencers for V.S. Naipaul, Joseph Conrad and this incessant dark view on the African continent.

## **1. The Postcolonial Sphere: Literary Turn**

When it comes to talk about the postcolonial field, one must begin with the idea of colonialism. Ronald J. Horvath in his work “A Definition of Colonialism” set a significant meaning for the term colonialism that is a “*Form of domination, the control by individuals or groups over the territory or behaviours of other individuals or groups*” (Horvath 45). He also distinguished between two of group domination; ‘Intergroup’ and ‘Intragroup’ domination. According to him, intergroup domination refers to the domination process in a culturally heterogeneous society whereas intragroup domination takes place in a culturally homogenous society(46). In plain words, Intergroup domination is understood in the colonizer’s domination of the territories while the Intragroup domination is the one based on ideological, social, and material structures of power established under it; these strategies give the colonizer authority to claim an imperial state on the colonized.

Depending on the history and as a basis for postcolonial criticism, colonialism in Africa, Asia, and America often started as unofficial benign forays represented in the several varieties of trading posts; as a quest for economic dominance, the so-called civilizing missions; as foreign religious activities and freedom and establishing settlements. Later, These benign conditions slowly manifested in the lived experiences of every colonised society, with official versions characterised by cultural violence, economic exploitation, and hegemonic relations.

The term Imperialism is frequently used in conjunction with ‘Colonialism’. It is the practice of governance through an indirect control or “‘remote control’, often

without actual settlement [...] It means that a metropolitan European or American power controls activities (financial, military, political, cultural) in Asian, African, or south American nations. It is driven by the ideology of expansion of state power (Nayar 4).

If colonialism was driven by the idea of ruling over another nation using political and military force, or the creation of another living space (as in the case of the United States of America and Australia). Imperialism is driven by the idea of expansion power and the economic needs of European nations.

Edward Said offers the distinction between the two terms colonialism and imperialism. He clarifies; “‘Imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism’, which is almost a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlement on distant territory” (Said 8). Said’s formula means that ‘imperialism’ can be analysed or defined as a concept or ideological force and ‘colonialism’ as the practice of this concept. Colonialism and imperialism, therefore, make a clear distinction about the state of colonization.

By the nineteenth century and up to the first half of the twentieth century, many colonized communities engaged in active political resistance and freedom struggles erupted throughout the colonies to this rule that resulted in a political independence for many states in Asia, Africa, the Middle-East and West-East, in terms “they were ‘postcolonial’, suggesting ‘after colonial’” (Nayar 7).

However, Postcolonialism for some historians, its history and development, is much earlier than the nineteenth to the twentieth century when many colonised societies began their quests for political and economic freedom. Thus, the term was a source of debate amongst critics. However, The obvious understanding of the term is

that it refers to the period following the decline of colonialism in which time many nations gained their independence, “As originally used by historians after the world war two in terms such as the postcolonial state” (Ashcroft et al.168), Simply to mean ‘Anti-colonial’ and to be synonymous to ‘post-independence as in reference to the postcolonial state.

As a literary turn, Postcolonialism as a term has been defined in a various ways and by various writers and researchers. Childs and Williams clarifies in their work *An Introduction to Post-colonial theory* that Postcolonialism isa form of writing which is difficult to pin down in chronological time(4). From the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss “The effects of colonization on cultures and societies” (168). Moreover, in *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin draw the attention to the nature of postcolonialism and the postcolony as ongoing process, using the term to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present daybecause there is“a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (Ashcroft et al. 2).Though no matter how we consider the chronological time, and whatever the debate around the term. The grounding of the term in the colonialist histories and postcolonial theorists remains fundamental.

In its most sense, postcolonial Literature refers to the literary works produced by writers from formerly colonised countries. It seeks to address,

Literature and cultures have been marginalized as an effect of colonial rule, and to find, if possible, modes of resistance, retrieval, and reversal of their ‘own’ pre-colonial pasts. That is this literature seeks to understand, negotiate, and critique a specific historical ‘event’ –colonial rule- while looking forward to a more just, socially egalitarian world order. It is a literature of resistance, anger, protest, and hope. It seeks to understand so as to plan for the future (Nayar10).

In terms of context, postcolonial writers dealt with a variety of subjects, issues and themes throughout time. The 1950s -1960s in most postcolonial literature marked by subjects about nationalism, decolonization and themes relating to Bi-Culturalism, local and tribal identities, the conflict between European modernization and native tradition, and discussing the nature of postcolonial identity. During the 1970s, there were persisting debates on the impact of colonialism on colonised cultures and about the nature of postcolonial period.

In the 1980s, there was much criticism towards the postcolonial condition, political and social identities. The postcolonial dream is in many cases lost and a mere fiction therefore several works explore the postcolonial nation's disillusionment with a degree of cynicism that had already sneaked into literary texts before this time. In the twentieth century, literature from the once colonized presented issues such as; minorities, ethnic identities, and globalization. As well as, it tackled themes like; Gender, discussing the problems of dual locations and dual roots, exploring Hybrid identities located between East and West, Diaspora and Displacement.

Once called 'commonwealth literature', this term began to be used during the 1950s. Broadly, it refers to the literary writings of the former British Empires or the colonies that had been a part of the British Commonwealth Such as, the literary writing from Africa, Asia, and South America alongside writings from white settler communities such as (Australia, America, and Ireland). Particularly, however, the term used to "describe the literature (written in English) of colonies, former colonies, and dependencies of Britain, excluding the literature of England" (Ashcroft et al. 44).

'New Literatures' is another concept used as an alternative to 'Commonwealth Literature', especially during the late 1970s and 1980s. The term highlights the nature of literary works from postcolonial societies. It also reveals the problem with the term

‘commonwealth’ which has been criticised as glossing historical and persisting power inequalities between coloniser and colonised. Later, it is used as a synonym for ‘postcolonial’; however, it has been used less gradually in the 1990s. Interestingly, the term continues to be used outside of Europe. Some critics and writers consider it as emancipator concept like Ben Okri, “literatures of the newly ascendant spirit” (Okri qtd. In Boehmer 4). He makes it clear from the implication of coming after in postcolonialism; he makes a preference for ‘New’ literature.

Postcolonialism has achieved notable goals that have combined to make it a critical and main trope as it is today. The development of postcolonialism as an academically framed critical category was mainly through two main facets. According to Victor Ukaegbu, the first being the political activism and writings by mostly people of colonial heritage such as; Aime Cesaire, Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Michel Foucault to name a few. The second avenue is through which postcolonialism becomes established is the activities of social anthropologists, sociologists, politicians, novelists, dramatists, poets and artists of both colonised and colonising/coloniser provenances (21).

Postcolonial theory, therefore, is a process of critical reading, political and social analysing, and economic interference, dealing with the history of colonialism, postcolonialism, and neo-colonial structures. According to Pramod. K. Nayar, it is a mix of rigorous epistemological and theoretical analysis of texts and a political praxis of resistance to neo-colonial conditions, in short, it is a critic. It explores the epistemological understandings of colonial history, strategies, practices (marginalization, dehumanization of natives), postcolonial conditions, the psychological effects of colonialism and its impact on the colonised culture and social identities.

Postcolonial theory is applied to several disciplines, literature, anthropology, history, psychology, sociology. It draws upon diverse theoretical frameworks for Writers, critics and Theorists who have been highly influential in the development of postcolonialism as a theory and academic domain. Their works used as weapons against colonial, as well as a basis for literary analysis and critical reading. This may be most clearly exemplified in the works of the figures so prominent in the field that Robert Young has famously called them “the Holy Trinity” of postcolonial theory.

One of the pioneer thinkers on colonialism and an important writer in the field is Frantz Fanon, whose works are influential in the fields of postcolonial studies, critical theory and Marxism. Fanon greatly influenced by contemporary philosophers and poets such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Aime Cesaire and Karl Marx. His work in Algeria made him actively involved in the Algerian liberation movement and enabled him to publish important works on colonialism which are considered to be fundamental works for postcolonial analysis and critical reading. These include the two of only three books Fanon published in his short life, *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952, translated 1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The texts examine the psychological and dehumanizing effects of colonization; they are a broader study of how anti-colonial may address the subject of decolonisation. In these texts the postcolonial experience is Fanon’s main focus, generalizing from the case of Algeria to the case of Africans who have declared independence from Europe. Although studies of colonialism have been undertaken much earlier, it is with Fanon that studies of cultural and psychological effects of colonialism really developed.

Edward Said is another main figure in the postcolonial theory. A Palestinian American writer, political activist, and literary critic, Said inaugurates the postcolonial theory with his major work *Orientalism* (1978). Generally, he examines

the process by which the Orient was and continues to be constructed in European thinking. The Orient is not a fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, commentators, writers, politicians and more, it is constructed by Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. The main importance of Orientalism as a process of construction is a mode of knowing the other. Said aims for examining the historical production and motivations of western discourses about the orient in general, and Islamic world in particular.

Homi. K Bhabha, another most visible postcolonial theorist, an Indian English scholar and critical theorist. Bhabha came to prominence through a series of seminal essays published in the 1980s. In 1994, majority of these works were brought together in one book titled *The Location of Culture*; where he proposes his most core concepts, such as Hybridity, Mimicry, and ambivalence...etc, which have become touchstones for debates over colonial discourse, anti-colonial resistance, and generally in postcolonial theory. His works which according to Childs and Williams turn from questioning the working of colonial discourse to asking how that interrogation should be developed in the postcolonial world to inform the aims of a theoretical perspective committed to strategies of resistance in the face of neo-colonial culture (123).

## **2. Bhabha's Unhomeliness in a Neo-colonial World**

The ex-colonized subject is positioned in such a way that his identity cannot be totally separate from the colonizer's neither it can be the same. Most of the former colonised people of those distorted societies fail to connect themselves with the cultural heritages of their ancestors because they have been dislocated from their origins, as well as they cannot develop a sense of belonging to the culture of their colonial masters. Although, the end of this colonial order may lead to a new start to the ex-colonised people, the postcolonial era, however, still holds this continuous

western influence represented in a Neo-colonialism<sup>1</sup>. As a result of this colonial and neo-colonial intervention, what they adopt is Hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness...etc. This study deals mainly with these concepts produced by Homi. K. Bhabha.

It is worth noting that Homi Bhabha see colonialism as straight forward oppression, domination, and violence, as well as a period of complex and varied cultural contact and interaction. In *Nation and Narration*, he argues against the tendency to put the Third world countries into a homogenous identity rather he claims that all sense of nationhood is narrated. Bhabha also stresses the idea that no one can accept the superiority of the western civilization instead of others' civilization because these differences open a gap that can be subjugated by the colonized.

In short, Bhabha points out that cultural differences are not a threat, and that everyone should accept and respect others' cultures. Moreover, in the postcolonial countries, he argues to the assumption that there is and was a shared identity amongst ex-colonial states. Also there is a relationship of antagonism and ambivalence between the coloniser and colonised.

'Home' is perceived as a place of stable identity where one has been and is understood. In postcolonial literature 'Home' occupies a main position as a setting, metaphor or symbol. The postcolonial world is concerned with the notion of 'home' with its affiliation to a nostalgic past, "*home is linked to positive version of the past. It means a life before oppression. In other words, home is tied to freedom*" (Rostami 157).

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<sup>1</sup>The term is attributed to Kwame Nkrumah, who used it in his 1963 preamble of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) charter. The term suggests that although countries have achieved political independence, the ex-colonial powers continued to play a decisive role in their cultures and economies through indirect control.

Bhabha developed 'Unhomeliness' by referring to some works of postcolonial literature that problematize the theme of the fixed and real home. The concept of 'Unhomely' is coined by Homi Bhabha, and echoes Sigmund Freud's concept of 'Uncanny'<sup>2</sup>. So, he emphasizes the instability of home, in "Home and the World," he defines 'Unhomely' as the creeping recognition that the line between the world and home are breaking down. Furthermore, the Unhomely may lack the sense of belonging. Mehmet Recep Taş points out that the unhomely becomes in a psychological dividing line which generally results in some psychological disorders and cultural displacement (2).

Moreover, "to be unhomed is not to be homeless" (Bhabha 9); that is being unhomed does not necessarily mean without home, it may be, "to feel not at home even in one's own home because you are not at home in yourself; that is, your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee" (Tyson qtd. In Taş2). Bhabha argues that the place between 'homely' and 'unhomely' is a postcolonial place; a place in which one can see how a person's identity is a mixture of what is unfamiliar or foreign and what is familiar,

Hybridity is one of the widely employed terms in postcolonial theory. In his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha introduces the concept as a source of anxiety for the colonizer and develops it to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and injustice. Commonly, and according to Amardeep Singh hybridity refers to any mix between western and eastern culture. Within colonial and postcolonial literature, it most commonly refers to colonial subjects from Asia and Africa who have found a balance between western and eastern cultural attributes(4). As it can be, "the creation of new transcultural

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<sup>2</sup>For Freud, the subconscious creeps and moves into the conscious, then creates an uncanny moment. The same idea for 'Unhome' as if the same when the world creeps into the home and shakes an identity that thought to be stable and in secure.

forms within the contact zone produced by colonization[...]hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, *etc.*” (Ashcroft et al. 108).

For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonised within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new. In his words, it is

The sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal. Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects (Bhabha 154).

Bhabha’s cultural hybridity highlights the mixture of different cultures and describes the emergence of new cultural forms from multiculturalism. He emphasizes that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls ‘Third space’; in which cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space that helps to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity.

The recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate in what he calls ‘in-between’. In other words, hybridity has both negative and positive implications. It can be considered as a positive process in a way that enriches ones culture, this called ‘third space’ meaning that hybridity is a form of exchange between different cultures. On the negative side, it can have a divesting effect on cultural identity and lead to what is termed by ‘in-between’ which is a state of alienation and caused the individual to become an outsider in both cultures.

In his essay “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” Bhabha lays out his concepts of Ambivalence and Mimicry<sup>3</sup> which describe the ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and colonized.

In its most general sense, mimicry is commonly seen when members of a colonized society imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitudes of their colonizers. Mimicry often occurs when “colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values” (Ashcroft *et al.* 124-125).

For Bhabha, mimicry, as a first point, is a strategy of colonial power, the most indefinable and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge (85). In colonial discourse, mimicry is “the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86), that is the colonizer wants to improve the other and to make him like himself, but in a way that maintains a difference, in which the other remains “Almost the same” like the colonizer, but never “quite” fits in with the hegemonic cultural and political systems that govern him.

The result of mimicking the other is never a simple reproduction of those traits, behaviours, manners etc. Rather it is a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer; it is at once resemblance and menace because mimicry is never far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics. The threat of mimicry, its turn to menace comes from partial resemblance, the fact that it ‘repeats rather than re-presents’ which further leads the mimic man to realize his nothingness and insignificance. Bhabha asserts, “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the

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<sup>3</sup>Bhabha's starting point for his consideration of mimicry owes something to Lacan as well as Fanon's psychological model, *Black Skins, White Masks*. He is interested in masks cause of their menacing effects as he focuses on an image of camouflage.

ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (88), means that mimicry locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, and an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized. Mimicry is “constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its access, its difference” (86); it is ambivalent because it requires a similarity and dissimilarity, a difference that is almost the same, but quite different and within this difference to mimic is to threaten this power and bias.

The term Ambivalence first is developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting something and wanting its opposite, or a “simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action” (Young 161). The term then is adapted by Homi Bhabha to describe this magnetism and revulsion which characterize the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

In colonial discourse, ambivalence is unwelcomed aspect for the colonizer. Robert Young suggests that the theory of Ambivalence is Bhabha’s way of turning the table on imperial discourse because the effect of ambivalence disturbs the authority of colonial discourse that wants to produce subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values, that is to ‘mimic’ the colonizer. However, it produces, instead, ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery.

The acceptance of the colonized to the colonizer political, economic systems, and cultural values lead to social ideological and cultural modifications that make these societies mimic their colonizers, update hybrid identities and subordinate to them. The idea of Bhabha’s concepts radically interrogates the effectiveness of colonialism in fragmenting and dislocating the colonized society.

### 3. V.S. Naipaul and Postcolonialism: An Image of the Third World

V.S. Naipaul is “an expatriate who, starting with no means then his will and the talents that he has developed through hard work, has supported him as a writer” (King 1). Naipaul has started with so little and come so to be one of the prominent writers in the world. At the beginning, Naipaul was influenced by his father, who brought him to England, then introduced him to serious literature and ingrained in him the notion that he should be a writer. Later, Naipaul is more influenced by European writers such as Albert Camus and chiefly by the Irish-English writer Joseph Conrad.

Naipaul’s literary career covers a journey from colonial mimicry and comedies about racially complex and culturally insecure communities in Trinidad, to the sombre work portraying English societies, moving to travel writing on Islamic world and the condition of India and Indian diaspora. Additionally, he reflects the misery generated in the life of ex-colonial people in the stage of decolonization.

Naipaul possesses a multicultural background, “a writer who has always felt physical distance” (Mohan 79); therefore, his works can be understood as autobiographical in the sense that they are outcrop of his own life and anxieties of homelessness, he even reflects this sense of multiculturalism in his works, they are “filled with characters, voices, representative documents, places” (King 4). In fact, these related themes of homelessness, alienation, dislocation, identity, multiculturalism...etc are considered as a characteristics of his novels.

Travel for Naipaul proves to be an important stimulus for the development of his career and his personal discovery, as it helped him to discover his vision of the world. This is clearly obvious from what he says in his autobiographical work *Finding the Centre: Two Narratives*,

Travel [...] became a necessary stimulus for me. It broadened my world view; it showed me a changing world and took me out of my own shell; it became the

substitute for the mature social experience [...] which my background and the nature of my life denied me [...] I recognized my own instincts as traveller, and was content to be myself, to be what I had always been, a looker. And I learned to look in my own way (Naipaul 11).

Travel contributes to his awareness of the world and himself as a refugee person because he has always desired a place to identify with in his homeland (the Caribbean), through the quest for his cultural roots (India), and finally to his place of education (England).

Naipaul is well known for his constant criticism of colonialism and postcolonialism and the effect it has on the lives of ex-colonized. In fact, the postcolonial approach gives V.S. Naipaul an opportunity to write and to unveil the deteriorate oppressor or the neo-colonial, as well as to write about political and social disorder. His writings of post independent period tend to be serious and reflective. He is “A severe critic of India and the short comings of the newly independent nations, he is also a nationalist who feels humiliated by the weakness and exploitation of the colonized”(King 2), a nationalist who records and analyses many of the main events, such as decolonization in India, Africa, and the Caribbean. Naipaul is a critic who disgusts the weakness of the decolonized. He is a historical writer who enquires into the conditions of the societies and cultures in the postcolonial era.

The unique origin and ethnicity of V.S. Naipaul allows him to establish this authority of writing about the Third world. However his interest in the Third world has created a postcolonial argument about his vision for those decolonized societies of the third world. When Naipaul won the Noble Prize for literature (2001), these controversies’ reaction to him would seem to be divided, as Rafe Dalleo mentions, Along “political and/or geographic lines: conservatives from western would love him; and leftist from the rest of the world hate him” (2001). Accordingly, many writers of

Asian, African and the Caribbean descent are remarkably emotional in their rejection of what they see as Naipaul's 'professional pessimism' regarding Third world countries and he even has accused of being non postcolonial writer.

Naipaul's harsh denounce of India as an area of darkness in his non-fictional works like, *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A wounded country*, have irritated too many Indian critics for example, I. K. Masih<sup>4</sup>. In his "India Theirs and Mine," he writes, "while Naipaul has a right to see us as we are – defecating in the streets, craving for foreign things, being sloppy and dirty in our poverty. It seems he forgets that he himself is a Dube whom he despises" (10). Masih assumes that the picture Naipaul presents is true. However, the basic fact that is missed is that Naipaul is a product of double exile, he himself from the same block which he presents in bad way; therefore, his facts about India represent him too.

Soon, Naipaul's view of western Indian independence influenced his perspective for other countries of the Third world, especially, Africa and the Islamic world, "[Naipaul] has passed beyond India...to a universal "Darkness"" (Hardwick qtd. In Achebe 28), in which he offers a portraits of actual situations and places that many unwilling to hear.

Similarly, Naipaul's African works such as, *Guerrillas*, *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River* hold up a dark vision of the continent. Naipaul's view of 'Africa has no future' brings public attention of many African critics. Chinua Achebe, for example, takes the task of Naipaul in his essay "Impediments to Dialogue between North and South". Achebe's comments were harsh when Hardwick asked Naipaul "what is the

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<sup>4</sup>An Indian who responds to Naipaul's harsh views of India.

future of Africa?”<sup>5</sup>, Achebe considers Naipaul’s reply “pat, smart and equally predictable:” Africa has no future [...] This modern Conrad, who is native himself, does not beat about the bush!” (28). For Achebe, Naipaul resembles Conrad in denying the African humanity and nature and considers him as a writer who belongs to European, writes for the West and reinforces this Conradian dark image on Africa.

Edward Said has also joined the accusation of what has been called Naipaul’s racist fallacy, publicly, he declares, “Naipaul’s consistency is not the world of truth seeker everywhere. He writes to the western liberal who wants very much to be reassured that, after all, after “we” left Pakistan, after “we” left Iran, things got worse. To flatter a prejudice is not simply to tell the truth”(Said 78-79).<sup>6</sup> Said criticizes Naipaul mainly for his alliance with the first world audience who celebrates him as an ‘indigenous ethnographer’. Also, he sees that Naipaul lacks knowledge about Islamic and Third world societies that he reflects them as ‘laziness’ and anticipates a dissatisfaction with what happen in Iran or other countries.

Said affirms that Naipaul is a very convenient witness who can serve the Third world since and, on the basis, of his being Indian Trinidadian. However, he considers him as a third world writer who denounces his own people, not because they are victims of imperialism, but because they are seen to have this innate flaw that they are not whites. For this point, Said calls into a main question “why, I wonder, doesn’t Naipaul talk about the confused and desperate situation in which people live in the white countries?” (80). Obviously, Said traces a racist mark in Naipaul’s view and sees a dishonesty in his works which capture the Third world in a certain context disillusionment. Though Said assumes that Naipaul attracted a great attention at a

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<sup>5</sup>Achebe discusses The New York Times Book Review once carried a review on V.S Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River* and also a long interview with Naipaul combined with commentary by the American critic Elizabeth Hardwick.

<sup>6</sup>Said in a conversation with other postcolonial writers in “The Intellectual in the Post-Colonial world: Response and Discussion” 1986.

particular time, he claims that Naipaul had this great impact because he contributes to an already growing dissatisfaction with the third world, and with the decolonization process generally.

Bruce King sees that at a time when people only wanted to hear of great success, Naipaul “warned that independence was often painful and failure” (King 194). So from the first, there is and would remain a division between Naipaul and the intellectuals who are committed to the cause of the new nations and racial their affirmations.

On the other hand, several writers reject these controversial arguments and praised Naipaul as the world’s writer. Lillian Feder, in *Naipaul’s Truth* (2001)<sup>7</sup>, illustrates that Naipaul’s conception of how to write about India, after many returns over the years, is changed because the truth about India was not what he thinks about; it is what they are living through (26). Unlike Edward said, John Lukacs posits that Naipaul is not a collector of injustice, “he castigates some of the postcolonial countries themselves[...] his principal concern is not with justice, or injustice, but with the truth” (68). Lukas stresses Naipaul’s value of the truth but not as one who bother with these issues of justice or injustice. Besides, he finds that Naipaul does not present any neutral negative viewpoint for a particular country or he is selective in the manner of intellectuals he knows since Naipaul says harsh things about different countries.

Another writer, Robert Boyers, for him Naipaul does not write for the purpose to show the first world audience the dreadful and hopeless conditions they already know. Boyers reasons an important dimension of Naipaul’s argument that “as long as Indians and Africans continue to think in ways mandated by their own cultural

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<sup>7</sup>A perspective and insightful book about V.S. Naipaul and his complex relation with India

institutions, they will be an able to deal effectively with their problems” (Boyers 80), that is to say that those countries are responsible for their misery, and Naipaul presents this conditions as a case that needs change. Moreover, Homi Bhabha finds in Naipaul’s early writing an illustration of the vitality and possibilities of devastated lives. Actually, Bhabha’s influential views of hybridity and mimicry are drawn from his reading of Naipaul’s works like *The Mimic Men*.

Naipaul has always invoked much controversy because of his views of the half-made societies. Between supporter and opponent, to critics such as these, Naipaul says; “I have nothing to say. I would find it impertinent to talk about individuals who are colleagues in the writing business” (Naipaul qtd. In Winokur 1991).Dr. N. Sharada Iyer writes that Naipaul is not somebody who cancers himself about keeping anybody happy, or being politically correct. Piqued by his rootlessness, he looks with penetrating insight at a number of countries, especially, third world nations, thus his insights have hurt many (59).

When Naipaul was asked about his insights toward Third world, his reply in interview to *Newsweek* is, “when people are wicked, you tell them they are wicked. If people are cruel, you tell them you are cruel. If they are not aspiration, and are lazy, you have to tell them that you have to do that-that’s part of it. Part of writing”(Naipaul qtd. In K. Ray 86).For Naipaul, it is part of writing to acknowledge people about their weakness or what is the bad or the good thing.

Likewise, journalist Edward Behr, in an interview with *Newsweek*, questions that it might be that a writer born in Trinidad of Indian descent like Naipaul would come out emotionally on the side of the third world, yet he is its most ruthless critic (38).

Naipaul’s answer is,

People love making simple distinction –left, right, colonialist, anti-colonialist – and if they have trouble

fitting you in, they do just the same [...] many people just judge me in a purely Marxist way. It gives them a way of considering the world(38).

As it is proposed by those critics that he is completely with a side, Naipaul's response, certainly, reflects this vision that opposes any binary thinking and ideology.

Naipaul cannot deny the fact of the existing conditions that he observes. In one way or another, this does not mean that he holds a racist view or that he belittles the third world societies just to have a place and to be sentimentalized by the first world. May be the essence that differentiate him from his critics is that "they desire a literature of cultural affirmation which the part of struggle for decolonization" (King 195). The moment Naipaul defines and crystallizes for the western audience is "the moment of our disappointment with the prospects of other peoples. And that disappointment, based as it is on our tendency to grow bored with something we can't control, is at the root of the acclaim Naipaul has won"(81), says Edward Said. Robert Boyers also declares that anyone can deny that, by time, Naipaul becomes very influential (80).

Obviously, Naipaul is abhorred for his perspectives and writing on the so called Third world. However, he is admired for his literariness, intelligence, and his various miscellaneous literary works that contributed to his success as a writer and to gain many world awards.

#### **4. Darkness Narratives: *A Bend in the River***

*A Bend in the River* is one of the most significant of Naipaul's works that was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1979. In 1998, it was ranked on the list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Modern Library. It presents a newly independent Franco phonic central African state. According to Ranu Samantrai, the novel provides a fictional documentation of the political shift from

colonial to postcolonial Africa, it takes on the task of defending the practice of colonialism by demonstrating the continuing veracity of its logic in the postcolonial world (1-2).

*A Bend* is about author's sense of "history and his beliefs that we are living at one of those critical moments when history change course, the question which arises is what is the nature of this bend in the river of time as Naipaul conceives it" (Vincent 338). Naipaul propose one of the many circular and ironic movements in the novel which is the irony of the once colonised native finding refuge in the country responsible for his state of restless exile, insecurity, and the social frenzy which ensures upon colonial interventions in Africa, the efforts of which continue to be felt long after decolonization.

Naipaul's novel tells its story about the corruption and state terror in an allegorical vein that precludes the naming of its president and places. Bruce King explains that, "the nameless of the country makes it stand for most of the third world countries, which are faced with the dilemma of choosing between their present and the traditional past" (3), this provides a general overview, the fact that the story resembles the Third former colonies which suffer the effects of colonialism standing between their past and present, and struggling for self-identification aftermath. Digambar N. Ganjewar, also, states that in *A Bend in the River* Naipaul "depicts the ordeals and absurdities in the new Third-World countries. He is concerned with the happenings in those unfortunate countries that have just freed themselves from colonial rule and are unable to attain the uncertain blessing of modernity" (273). *A Bend* reflects a background of the civil disturbance, the unsteadiness idea of civilization and modernity, and the political preconceptions on third world.

Naipaul spends a large part in the East Africa and Zaire in the years 1965-1966, he also returned to both in 1971 and 1975. Accordingly, many reviewers draw a link between the novel and the writer earlier works on Africa. Hence, *A Bend in the River* envelops a decade from 1965 to Naipaul's 1975 journey which he describes as a journey through nothingness, "after a[...] trip to Africa in the early seventies, he wrote "A New King." This is a remarkable piece, for chunks of it are paraphrased in the novel. ABR is a Novel based on these trips to Africa"(Mittapalli and Henson 136); in particular, it is shaped on the basis of Naipaul's work after his travel to Zaire and the East, "A New King for the Congo: Mobuto and the African Nihilism".<sup>8</sup>

*A New King* is a starting rehearsal for the novel *A Bend in the River*. It offers specific details of Joseph Mobuto's reign and this idea of authenticity to be later 'Mobutism'.<sup>9</sup> The essay betrays its deepest debt to an earlier imperial moment for which it evinces a curious nostalgia. Vilashini Cooppan discusses, "the essay and the novel it anticipates are caught between two worlds. Unable to clearly distinguish between imperialism and postcoloniality, they are convinced that the latter is nothing but the farcical, debased return to the former" (83); essentially, this is the main idea that both works hold, *A Bend in the River*, indeed, stands for this idea of what is really postcoloniality, if the postcolonial world suggests a life full of political and social disorder as in the colonial period.

If one compares both works, many details of the essay are represented in *A Bend*. To mention some but few, for example, the president 'The Big Man' is like Mobuto of Zaire, both represent the power of an African chief. Both wanted to build a model of European touch such as, the New Domain in *A Bend* is a resemblance of Mobuto's

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<sup>8</sup>Naipaul's 1975 documentary travelogue work, it was included in the collection of essays *The Return of Eva Peron* 1980.

<sup>9</sup>A political system in which Congolese ordered to change their European names and transfer the Industrial and business enterprises from foreign to domestic owners. But leaving the economy in mess and the president in control owning billions.

international conference centre, Nsele, with its model farm and polytechnic college. Furthermore, both have their thoughts collected in a little green book. Also, there are several incidents in the novel that are already took place in Africa after 1960 like the slaughter of Arabs and the killing of the tall Veena Singh explains,

Naipaul lets the town, the river, the country and its president remain unnamed, it is obvious that he gives fictional treatment to Zaire, a part of the Congo and to the specific period of Mobuto's power [...] the unnamed town at the bend in the river has seen the internecine wars of independence (125).

The fact that the novel is a Franco phonic and there are similarities between both works and other similar details, it makes it clear to associate the setting of the novel with Congo.

## **5. Writing as Influence: Naipaul and Conrad**

Much is said about Joseph Conrad's influence on writers. A number of major writers discoursed about Conrad and inspired by him and his major work *Heart of Darkness*. Some have made a journeys modelled on Marlow's journey, these travels may owe much to the imaginary and structure of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. To mention some, such as Andre Gide in *Travels in the Congo*, highlights that he is re-reading Heart of Darkness for the fourth time. Graham Greene in *Journey Without Maps*, makes it clear why he should go to Africa and no other place else because "A quality of darkness is needed, of the inexplicable. Africa may take the form of unexplained brutality as when Conrad noted in his Congo Diary" (9). Moreover, in "Conrad's Darkness" V.S. Naipaul asserts that in order to understand Conrad, it is necessary to match his experience (217).

In his essay "Conrad's Darkness", Naipaul writes that Conrad were a years ago before him, "I found Conrad – sixty years before, in the time of a great peace – had

been before me[...] someone who sixty to seventy years ago meditated on my world, a world I recognize today” (216-219). Rob Nixon clarifies that this ‘found’ underlines a basic assumption for Naipaul’s neo-Conradian writing and for heart of darkness tradition as well(179).

While Conrad offers a vision of "the world’s half-made societies as places which continuously made and unmade themselves, where there was no goal” (216), alike, Naipaul tackles the half-made societies that seemed doomed to remain half-made. Asako Nakai asserts that Naipaul is “doubly transgresses temporal borders: first, the border between himself and Conrad, and second, the border between the contemporary world and Conrad’s” (Nakai 2). Obviously, Naipaul makes a second vision of Conrad that despite the temporal distance he made between him and Conrad, his vision of those societies appear to be the same as Conrad’s even after years of colonization.

V.S. Naipaul is heavily influenced by Joseph Conrad’s portion ways of describing things and people, and of his writing and views. Dagmar Barnouw, in *Naipaul’s Strangers*, states that Conrad is for Naipaul “the rare writer whose imaginative fiction took on the real issues, the real difficulties – as he saw them, as Naipaul sees them. Both of them are outsiders, if in different ways, and Naipaul has learned much from Conrad’s involvement in the writing process” (17); Naipaul’s writing shares this documentary ethos, both record their own sensation of what they observe with truthfulness. They appear unselfconscious to their own experiences of the world, they simply absorb what can be seen. The influence of Conrad is clear in many of Naipaul’s works. The three regions that have preoccupied Naipaul most (the Caribbean, Indian, and African) cover to some degree Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. But Africa is scored mostly with these writings: “Conrad’s Darkness,”“A

New King for the Congo: Mobuto and the Nihilism of Africa,”“A Congo Diary”and *Bend in the River*. Naipaul’s African landscape symbolizes the survival of Conrad’s image of Africa, ‘Kurtz’ of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

Today, Naipaul’s works represent those of the new African dictators such as, Mobuto of Zaire and The Big Man in *A Bend*. Naipaul also reanimates the River down the Congo once navigated by Conrad, generally, in his three pieces “A New King,”“A Congo Diary,” and indirectly in *A Bend*. In “A Congo Diary”, he mentions, “On the river, the endless green vegetation drifting down from the heart of Africa. The brown river breaking white on the rocks: oddly static in appearance, not moving like waves: the eternal sound of water”(17). On this point, Asako Nakai affirms that translating spatial experience into temporal experience might in itself be“a legacy from Conrad”(2).

Joseph’s *Heart of Darkness* is considered to be the very literary model for *A Bend in the River*. Though neither Conrad nor his novella is ever named or mentioned, this influence rightly called ‘Ghostly’ by Steven Blakemore. The parallel between *Heart of Darkness* and *A Bend* is based on Naipaul’s 1975 trip to Zaire, in which time he proposes his work “A New King.” Evidently, the source of *A Bend in the River* takes in Conrad’s vision of Africa in the days of imperialism as well as Naipaul’s own analysis of postcolonial Zaire. Both novels deal with “the vision of outsider whose modern, European ideals are set into conflict with the ugly realities of exploitation in the Dark Continent” (Harrow332), alike Marlow, the narrator Salim faces this ugly fact of the terrible situations in the deep of Africa.

According to Vilashini Cooppan, Conrad serves as the point of entry for Naipaul’s project to measure the lack of distance between imperialism and postcoloniality(83), because for Naipaul, the contemporary journey to Africa is still like a journey through

nothingness, unchanging dreadful life before and after colonization. *A Bend* is a return to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in the context of postcolonial hybrid society; this postcolonial hybridity and cross-cultural interaction among characters illustrate how *A Bend* is a series of *Heart of Darkness*.

The Rejection of Conrad is concurrent with the hostile critics. Conrad's influence on colonial or postcolonial writers is generally considered to be destructive rather than constructive, especially for those of Africa like, Chinua Achebe's well known indictment of Conrad's racism. Likewise, V.S. Naipaul has been accused of adapting Conrad's narratives and themes to his writings of Africa.

One of the most militant critics of Naipaul is Rob Nixon who sets it as 'Conradian Atavism'. Nixon endorses that Conrad provides Naipaul with his most direct point of entry into mainstream British literature as a displaced writer, an immigrant, an international wanderer turned Englishman(8). Conrad has exercised a special hold for Naipaul, but Nixon is arguing with Naipaul's employment of the Conradian trope, he says,

V.S. Naipaul ventured down the Congo with a copy of *Heart of Darkness* cradled in his lap. On this trip, V.S. Naipaul[...]was drawn to Kurtz's magnetic allure and allowed it to deflect his observations in the direction of a charismatic literariness which seems to make Africa "degeneracy" more intelligible (182).

Thereby, reinforcing the same image of Africa as in the late nineteenth century colonial discourse. Nixon sees that Naipaul's appropriation of *Heart of Darkness* is "a part of consistent preference for reading "Africa" through European representations of it. This partiality is complemented by a mistrust or incomprehension of insides perspective." For him, this enduring trope often serves to deter later writers from exploring any new discursive possibilities and it permanently fixes these areas of the world into the image of unredeemable darkness. Nixon stresses that to write about

Africa, particularly, through Conrad's vision, is not so much to choose him as an ancestor but to discover him in his place.

Chinua Achebe is known for his detest toward Conrad's racist view as he has written extensively about in his work "An Image of Africa: Racism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." Achebe's view towards Naipaul sounds to be similar. In a recent paper titled "Today, a Balance of Stories"<sup>10</sup>, Achebe remarks that Naipaul's *A Bend* leaves a little room for doubt about its prejudice concerning Africa that it is a reminiscent of *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe compares, "While Conrad gives us an Africa of malignant mystery and incomprehensibility. Naipaul's method is to ridicule claims to any human achievement in Africa"(87-88); it is inquisitive that Achebe divines both authors' feeling and perspectives toward Africa in a similar way. While he considers the Africa of Conrad that "it is not really about Africa. And yet it is set in Africa" (25).It is the same as Naipaul's Africa, "Although he was writing about Africa, he was not writing about Africans"(88);for him, Naipaul holds Africans in deep contempt himself and makes no secret of it.

In this instance, Naipaul appears to rely too much on Conrad's tradition of positing African societies with a set of viewpoints. At some point, Naipaul's relationship with Conrad is hard to be described. Notably, Joseph Conrad holds a special place in the making of V.S Naipaul as a modern writer.

Overall, many writers see Africa that presented by V.S. Naipaul seems to lead nowhere, it is a dead end, and its people amount nothing. This independent Africa lies in confusion of cultural and political chaos, alienation and paradox of freedom. V.S. Naipaul treats Africa with a sense of scepticism and cynicism in a time that could be seen as a new start for some. This study will deal with this independent African

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<sup>10</sup> A paper written by Chinua Achebe, it has been delivered at Harvard University and later published in *Home and Exile*.

society and their ability to create their political and social identity, particularly, in his work *A Bend in the River*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN NAIPAUL'S *A BEND IN THE RIVER*

The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it. V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend*, 1979, 4.

The ending of colonial rules naturally brings hopes and ambitions for the newly decolonised countries to build an independent identity. However, postcolonialism in Africa that presented by V.S. Naipaul is painted with adequate artistic detachment, a world with a large number of contradictions and inconsistencies within it. It removes the hope of having an independent political and social identity, people's cultural identities are at stake, and quest for home and a place of belonging is complicated.

In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul links two stories with masterly skill, the story of the narrator Salim and the story of the town at the bend in the river, which revived after the post independent struggle.

This chapter explores the author's stance on postcolonial identity with a sceptical and cynical view in the novel. It exposes and explores the conditions of political and social identity crisis that emerged in postcolonial period and the impact of western cultures on characters' cultural identities and their sense of unhomeliness. This chapter presents an analysis of the novel in the light of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories.

#### 1. Neo-Colonial Politics and Social Realities

*A Bend in the River* opens with a despair opening epigram to brief the reader in a codified way on what is thematically to come, "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it" (4). It summarises this existential philosophy the novel holds, which is the idea that Naipaul

presents the African world in the conflict between political and social context and individual effort. It is a note that asserts the futility of men's efforts to change his position in this postcolonial African world.

From the very beginning of the novel, it is evident that the country like others in Africa has its troubles after independence,

The town in the interior, at the bend in the great river, had almost ceased to exist [...] (it) was more than half destroyed [...] it was hard to distinguish what had been gardens from what had been streets [...] the African – cités – were inhabited only in corners(4-5).

The narrator Salim describes that when he arrives, the country is almost destroyed and there is no life there. However, at some time, peace holds and events in this part of Africa begin to move fast. The narrator mentions that people are coming back to the town and needing the goods which they could supply. And slowly business started up again. Although he feels that events in Africa at times become peaceful, fear still exists and corruption becomes a culture that means “Don't harm me, boy, because I can do you greater harm” (60). A culture that reflects this Africa in a state of disorder.

Naipaul throws light on the culture of the Africans. He considers post independent Africa as a bygone civilization in which it has experienced the rise and decline of more than one civilization. It seems to speak of a final catastrophe; local people are feeling like ghosts from the future. With its ruins and its deprivations, as though their life is already lived and they are looking at its remnants. Salim narrates that in this place the future had come and gone.

Naipaul presents people without past and history. History as something is dead and gone, as a “part of the world of our grandfathers, and we didn't pay too much attention to it”(186), claims Salim. The narrator seems to reject people's timeless

fatalism, and pursues individual achievement in society without being involved in history and politics. For him, all what they know about history comes from books written by European. This shows a clear appreciation of the European basis of colonial education and the inability of non-western to write their own history, Salim says,

of the whole period of upheaval in Africa- the expulsion of the Arabs, the expansion of the Europe, the parcelling out of the continent- that is the only family story I have. All that I know about our history and the history of the Indian ocean I have got from the books written by Europeans [...] they formed no part of our knowledge or pride. Without Europeans, I feel, all our past would have been washed away (13).

Salim emphasizes the need for individuals and society to know their history in order to make a sense of their present. Hence, he values father *Huismans* and the African woman *Zebeth*. For him, the former, represents the African history and civilization or as so old and so new and the lucky witness. He is a Belgian and heads the *lycée*, besides collecting African masks and other artefacts to put in the *lycée* museum as reminders of African history. Unfortunately, he is killed by the president's army during the rebellion, the old is destroyed by the new. *Zebeth* represents the African tradition, one of Salim's regular customers who prefer the security of the forest to the dangers of the town. For Salim, forest represents the past and history. *Zebeth* wanted him to teach her son Ferdinand the foreigner mannerisms because, for her, Africa symbolizes the hard life, a real life she did not want her son to accept. Salim's meeting with *Zebeth* results in his introduction to natives.

*A Bend* is divided into four parts. They are clearly concerned with social and political issues: The Second Rebellion (the Big Man's access to power), The New Domain (the cultural innovations in the European style introduced by the president),

The Big Man (the progressive reduction of the exercise of power to absurd tyranny), and Battle (the assault on the steamer on which the narrator is leaving Africa).

Throughout the novel, V.S. Naipaul explores the social and political disorder in this great bend in the river. Social life in this town is considered to be a mess. Schools are not safe and they mislead rather than educate, “I felt I had given myself an education for nothing. I felt I had been fooled. Everything that was given to me was given to destroy me” (164), says Ferdinand. By quoting Ferdinand as an example of being educated and having difficulty in adapting to civilization, he generalizes this affirmation that the more educated the person in Africa, the more confused and baffled he was, with a mind full of rubbish. Naipaul depicts a town with no rules and regulations, Salim recounts, “Beer was part of people’s food here; children drank it; people begin drinking from early morning” (44). The author also characterizes African life style as junk, saying that they never learnt how to spend money wisely and keep their households. The narrator states that he himself owned a shop which was no less than a sea of junk. A place with dirty clothes, old paint and wood, it smells of rust and oil and kerosene (46). Salim expresses that everything one possesses is worthless in this town. Though he had come to the town to make his fortune, it only gives him gloomy nights. He even feels more miserable when he thinks of Americans, the white people, or Europeans whom he considers as makers of the big things. People on the great bend in the river seem indifferent to the chaotic events. And as they observe life and politics with apparent fatalism, they become unconscious to everything that does not concern their personal safety or private business, “We had become what the world outside had made us; we had to live in the world as it existed”(87). Although chaos and anarchy prevailed, people have to cope with all worse situations in Africa.

It is well-known that Naipaul's women are not well-treated. In this multi-ethnic society in the African town, the position of woman is not free from disorder and insecurity. Women are disfigured, defeated or dislocated by the men around them. Shoba, Mahesh's wife, always feels insecure and alien not merely for she escaped her town, but her family too. She always lives with this fear that one of her family will come to kill her. Shoba who seems to be tied to her Indian tradition, has actually broken her family tradition when she married Mahesh and escaped her town. Women are also presented with no dignity or a constant life, Salim illustrates, "women slept with men whenever they were asked; a man could knock on any woman's door and sleep with her" (44). He assumes that he knew only women who had to be paid for. Besides, they are left behind with their children and considered as animals, "I will leave her, patron. She's an animal [...] She's only an African woman. I will leave her" (65), Metty says to Salim on the girl he has a child with.

Moreover, they are deceitful like, Yvette, Raymond's wife, the beautiful white woman, who betrays her husband with Salim. Ironically, as if Naipaul suggests that Salim's affair with Yvette resembles the relation between Africa and Europe. Yvette is the concrete status of Europe; Salim's obsession with her and how he is affected by her is the same description of the way Africans see Europe and the western culture. As Europeans do to Africans, they pretend like they bring light and civilization. The same sense that Salim adopts and the first sight at Yvette in the Domain brings European effect with itself, she plays the role of neo-colonialism. Salim feels that he has been fooled as well as those Africans, "that gesture, of kissing my trousers, which elsewhere I would have dismissed as a brother courtesy, the gesture of an overtipped whore, now moved me to sadness and doubt. Was it meant? Was it true" (106), this sexual relationship thus ends in violent disgust. By humiliating Yvette, Salim wants

to assert his manhood asserting that he wished to be taken to the skies not to be occupied with trapped people like himself (191).

Apparently, women are gluttons for punishment, and this sexual casualness is plainly a part of the chaos and perplexity of the place. It is clear that women are considered to be nothing and allow themselves to be nothing at this part of Africa; therefore, they have no value.

Naipaul presents a society characterised by lawlessness. The soldiers' retreat shows a situation of lawlessness and Africa sounds as a place where brutal killing is a common site. Salim narrates that he heard dreadful stories of casual killings by soldiers, rebels and armed forces, people were murdered in disgusting ways and they were made to sing certain songs while they were beaten to death in streets (41). Yet, it sounds all starting up again. Law seems to be the same of the old; Naipaul writes ironically, "some papers spoke of the end of feudalism and the dawn of a new age. But what had happened was not new. People who had grown feeble had been physically destroyed. That, in Africa, was not new; it was the oldest law of the land" (35). Independence and freedom in this town are still linked with lawlessness, killing, and chaos.

Salim indicates that what is going to replace the political system is not pleasant. The town is governed by a dictator president called the 'Big Man' who resembles the new version of the colonizer. He claims to have brought peace and social justice by combining nationalist feelings with the nationalization of property belonging to foreigners. In fact, this attitude gives rise to political and social disorder as well. Salim states,

Before the big man came and made us all *citoyens* and *citoyennes*. Which was all right for a while, until the

lies he started making us all live made the people confused and frightened, and when a fetish stronger than his was found, made them decide to put an end to it all and go back again to the beginning (6).

The president assumes lies; he is not able to introduce any new ideas that can help in the development and establishment of a new born independent country. His radio speeches as described by Salim were like many other presidents' speeches. The themes were not new like: nationalism, the need to strengthen the revolution and the bright future, the dignity of the woman of Africa who, in fact, has never been valued and has treated badly in his town, to rediscover the virtues of the diet and medicines of their grandfathers, work and, above all, discipline (125). However, these speeches convey all the contradictions and hypocrisy of the Big Man's principles. Naipaul mocked these Africans who accept these lies as "they waited for the old jokes"(125). Because every speech was "a new performance, with its own dramatic devices; and every speech has a purpose" (125), that serves the president's own hypocritical goals.

The president then decided to create a modern Africa by building the New Domain, "he was by-passing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages, and creating something that would match anything that existed in other countries"(116), what He is building is meant to be grander. Naipaul talks of the New Domain where things are a bit improving with a modern European touch, in which with each setback the civilization of Europe would become a little more secure at the bend in the river. It is a place for educating the African youth by European teachers, with its modern luxurious buildings, a European model with western values. There is also a drastic change in the structure of politics and economy which alerted beyond recognition. Such ordinary everyday articles and objects have changed names and packing, they would have been acceptable in plain brown papers with tempting slogans.

As development is going fast, things are falling apart. On the one hand, This new modern European culture built by the Big Man causes rift in people and how they feel offended by the great building, Salim tells “in those days we felt that there was a treasure around us [...] during the days of rebellion it had depressed us. Now it excited us – the unused earth, with the promise of the unused” (109-110). This development shows the change which could be felt by the people of the bush. On the other hand, the black Africans are out to support the restoration of the original Africa. A solution is a new revolution that is expected to compromise by preserving certain social and cultural tradition. A liberation army opposed the Big Man declares,

we have decided to face the ENEMY with armed confrontation [...] the ancestors are shrieking [...] by ENEMY we mean the powers of imperialism, the multi-nationals and the puppet powers that be, the false gods, the capitalists, the priests and teachers who give false interpretations. The law encourage crime. The schools teach ignorance in preference to their true culture. We of the liberation army have received no education. We do not print books and make speeches. We only know the TRUTH, and we acknowledge this land of the people whose ancestors now shriek over it. OUR PEOPLE must understand the struggle. They must learn to die with us (128-129).

The liberation army opposes the Big Man’s modernization and the new Africa he aims to introduce. To them, this newness is a limbo that breaks them up from their past. However, the Big Man knows how to deal with these rebels. The process of peace resulted in the killing of the men who had a great love for the original African cultural values and their untimely death gives the message that the fate of this uprising is known. All the people should be dependent on the Big Man. The second rebellion proves to be a hopeless affair; political and social disorder, frequently, turns to chaos.

In order to achieve liberation, the liberation army assumes to restore to killing, Salim's assistant Metty tells that they are going to kill everyone who can read and write and who put on a jacket and tie because it seems that killing is the only way to attain their goals. From its inception, Naipaul suggests that the individual Africans are responsible for the tragedy in their lives and are responsible for their destruction. Again, like the revolution against the colonialist, there will be a revolution that will destroy the old regime and bring a worse one.

Naipaul clearly elucidates that progress owes to the Big Man's reliance on European power. The New Domain, this miracle, is a practical joke. Naipaul draws attention to the president's socialism that it is just a mask for his personal dictatorship. Salim mocks,

the president had wished to show us a new Africa. and I saw Africa in a way I had never seen it before, saw the defeats and humiliations which until then I had regarded as just a fact of life [...] old Africa, which seemed to absorb everything, was simple; this place kept you tense. What a strain it was, picking your way through stupidity and aggressiveness and pride and hurt! (62).

Salim observes that this new Africa is going back to its old ways through fierceness, force, and anarchy with modern tools. Naipaul is sceptical about this independence and modernisation of Africa that owe to European power. Beneath this scepticism and cynicism lies the sadness at the sickness of this African world. Consequently, the corruption and anarchy are the results of the Big Man's policies. Moreover, the relationship between the Big Man and the people, then, is unrealistic. A relationship that does not take into account the level of people who never produce what they consume. Hence, the economic boom the country witnesses as a result of the selling of the copper easily collapses. For the Big Man, discipline means absolute loyalty. On the one hand, he is trying to westernize the country. On the other hand, he

encourages the cult figure of the African chief, and fools people to realize his purposes.

Salim utters that “In the bush they would learn the wisdom of the monkey [...] It was the Big Man’s way. He chose his time, and what looked like a challenge to his authority served in the end to underline his authority”(126). The image of this new Africa is not real; it is only an ideal place that has nothing to do with the Africa of the bush and villages. The old Africa is always observable beneath the surface decor of the new. People are unable to identify themselves with this new African consciousness. For them, mystery and peace lies in the bush, "During the rebellion I had the sharpest sense of the beauty of the river and the forest, and had promised myself that when the peace came I would expose myself to it, learn it, possess that beauty”(103), Salim nostalgically recalls, the cause of the loss of the magic and mystery of the place resulted from this change and development.

Fundamentally, Naipaul centres on the conflict between traditionalism and westernisation. It is the clash between such categories as the “modern” and the “traditional,”“the new and the old,” and hence between western and native cultures and values. The influence of western and European power is major. Basically, Williams and Chrisman underline that “this continuous western influence, located in flexible combinations of the economic, the political, the military, and the ideological is called neo-colonialism” (3), which is another manifestation of imperialism. The town on the great river has two kinds of politicians: the Big Man and the Liberation Army; both are worse than the colonial rulers. People realize that the actual liberation that they had anticipated was outlandish. The economic, cultural, political, social atmosphere is still under some form of control like the former masters.

In his book, *Decolonizing the Mind*, Wa Thiong'o explains the nature of imperialism as it affects the culture and language of the colonized, particularly the Africans. He proposes that perspective which he calls "Effect of Cultural Bomb" (3). According to him, the imperialist uses a cultural bomb to isolate people and estrange them from their identity by annihilating them from their heritage, their environment, their names, and above all their language. By implication, the postcolonial nations continued to experience the domination of the western and European political, economic and cultural models the Big Man brings with his white men to this great bend in the river.

Education, for example, the lycée in the town where Ferdinand goes is built in the colonial-official style. Students in the New Domain are taught by foreign teachers, "Education was something only foreigners could give" (23) in the continent. History, as Salim mentions, is known from European books and they are taught about European expansion. Moreover, Salim asserts that,

They! When we speak politically [...] or praise politically, we said "the Americans," "the Europeans," "the white people," "the Belgians." When we wanted to speak of the doers and makers and the inventors, we all [...] said "they." We separated these men from their groups and countries and in this way attached to them to ourselves [...] they were impartial, up in the clouds, like good gods. We waited for their blessing—as I had shown my cheap binoculars and my fancy camera to Ferdinand—as though we had been responsible for them [...] In fact, I—and all the others like me in our town, Asian, Belgian, Greek—were as far as away from "they" (28).

Noticeably, people are fond with 'They', with this cultural bomb and try to identify with the technological world which is alien to their culture and which they do not produce. Mahesh, Salim's friend, is a good example who is in love with machines, Salim clarifies that Mahesh is not attracted to the ice cream rather the idea of that

simple machine, or rather the idea of being the only man in the town to own such machine(56).

In effect, one of the objectives of neo-colonialism lies in enjoining leaders of the independent colonies to accept developmental aids “through the guise of developmental aids and support, technological and scientific assistance, the ex-colonial masters impose their hegemonic political and cultural control in the form of neo-colonialism”(Serequeberhan 13); therefore, support the imperial power to continue its control over the ex-colonies. The leaders of the newly independent states, under this impression of that the former colonial are superior and more civilized, they keep following the political, economical domains and cultural practices of imperialists. In reference, that is exactly what the Big Man tries to do by creating this new Africa modelled on European values and aids. He maintains his power by means of European airplanes, and by positing gigantic photographs of himself printed in Europe. European experts rebuild the destroyed town and European mercenaries suppress the rebellion. He is dependent upon European advisers and experts who affect his views, such as Raymond, the president’s Belgian advisor who represents the ideal European intellectual ‘Africanist’. Salim claims,

If it was Europe that gave us [...] some idea of our history. It was Europe, I feel, that also introduced us to the lie [...] the Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else; but at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their powers, they could express both sides of their civilization; and they got both the slaves and the statues (12).

In this neo-colonial state, ex-colonizers try to maintain their influence in many approaches as they possibly could, and make of ex-colonies less independent. Naipaul’s defence of neo-colonialism concludes that Africans are not authentic producers because they do not produce like Europeans and Americans, but they only

consume. That is to say, without this Eurocentrism, the Big Man and Africa would not be able to survive.

In the end, everything is overwhelmed, crushed by civic chaos. The result is the same; they were all controlled by the Big Man, and he is controlled by European power. The president's power is challenged. There is a change in the cultural values of the citizens such as bribery, Salim protests when he feels that he has to pay for the man who fixed his papers in order to leave the country. There is also a realization of insecurity, as Ferdinand, who becomes the commissioner of the town. He believes that they now only want to make their own money and escape because no one is safe anymore; they are going to be killed. When Salim sees Ferdinand in the capital, he does not find a man with position and pride but someone "shrunk, and characterless"(172). Non-Africans not only feel insecure, they find themselves cut off from their roots as well. Salim expresses that his own feelings are more complicated and that he notes a disordered future for the country where no one is going to be secure there(63).

The novel even ends in darkness, "there were gunshots [...] the steamer started up again and moved without lights down the river, away from the scene of battle. The air would have been full of moths and flying insects. The searchlight, while it was on, had shown thousands, white in the white light" (168). This final scene, essentially, returns to what Naipaul asserts in the beginning of the novel "the world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it" (4). People are, then, invited to accept that they are nothing, that they cannot break down the situation and that they are responsible for their misery since the world is what it is. It seems that men have no place in this new independent African world. Thus, the novel achieves a devastating recognition of moral blankness and loss.

Naipaul reveals the reality of a newly independent state in which he believes that the redemptive action of a free man is possible out of the disturbance and unrest that this town does not show. This postcolonial continent never opens up possibilities for the future. Naipaul offers a condemned, fragmented society that lacks creative potential, a black society that cannot govern itself without an external power.

## **2. Representation of Postcolonial Identity**

Postcolonial theory holds that decolonised people develop a postcolonial identity that is based on cultural interactions. Ex-Colonised people were trapped between different cultures caused them to have a merged and dual identity as the result of “hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence”. The story takes place in a town at the bend of a great river in a newly-independent African nation which just escapes from European domination. It highlights the conflict between two cultures; the western versus the native culture. Obviously, Naipaul emphasizes the result of the clashes between two cultures which is the inward struggle to achieve fixed identity.

Naipaul’s Africans are obsessed with modernity and its technology and tend to reject their traditional past and mimic the lives and cultures of their colonial masters. Sometimes, they totally reject whatever is new and unfamiliar to them. The contradiction between the traditional culture, rooted in village life, and the seemingly modern westernised town is appalling. Hence, the implications and images of mimicry and ambivalence are thematically recurrent.

Mimicry refers to the imitation of one species by another “colonial subjects practice mimicry – imitation of dress, language, behaviour, even gestures – instead of resistance” (Dobie 189). In postcolonial context, the practice of mimicry becomes a series of personal and generalized vanities which allow postcolonial subjects to sweep through societies and social contexts that are broken away from an older order of

things. Bhabha establishes a connection between mimicry and camouflage put forward by Jacques Lacan,

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage [...] it is not a question of harmonizing with the background. But against a mottled background, of becoming mottled---exactly like technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare (Lacan. Qtd, In Bhabha 85).

According to Bhabha, mimicry and camouflage result in ‘colonial ambivalence’; people produces mimetic representations that are little more than ‘unsettling imitations’. These imitations are unsettling because postcolonial subjects engage in mimicry and transform into someone and something that is no longer a native. These men, rulers, and children are not perfect copies of the other, the foreigner, or colonizer, regardless of whether they want to be so or not. But can never be equal of the role models they choose as paradigms.

In *A Bend*, the Big Man mimics a European political career. Imitating the display of power he sees in the West. Naipaul’s narrator satirically says, "he(the Big Man) needs a model in everything, and I believe he heard that de Gaule used to send personal regards to the wives of his political enemies” (186), for sure, the Big Man never understands the theoretical nature of French politics. It is not something that was produced in his native culture. His use of the French language clearly conceives the idea that he lacks knowledge of the language and only mimics what is heard and using musicality in his speeches to sound like those European presidents.

Salim comments that the president’s speeches were in French, but the only used French words were “Citoyens and Citoyennes” or other specific words. It is ridiculous that what he does is mimicking the external gestures of political life which are alien to Africans thinking he is being civilized by doing so. Moreover, he creates

the New Domain with European model on the site of what is being a rich European community, and he runs this institution by European teachers and manners as well.

The narrator describes,

in the Domain servant costume – white shorts, white shirt and a white – jacket de boy – (instead of the apron of colonial days). It was the Domain style for people in Indar’s position. The style was the President’s [...] And in the strange world of the Domain Indar appeared to be well regarded. Part of this regard was due to the “outfit” to which he belonged (71).

Ironically, this place was also an imitation of the western culture. The New Domain is a dreamy place for those villagers but a joke for those foreigners. Salim expresses his sadness and pain hearing in the bars those foreigner builders and artisans making jokes about the country (62). The president wants to bring the country to superior level as West countries. On the other hand, to be loved by natives, he has to separate from foreigners. However, he keeps Raymond, his European director, and his white men. This clearly elucidates that the Big Man exists by name only; as long as a crack appears in his power, the civil wars are unavoidable.

In postcolonial studies, 'mimicry' is also considered as unsettling imitation, as a desire to sever the ties with 'self' in order to move towards the other. Throughout the story, Naipaul shows the struggle the characters experience towards their own cultures. The narrator himself expresses his penchant for colonial mimicry when he wishes to desert his roots, Salim says, “I wanted to break away. To break away from my family and community also meant breaking from my unspoken commitment” (31). He does also show the others' struggle of creating and keeping their own culture. Ferdinand has an impressive character of an intellectual African student. As a native, he is the one who could represent hope for Africa. Yet, he considers himself a more outstanding person because he imitates the western culture. In the lycée, “he

liked to wear the blazer with the *Semper Aliquid Novi* motto; no doubt he felt it helped him carry off the mannerisms he had picked up from some of his European teachers. Copying one teacher” (29). Salim finds that Ferdinand is fond of these European formats, and how he looks funny in these clothes that seem undersized for a big person like him. Actually he mimics Salim himself as a foreigner, an English-speaking, someone from whom Ferdinand can learn manners and the ways of the outside world. By joining in the New Domain, he also mimics different characters to convey that he is special in the town. Salim points out that his mind is not empty as he thinks rather "It was a jumble, full of all kinds of junk” (33), he cannot be simple, the more he tries, the confused he becomes.

Mahesh who took over the Big Burger franchise in the town, he is proud of his career and becomes arrogant. Salim describes,

Standing in his nice clothes by his imported coffee machine in his franchise-given shop, he really thought he was something, successful and complete, really thought he had made it and had nowhere higher to go. Bigburger and the boom [...] had destroyed his sense of humour. And I used to think of him as a fellow survivor! (121).

What Mahesh does, actually, means nothing neither to outsiders nor to his friend Salim rather he becomes a different person. The other one is Metty, Salim’s assistant slave, is credited with this European culture in the town. Since he arrives to the bend in the river, he picked up the local language fast, and he even got a new name. Salim clarifies that at home they used to call him ‘Ali-Wa’, but "where is this Al-Wa! [...] it was just the French word – *metis* –, someone of mixed race. But that wasn’t how I used it. To me it was only a name: Metty” (21). Metty rejects his name and prefers to be called Metty as the local people call him. Salim says that Metty also calls him with

the French word 'Patron' in the presence of a third person and that "makes it sound ironical" (27).

Moreover, his use of the French language, his pretence to know things and places and his care of white people, for Salim, he appears to wear a white mask, "We must go there, patron. I hear it is the last good place in Africa. Ya encore bien, bien des blancs côté-qui-là. It have a lot of white people up there still. They tell me that in Bujumbura it is like a little Paris" (33), says Metty. Salim comments that if he believes that Metty understood a quarter of the things he said, that he really longed for the white company at Bujumbura, he would worry about him because he knows him better and all what Metty said is just a chat to show off and a mimic to what he hears in the town. Salim claims "the white people had been driven out from our town, and their monuments destroyed. But there were a lot of white people up there [...] And that was glamour for the warrior boys, glamour for Metty, and glamour for Ferdinand" (33), means that though European colonialism has an end, those Europeans and white people still exist everywhere and now they are considered as an attraction for those boys and people of the town.

Furthermore, there is also Indar, Salim's friend from home town, "the mocking quality of the grandeur" (13). He has always been a source of despair for Salim because he always makes him feel so backward. Besides, Salim always thought of Indar's family as 'modern' people, with a Western style quite different from theirs. Since he was young, Indar is engaged with western culture. He went right through the local English-language college, and then moved to England to a famous university that was "part of his style" (67) to do a three year course. Indar is the grander quality of mimicry for Europeans with his clothes and manners, "There was London in his clothes, the trousers, the striped cotton shirt, the way his hair was cut, his shoes

(oxblood in colour, thin-soled but sturdy, a little too narrow at the toes)” (67), Salim describes. Moreover, Indar assumes that the only place he belongs to is out his disillusioned native condition in Africa, “for someone like me there was only one civilization and one place – London, or a place like it” (63). He believes that London is his place where it allowed him to be something but not in Africa where there is no civilization.

Alas, Ferdinand and others have no return. The self-adaptation of mingling of peoples make them too fluid to regain their original cohesion, and the hide of identity under the garb of borrowed culture make them “assuming the lies of white people” (23). Such situations create disjunctives that divide people. They become deviated from their birth cultures and practices and become unable to reincorporate into them. They are also not one with the ruling power of the other. The end result is a hybrid and ambivalent subject that does not know who is or to what he belongs.

The failure of the mimic men is further determined by hybridity. Although ambivalence marks the lives of all colonials, hybridity and multicultural locale add to its intensity. Hence, the overlap of different cultures forms cultural hybridity then reasoning mapping changes in people’s consciousness. Hybridity happens when a person is caught between two different cultures which leads him/her to a double vision or consciousness. Therefore, a new identity is created. Indeed, living in the in-between spaces and between two different cultures brings the person a merged identity, and this is what Bhabha calls the ‘third space’.

The novel blends a good mix of characters from different cultures and lands. Most of them have this sense of not belonging politically or culturally to this town in spite of their sympathy for the unnamed state at the great bend in the river. In the bend in the river there are who carry on and occupy with this world as it existed such as,

Indar, Mahesh and Nazruddin who have learnt the art of survival. Nazruddin, who sees things seemingly working out beautifully, always “lived with a vision of things turning out badly” (226). He lives in the world as existed and always ready for upheavals. He also pushes his children into acquiring skills that could be turned to account anywhere. Nazruddin does not allow himself to become nothing. The other one is Mahesh and his wife, a typical Hindu middle class couple, Mahesh’s motto in life is to ‘carry on’ through all the turmoil of the town. During this disturbance and multiculturalism, when Salim is worried, Mahesh expresses, "what do you do? You live here and ask that? You do what we all do. You carry on” (73); This is Mahesh's philosophy in a bend in the river. It is to live according to what the world is and to do according to what exists.

Unlike Mahesh, Shoba after running with the desire of violating community rules, she lives with this fear of her family’s revenge. When her father died, she went to India for two months and comes back with utter disgust for the land. Shobha does not appear to be bound to either Indian or African tradition; she rather becomes indifferent to both. The knowledge she has gathered in India frees her from the earlier attachment with tradition; she finds India and Africa no better. The result of the clashes between the two cultures is the inward struggle to achieve fixed identity. Therefore, a new identity is created. According to Bhabha, this new unfixed identity is a hybrid identity. Shobha feels trapped with her borrowed culture and unable to direct her life with this consciousness that she feels completely unattached nowhere in the world.

Like Shoba, a sense of encroaching disorder is focused through Salim. An East African Muslim Indian, with this background, and in this town Salim continuously remains in the in-between situation of different cultures. He feels perplexed while

living in one culture and thinking about another. His consciousness reveals that he is different from those Africans and fellow emigrants. He has a better life than those natives and is respected by them. He is called mister because he is a foreigner, and he was mister in order to be distinguished from the other resident foreigners, who are monsieurs. But he cannot compete with the Europeans who are the real dominators, "My own pessimism, my insecurity was a more terrestrial affair. I was without the religious sense of my family. The insecurity I felt was due to my lack of true religion" (22), says Salim. In this complex situation he tries to find out his cultural and social roots but at last he feels disillusioned. Salim expresses,

Africa was my home, had been the home of my family for centuries. But we came from the east coast, and that made the difference. The coast was not truly African. It was an Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, and we who lived there were really people of the Indian Ocean. True Africa was at our back (8).

Salim belongs to a group without past and history and all he knows is from European books. An outsider in this town "with no family, no flag, no fetish" (61), this leads him to feel insecure and to emphasize the need to know the past in order to make sense of the present. Although Salim travels to London to make a new life, this new culture did not provide him with complete freedom and security as well. The society establishes the same relationship between them and the native whites as it was maintained between them and Africans, "they live on the margins of society" (229). Therefore, Salim does not develop any ground-breaking towards his life. He becomes sympathetic to this idea, proliferated by his friend Indar, that is necessary for displaced Indians like them to "reject the ideas of home and ancestry piety" (181). In this hybrid world, the impact of alienation runs deep. The cultural transition alters his temporal reference.

Salim sees that the adoption of this culture also offers no promise or future. London neither represents the old he was once familiar with nor the future. Salim appears to have this kind of contrast in his feeling about the past culture, the culture in the town and the future. He sounds unsatisfied wondering about the nature of his aspirations, and the very supports of his existence. He is now without hope with the life where he comes to make a fortune.

With the arrival of immigrants (Europeans, Indians...etc), the dominant culture is contaminated by the linguistic and racial differences of the native self. Belgian Father Huismans defence of the African culture and the Latin words is carved on the ruined monuments like “Misericordie probat populos et foedera jungi”(62) which, according to his conflicting interpretation, call for the mingling and meeting in Africa. His defence of hybridity seems to be based on the belief that the colonial ambivalence is an evident illustration of its uncertainty because hybridity and multiculturalism are sensed as contaminating elements that endanger the purity of the natives. This ambivalence gives birth to a postcolonial in-betweenness.

Such in-betweenness affects the culture and ontology of people in the town. Ferdinand, for example, is a native of mixed heritage, he feels even more insecure as he has no cultural group where he can feel associated. Salim finds that Ferdinand’s ambivalence is more excruciating and his “affectation is more than affectations [...] his personality had become fluid” (55). Ferdinand ends up feeling afraid of losing his own culture and his identity. He articulates, “I felt I had been used [...] I felt I had been fooled. Everything that was given to me was given to me to destroy me. I began to think I wanted to be a child again, to forget books and everything connected with books” (164-165). At last, he recognizes the big lie he wishes to come to. He feels he is losing the place he can run back to, and everything he has as an African. Salim

narrates that when he saw Ferdinand at last as a strange in his polka-dotted cravat and short-sleeved jacket, what was not expected is not the style. But Ferdinand looks reserved and ill, like a man recovering from passion, and He is not interested in impressing him as he used (164). It seems that this new African man has changed him in a negative way.

This ambivalence seems ironic, deceptive and disappointing. Salim asserts, “his face [Ferdinand’s] had been like a mask at the beginning. Now he was showing his frenzy” (165). Such ironies happen with other characters as well. The narrator himself, alike, shows a case of ambivalence. Salim become affected by the unstable society and life in the town. He says, “I began to get some sense of the social excitements of life on the Domain” (72). At some time, this affection also makes him eager to have a life like those Europeans in the New Domain.

Moreover, Salim’s affair with Yvette, Raymond’s wife, makes him feel as good as those white people because in that atmosphere of Europe in Africa, he develops a new kind of political concern. Through her, he is bound to Raymond, and through him he is bound more closely to the president’s power. He becomes delighted to feel so close to the highest power in the land. However, in the end, he understands and reasons that the place is quite simple and less complicated for those uneducated ones like him and those Greeks and Italians in the town, “It didn’t matter that we couldn’t make the things we liked to use, and as individuals were even without the technical skills of primitive people. In fact, the less educated we were, the more at peace we were, the more easily we were carried along by our civilization” (33), because this western civilization and culture make them far away from their civilization and roots.

It is apparent that people at the bend in the river try to find their self-identities by pretending someone else, and prove their values by showing off something unworthy

in those white people's mind, Salim expresses ironically, "Africans had become modern men who built in concrete and glass and sat in cushioned chairs covered in imitation velvet. It was like a curious fulfilment of father Huisman's prophecy about the retreat of African Africa. And the success of the European graft" (62). Naipaul suggests that those people with few cultural values and without creative and technological abilities have no way out except mimicry. Consequently, this kind of cultural breakdown makes them ambivalent or lost between the traditional and the western cultures. Obviously, most characters cannot reject the occupation of the western culture. Through Salim's description, it is clear that political, social, and cultural are still affected by those foreigners. It shows the fact that it is hard to make an independent political and social identity in this postcolonial African state.

In fact, Naipaul finds it ridiculous that people in the town are satisfied with some ludicrous things with their narrow minds, and they do not know that their prospects are composed of another culture which does not belong to them. This ambivalence puts into words Naipaul's sceptical view towards Africans and their ability to forge an independent identity. The fact that although the natives want to be independent confirms that they feel affection for their own culture, and that they are willing to fight for it. They cannot get rid of the effects of western culture completely, and the culture they adopted is already a hybrid one.

### **3. Traumatic Experiences of a Postcolonial Home**

Postcolonial home plays a crucial role in the stability of one's identity. Therefore, "unhomeliness" can be the main cause of a merged and lost identity. Bhabha sees that diasporic communities, by virtue of their disposition after decolonization, and by virtue of democratic systems can form a new community of what he terms 'unhomely'; "to live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities

[...] to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity” (Bhabha18). Once again homeliness is Naipaul's theme in *A Bend* which represents the Indian and European cultures in exile, where characters like Salim, Mahesh, Shoba, Nazruddin, father Huismans, Raymond, and his wife Yvette have come to know how to live in the postcolonial African state.

The novel begins with the destruction of old ways of living and their rebuilding. Salim describes the family home on the coast of an African state as an overcrowded compound where the distinction between servants, slaves owned by the family and family members is faded, "we continued to live as we had always done, blindly” (23). Nezruddin the merchant and Salim are descendants of a colonising trading race (the Arabs). The former, is never down and out, “a man of the world” (13), for he takes the world as it is without allowing himself to be nothing. It is through him that Salim realizes the fluidity and changing aspects of the world. Nazruddin and his family shift from one place to another, from the East coast to the deep centre of Africa, then moving to London, and his plan now is to move to Canada. The constant moving of Nazruddin from one place to another with his family promoting the idea that home is unfixed and no place is free of troubles. He wants to find a secure place, a place he can call his own and a place where he feels attached so that he can define his existence in a positive way.

Like Nezruddin, other characters prove the idea of instability of home. For Salim, constantly moving between places, home converts from a location in space into the idea of ‘the other place’. Salim left his family home and looked up for his fortune in the middle of the continent. When Salim arrives at the bend in the river, he discovers a place in decay, “you were in a place where the future had come and gone” (33). Salim, then, recreates a home with his assistant Metty. It is in a flat, once owned by a

Belgian woman who departed after the independence, in which she has attempted to introduce a touch of Europe and home and art. In his view, it represents another kind of life to this land of rain and heat. Salim suggests that home is interpolate; owned and dwelt in. He considers this flat is still the Belgian lady's flat and is not his home, it is like a camp, and then that camp becomes his.

Salim finds it hard to break or forget his links with the land and culture of his ancestors. As the recognition of the change of values including cultural values in the town, this leads characters to feel homesick and rootless; "Nothing stands still. Everything changes [...] through the white-painted window I saw the trees outside – not their shadows, but the suggestion of their forms. I was homesick, had been homesick for months" (114). The loss of characters' identity during this disturbance results in the loss of security and home. Metty, the other one, feels alienated, as a slave he has no fixed home. He lives with Salim and a local African woman with whom he had a child, an elusive home to which settlers like Salim and Metty have no access or knowledge.

Salim like many other settlers in the town, invests security in gold and currency rather than fixed benefits like having a secure home, "two or three kilos of gold I had picked up in various little deals; there were my documents – my birth certificate and my British passport [...] in a hole just at the bottom of the external staircase [...] buried" (74-75), a fragile identity that anticipates only flight and loss. He informs that the idea of migration and leaving is permanent, "the idea of going home, of leaving, the idea of the other place—I had lived with it in various forms for many years. In Africa it had always been with me. In London, in my hotel room, I had allowed it on some nights to take me over" (148). When civil unrest occurs, there is no place to let them settle down peacefully, neither in Africa nor in other places.

Naipaul also represents home to shift and interrogate the new forms of belonging associated with globalization, like the inhabitants of the Domain houses, who are also of interest because they are always cosmopolitan intellectuals working on a project. They are ideal of not being located in a fixed place. This internationality assumes a global identity in which local identities can be exchanged variously depending on the will and individual's means to migrate.

Indar, for example, holds these features. He speaks of the need to free oneself of connection, he says, "I didn't know my heart could stand it (going back to Africa). But the aeroplane is a wonderful thing. You are still in one place when you arrive at the other [...] you stop grieving [...] you trample on the past" (119-120). Indar has a house in the artificiality of the domain, a location in the dislocation. In this description, Salim sees Indar as a global citizen in an opposing sense, no fixed location or local connection. Indar has left his home to study in England, he then returns back to Africa but he neither feels Africa is his home nor England. He makes himself at home without regarding it as home. This conveys the idea that home becomes a creation of a nostalgic imagination. However, this later affects negatively. Naipaul, through Indar, proposes that home is not afforded by high ideas and these influences but through living and forming connections in the place over time.

Moreover, The Indian couple Mahesh and Shoba who eloped to this town in the interior. Mahesh accepts this small world as home and he seems satisfied with his own world. To some extent, Mahesh's devotion with Shoba makes him the way he is. Salim says that "had made him half man and ignoble"(205), but this to some degree makes him responsible and he is obliged to live in this world as it is since he and his wife broke their traditional rules and escaped to this town. Unlike Shoba finds it difficult to fit in this place because of her anxieties and the fear of her family's

revenge. She possesses a fear as well as contempt of the unknown Africans with whom she lives. When she returns from India after she visited her family home because of her father's death, she becomes more depressed and homesick. Shoba ends up with no sense of home neither in Africa nor in her family home.

This problem with identity does not touch settlers only, but also citizens. The postcolonial state is terrifying that ultimately even the natives of the land have to opt for the life in exile. When Ferdinand moves to his mother home and comes to the town to study, he has this conscious feeling of a foreigner, he says, "I didn't want to come here. I don't know anyone here" (77). To be unhomey is not necessarily to be out of land or without home, natives like Ferdinand has this sense of unhomey even in his land "to be unhomed is not to be homeless" (Bhabha 9). Modern Africa is no home for people like Ferdinand and Zabeth. About Ferdinand, Naipaul canters his argument around the anxieties of the changeable world. The events of his life, his early years in the bush, schooling in the Lycée, joining to the Domain and the president's regime, sum up a brief history of a developing nation. Ferdinand is divided between the old and the new. That is, his cultural identity crisis has made him "a psychological refugee" (Tyson qtd. In Taş 2). This cultural unrest makes him get a sense of unhomeliness and no secure place to go to. Ferdinand conveys, "there is no place to go to. I've been on tour in the villages. It's a nightmare [...] nowhere is safe now" (165). The country is no safe even for real citizens like Ferdinand.

Like Ferdinand, Salim also remains divided. Being placeless, nomadic and trapped in the world of international disturbance inherits him in an existential dilemma. This world impacted and influenced Salim to escape in the end, "Migration is one way trip, there is no "home" to go back to" (Hall 115), meaning that once people leave their home or homeland, the migrants get transformed or translated into "homeless"

beings who can hardly dream of a return, like Salim. He has earlier drifted into the interior, and then he immigrates to London, in unhappy state. He tries to make a new start of his life and thinks of the opportunity of marrying Kareisha, Nazruddin's daughter who had been promised to him since he was a child. In London, he reaches the highest feeling of his alienation from his detached community and his instruction into European culture, Salim says, "the Europe I had come to – and knew from the outset [...] was neither the old Europe nor the new. It was something shrunken and mean and forbidding" (139). Salim gives up totally to the overwhelming power of Eurocentrism and his physical self-catches up with psychological ones.

When he returns to the town, he has already lost his job, he finds that the nationalization has deprived him of his shop and many things have changed, Salim utters "there could be no going back; there was nothing to go back to" (244). He sadly reflects that neither the town nor any other place can provide him with what he has lost because home is "hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost" (114). In spite of his constant desire for order and meaning, he finds out only chaos and no meaning not only in the external world but also within his inner. In this invariable change and displacement, home constitutes to the present, it becomes the present and unhomey inhabit in its extension, "I was in Africa one day, I was in Europe the next morning. It was more than travelling fast. It was like being in two places at once [...] both places were real; both places were unreal" (246), tells Salim. Home symbolizes the desire of locating a real being and true self.

Salim looks for home in the town, then for hope to find in the London dream. But, he feels only neglected and abandoned and belonging nowhere after he left his family. He recognizes that the dream of home and security is pressing more than a dream of

the isolation, an anachronistic and feeble, Salim says, “and what I have been looking for since I left home has not come to me. I will wait for the rest of my life” (114), a thing he didn’t find and he is waiting for to come. In the end, he finds it reassuring to return to his family home, to get away from the African world that is terrorized by the president’s boom of horror. And Salim continues his journey away from Africa.

Naipaul places his characters in complex circumstances. The political, social and cultural upheaval serves as a backdrop to the drama resulting in psychic crisis and the sense of refuge and unhomeliness. Obviously, Naipaul regards home as the foundation of one’s identity; therefore, unhomeliness is seen as cultural rootlessness. In *A Bend*, it appears that the notion of home is interrogated and symbolizes a search for true self. Perceptibly, most characters share a perpetual obsession of the pursuit of home, besides a common hereditary trace of homelessness and failure. Home and identity undertake a radical change. This change does not provide much chance of any kind of fulfilment for characters who are already feel outsiders and adopt this sense of unhomeliness without any definite identity of their own.

#### **4. Naipaul’s Symbolic Tinge**

V.S Naipaul is a master of fiction and literary device, a craftsman of style, language and symbolism. His talent consists in creating images and original descriptions to understand human conditions. Naipaul is, perhaps, the most lucid witness of a world in the struggle of moral and spiritual uncertainties. In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul’s use of language, symbols, the sense of irony and his ruthless honesty is apparent, in order to show his cynical and uncertain view of this counterfeit and contradicting postcolonial Africa.

The opening sentence of the novel “the world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it” (4), which has also entered the title of the authorized biography of Naipaul; *The World is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V.S. Naipaul*<sup>11</sup> by Patrick French has been much interrogated. Imraan Coovadia offers a sensitive reaction to the language employed. According to him, the declaration of world weariness ‘the world is what it is’ is also a statement of identity indicating a logical mood that is (a=a) or (Rome was Rome). He gives the following explanation,

if we fill in the implied connectors the statement reads “the world is what it is *therefore* men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it.” Yet the second statement by no means follows from the first without stated assumptions. The reader is challenged to accept the presupposition, if provisionally, or reject the argument altogether (8).

Coovadia acknowledges that Naipaul usually employs semi-colon for rhythm, but here the mark conceals the function of logical implication. Another writer, Laurence Wright, who claims that “Naipaul grounds his fiction in the Aristotelian axioms<sup>12</sup>” (188), that introduced generations to the fundamentals of traditional western logic, and which Naipaul may well have known from his time at Oxford. The laws as Wright quotes from Bertrand Russell’s *Problems of Philosophy*<sup>13</sup> are: “The law of identity: “Whatever is, is”, The law of contradiction: "Nothing can both be and not be”, The law of excluded middle: "Everything must either be or not be” (72).

According to Wright, “the world is what it is” (the empirical and intellectuals) echoes the law of identity “what is, is”, means that Naipaul views this African world as what intellectual Africans and Western politics, science and technology make it.

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<sup>11</sup>A biography of the Noble Prize winning author V.S. Naipaul. It was published in 2008. The title derives from the opening sentence of Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River*.

<sup>12</sup>The classical 'laws of thought'. They are attributed to Aristotle.

<sup>13</sup>A 1912 book by philosopher Bertrand Russell, a brief and accessible guide to the problems of philosophy.

Salim, returning to Africa after his time in London, remarks, “I had just come from Europe; I had seen the real competition” (258). “Men who are nothing” (traditional Africans) and “men who allow themselves to become nothing” (semi-educated Africans and delayed colonials) echo the second and the third law. Those close to traditional Africa, like the rebels and Zabeth who live a purely African life, for her only Africa. Those have difficulty recognizing this modernity and its contradiction, “the rage of rebels was like a rage against metal, machinery, wires, everything that was not of the forest and Africa” (49), because modernity cannot achieve fulfilment to them. So, the second and the third laws occur.

Ferdinand is a product of the colonial *lycée*, the polytechnic and the Big Man’s cadet program. He Intends to be ‘the new man of Africa’, Ferdinand also returns to the forest each night, he is pliant, accepting all situations. He learns to accept all sides of himself and all sides of the country. He knows his country and what it offered and all that his country offered him he wishes to take as his due. It was like arrogance but it was also a form of ease and acceptance. This ideological instruction and poor education made him paralyzed. Salim mocks, “Ferdinand could only tell me that the world outside Africa was going down and Africa was rising. When I asked him what way the world outside Africa was going, he couldn’t say” (53). Ferdinand's acceptance of tradition and modernity without having no difference, unselfconsciously, he manages with both “To be and not be” so effectively becomes ‘nothing’. When Salim sees Ferdinand after his return from London, he remarks that he would find him different but these men, who depended on the President’s favour for everything, become bundles of nerves. The great power they exercised went with a constant fear of being destroyed. And they become unstable and half dead(164).

According to Indar, Africans have no means of understanding a fraction of the thought and science and philosophy and law that have gone to make that outside world, they simply accept (148). Hence, Africa is trapped as “not being,” “nothing,” and epitomized by the unnamed town at the bend in the river. Wright claims that when Naipaul writes “The world is what it is,” he asks the reader to equate the “is” of identity [...] with “is” of prediction, on his own unique terms. For “the world” is not western civilization, science, and power, even if (assuming a benevolent intention) Naipaul wants it to be” (192). For Naipaul, Africa is timeless and history-less, represented by natural elements like the forest, the river, and the bush. And “the men who are nothing” and “men who allow themselves to become nothing” are such because they cannot make anything new, allow themselves to be nothing and leave behind their loyalty to the old ways.

*A Bend* essentially focuses on individuals attempting to escape fate. Naipaul however suggests that fate belongs to a world of magic where only past exists but no history which provides a sense of wholeness and belonging.

The novel is about current history, and also the procedure of making history. The river is a significant symbol in the novel, “The river [...] is history itself, and the bend in the river is history in the process of changing direction” (Vincent 337). It has a constant presence in the background of Salim’s narrative,

on the river, it was another thing. You felt the land taking you back to something that was familiar, something you had known at some time but had forgotten or ignored [...] You felt the land taking you back to what was there a hundred years ago, to what had been there always (7).

The river revisits the past history, a meeting place for Arab settlement, European outpost and European suburb. It is a witness of the psychological, existing upheavals and changes that have come to the forest, the ruin of a dead civilization and the glittering

Domain of new Africa. For Salim, it is a place where he shares thoughts and his nostalgic feelings “I felt lost and had to fight hard to hold on to that mood that had come to me beside the river” (93).

The great African river also serves as the geographical anchor to the unnamed town. The novel is about this unnamed state on a bend in the river; it also takes action in other place, London, which is also placed at a great bend in the Thames. It seems that Naipaul intends to show that this European city is no less than the African city, therefore symbolizes the whole Europe, "they traded in London as they traded in the middle of Africa [...] the streets of London I saw these people, who were like myself, as from a distance” (140), describes Salim.

There is a similar life lived there in London as in Africa. Salim discovers that though Austria and Europe and North America were nice places to visit, life there is not as rosy as some people think and as he used to think of Europe before he goes to London. Naipaul hints that Africans are affected by these changes made by western culture. The paradoxical fact is those civilized countries are also affected by the new things.

Moreover, the river is a symbol of mobility; it makes it possible for the villagers to commute to town from the bush and for foreigners and politicians to travel there from the capital. It links between the new and the old. The river also indicates natural dominance as Salim recognizes, “The river and the forest were like presences, and much more powerful than you. You felt unprotected, an intruder” (7). Romans considers every river and forest as a home to spirit that “gave identity to that place by its presence and its actions” (Relph 18). The symbolic power of the river recalls the power of nature in both its beauty and its ability to inspire fear in people. Salim expresses that in those days of rebellion and fear, he feels they are in touch, through the Africans, with the spirits of the river and forest.

The symbolic value of the recurring image of the water hyacinth is recognizable as well. It reinforces this idea of change and the new. In the local language, there is no word for it so people call it 'the new thing' or 'the new thing in the river'. It is part of 'the new Africa', yet it is not introduced to the river ecology from outside. It represents this new kind of African person who begins to gain power after independence.

The hyacinths of the river, floating on: during the days of the rebellion they had spoken of blood; on heavy afternoons of heat and glitter they had spoken of experience without savour; white in moonlight, they had matched the mood of a particular evening. Now, lilac on bright green, they spoke of something over.(95)

Through the novel, this new thing continues to float down the river, emblematic of the new thing in the flow of history and the change that grows faster. Although it is considered by people as another enemy because its rubbery vines and leaves formed thick tangles of vegetation that adhered to the river banks and clogged up waterway, it is "the fruit of the river alone" (28), says Salim. It seems that Naipaul's inscription of the water hyacinth is a symbolic language to describe this idea of the new kind of African man who come into being around the time of independence and quickly spread a political ideology that many locals do not approve of. Just as the water hyacinth becomes a menace to the river ecology, these political activists like the Big Man and rebels become a menace to the town.

As these images and the recurring references to time, history, and the making of history, William Vincent states that "The novel is about the author's sense of history and his belief that we are living at one of those critical moments when history changes course, the question which arises is what is the nature of this bend in the river as Naipaul conceives it" (338). Obviously, Naipaul regards the third world,

practically Africa. He conceives a dependent African state and the role of these western powers and civilization of making this change that takes place.

Naipaul uses different languages in the novel: Latin, English, and French. When Salim comes to the bend in the river, he observes that this town strongly engages with European civilization especially the use of language. On a ruined monument near the dock gates of the town, the operators of the steamer carved a Latin inscription, “Misericordie probat populous et foedera jungi”(62), which serves as the community motto, Salim keeps it untranslated. The source of the words is the *Aeneid* by Vergil.<sup>14</sup>

Later, Salim learns from the Belgian missionary, father Huismans, the formula’s provenance in Vergil. This revised formula celebrates the linking of the town to the capital by steamship. Huismans’ interpretation to the sentence in the new context is ironical “he approves of the mingling of peoples and their bonds of union”(38), meaning thereby the Roman god approves the mingling of people and treaties in Africa. However, in the old Latin one of the watching gods says that the great Roman god might not approve of a settlement in Africa, of mingling people there and of treaties of union. In the motto words altered to reverse the meaning. Salim’s reaction to such colonial over-searching “I was staggered, Twisting two-thousand-year-old words to celebrate sixty years of the steamer service from the capital! Rome was Rome. What was this place?” (38), Salim exclaims. To carve the words on a monument beside this African river is “surely to invite the destruction of the town. Wasn’t there some little anxiety, as in the original line in the poem? [...] the monument had been destroyed, leaving only bits of bronze and the mocking word”(38). Therefore, the hostility of those locals to one another makes the idea of the meeting and mingling ridiculous.

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<sup>14</sup>A Latin epic poem, written by Vergil between 29 and 19 BC. Originally published in 1845. It tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans.

The use of Latin language in the novel is obscure to some extent. Salim says that Huisman uses these Latin words in new context because these words help him to see himself in Africa, he saw himself as part of an immense flow of history. He took the Latin words to refer to himself because he is European, otherwise, words were not vainglorious to him. Unlike Huisman, Ferdinand enjoys the prestige of the Latin language, he proudly wears his school blazer with “the *Semper Aliquid Novi* motto” (29). The Latin words are from Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia*<sup>15</sup>, *Natural History*. It is truncated and in full “*Ex Africa Semper Aliquid novi*”; “out of Africa there was “always something new”” (38). Ferdinand identifies himself with Elder’s quote as this “*Novi*,” the new man in this emerging continent. Salim finds Ferdinand mocking because he is mimicking and holding this new culture from out of Africa.

Moreover, this misquotation, the absent words, “*Ex Africa*,” is satirical because the entire proverb what makes the school’s motto suitable to its situation. In addition, the motto may represent all new things brought to this continent, for example, The New Domain, which symbolizes ‘the new Africa’. The Big Man wants it to serve as a model for his vision of a new Africa through an outsider power. For Naipaul, the motto is ironic because he insists on the circularity of African history. There is an irony in the other French motto as well “*Discipline Avant Tout*”, in a land lacking in discipline and any chance of discipline speculative, nothing can be more cynical than these words ‘*Discipline above everything*’.

The French language and culture are also noticeable. Starting from the opening reference by Salim to his French made car (a Peugeot), and the French-African photo novels and comic books. The characters’ use of French words, “the woman wanted to be shown respect and to be called *Citoyenne*, *monsieur* and *madame*”(97), says

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<sup>15</sup>A book by Pliny the Elder (Roman author, a naturalist, a naval and an army commander of the early Roman empire), an encyclopedia, comprises 37 books, into which he collected much of the knowledge of his time.

Salim, the president's speeches which are in French, Mahesh has used the French word "they are malins" (34), other words such as; 'Metty' the name which means the French word 'metis'; someone of mix race, the word "patron"...etc. Obviously, this shows the use of European colonialist language and culture; besides, the characters' use of language as a prestige and modern mannerism sounds ridiculous.

Furthermore, since *A Bend* takes in unnamed African state newly-liberated from European colonialism, the frequent reference to the French language and culture identifies that the recently-departed colonial power can be France. Besides, knowing that France in real life has colonized Democratic Republic of Congo (known as Zaire during its post-independence period) and it was ruled by a dictator and corrupt Mobutu Sese Seko over thirty years, Naipaul's narrative by a highly metaphorical "Big Man" hints to the precise point on the African map where the story takes place. Evidently, Naipaul intended to present this dictator to convey the ravages left behind by the departed colonial powers and the power vacuums that are filled by ruthless militants.

Apparently, Naipaul's use of language, symbols and of satire and irony copiously is to show the culture ethos of this part of Africa. In *A Bend*, Naipaul writes the contradiction of thought and the unstable conditions of postcolonial government to convey his sceptical and pessimistic point of view concerning the current present and the future in this new independent county on a bend in the river.

## CONCLUSION

The present study explored the writer's potential in presenting a sense of scepticism and cynicism. It employed the postcolonial theory to examine different contexts and structures that contribute to the research study. The socio-historical context in which this literary work is produced reviewed the different perspectives in postcolonial discourse especially those of notable theorists by Homi Bhabha.

The study examined Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* that meanders steadily through the dark reality of postcolonial Africa, depicting minimalist beauty and frightening tension. Indeed, the dissertation unveiled the truth about the ability of the newly postcolonial African nations to forge an independent political and social identity in Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*.

Naipaul discussed different issues in the postcolonial period highlighting the conflict that arises when one culture is dominated by another. The dissertation focused on the effect of Western culture on ex-colonized African nation, and examined its impact on the characters' sense of unhomeliness. Therefore, the study relied on Bhabha's postcolonial theories of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and unhomeliness. Through these concepts, Bhabha depicts the main factors that represent one's culture and identity.

It is worth to mention that the Africans' exposure to Western values and thoughts caused them to have cultural hybridity and identity crisis resulted in homesickness. So, *A Bend* reflects the interaction between native and Western culture. The novel showed the hybrid culture that the characters exhibit after their attachment with the European culture even after independence. Unquestionably, the work offered examples in which how the African identity and culture have been distorted.

This study exposed the impact of neo-colonialism on the African's identity and culture. Naipaul has showed the outcomes of the imposed superiority on the African individual. After being exposed to the Western culture, the ex-colonized people fail to maintain their cultural values and political and social identities. The loss of hope came from the lack of cultural and spiritual traditions and history. Thus, the Africans face a dilemma of identity, and find themselves in a crossroads of cultures.

Naipaul presented the characters' identity that falls in an intermediate zone, where their hybridity and mimicry bring about their ambivalent position with an uncertain and unstable identity. Moreover, they have no place to call own. Characters always hang in-between, and therefore, blur the boundary between the self and the other, identity and non-identity, home and unhomeliness.

Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* is a dark comedy where the author used a sense of scepticism and cynicism chiefly intensified the reader's awareness of the tragic possibilities of life in postcolonial Africa. It revealed the author's doubtful and ironical view towards this independent African nation to have an independent political and social identity. Indeed, it showed a fragmented society after the colonial period that lacks creative potential and that cannot govern itself without external power. Apparently, Naipaul has no certainty of life and existence in this bend in the river. His constant mobility symbolized that this postcolonial African world is a place of dispersed people who constantly make and unmake themselves.

Most of the earlier readings of *A Bend in the River* suggested that Naipaul adopts the transitional view of the traditional colonial hierarchies of the west, therefore leading to a distinct Conradian vision of history. Although Naipaul has some limitations and negative judgments which have been highlighted in this study, yet, he is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures to write on postcolonial issues and diaspora.

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## RESUME

Dans ses œuvres, V.S. Naipaul discute du débat persistant du post colonialisme. Il cherche à aborder les questions de décolonisation, d'eurocentrisme et d'identité. Par conséquent, la présente étude examine le scepticisme et le cynisme de Naipaul à propos des nations africaines nouvellement indépendantes et de leur capacité à forger une identité politique et sociale indépendante. Il s'efforce d'analyser le roman "*A Bend in the River*" à la lumière de la théorie postcoloniale. L'étude utilise les théories postcoloniales de Homi Bhabha sur l'hybridité, le mimétisme, l'ambivalence et le concept de l'inhabituel. Le premier chapitre présente le contexte socio-historique et le cadre théorique. Le deuxième chapitre examine le scepticisme et le cynisme de l'écrivain à l'égard de la nation africaine nouvellement indépendante dans le roman.

## الملخص

يناقش في. أس. نايبول في أعماله الجدل الدائم حول ما بعد الإستعمار. فهو يسعى إلى معالجة مسائل عدة مثل: إنهاء الإستعمار، إشكالية المركزية الأوروبية والهوية. ومن ثم ، فإن الدراسة الحالية تبحث في شكوك نايبول وتهكمه بشأن الدول الأفريقية المستقلة حديثًا وقدرتها على تشكيل هوية سياسية واجتماعية مستقلة. ومن هنا، تسعى الدراسة إلى تحليل رواية "منعطف النهر" في ضوء نظرية ما بعد الكولونيالية. توظف الدراسة نظريات هومي بهابها لما بعد الاستعمار عن التهجين، التقليد، التناقض، ومفهوم انعدام ألفة المواطن. يعرض الفصل الأول السياق الاجتماعي التاريخي والإطار النظري للعمل. ويبحث الفصل الثاني في شكوك الكاتب وتهكمه تجاه الدولة الأفريقية المستقلة حديثًا في الرواية.