Postcolonial Themes
Chapter Two

Postcolonial Themes

Post-colonialism is an intellectual direction that has existed since around the middle of the twentieth century. It has developed from and mainly refers to the time after colonialism. The post-colonial direction was created as colonial countries became independent. Nowadays, aspects of post-colonialism can be found not only in sciences concerning history, literature and politics, but also in approach to culture and identity of both the countries that were colonized and the former colonial powers.

Indeed, on the one hand, 'post-colonial' may refer to the status of a land that is no longer colonized and has regained its political independence (e.g., post-colonial India). In this sense, 'post-colonialism' will pertain to the set of features (economic, political, social) which characterizes these countries and the way in which they negotiate their colonial heritage, being understood that long periods of forced dependency necessarily had a profound impact on the social and cultural fabric of these societies (the post-colonial condition). It may also apply to the former colonizers in as much that both extended contacts with the alien societies they conquered and the eventual loss of these profitable possessions, deeply influenced the course of their economic and cultural evolution.

On the other hand, 'post-colonialism' may designate and denounce, the new forms of economic and cultural oppression that have succeeded modern colonialism and it is sometimes called 'neo-colonialism'. The term tends to point out that cooperation, assistance, modernization and the like are in fact new forms of political and cultural domination as pernicious as the former imperial colonialism or colonial imperialism were: the devaluation of autochthonous ways of life and their displacement.
by the ethos of dominant nations which are technologically more advanced. Obviously, these two senses are intimately linked but foreground different aspects of a single process: the cultural homogenization of ever larger areas of the globe.

The term 'postcolonialism' refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonized. By the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the world was under the control of European countries. At one time, Great Britain, for instance, ruled almost fifty percent of the world. During the twentieth century, countries such as India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada and Australia won independence from their European colonizers. The literature and art produced in these countries after independence has become the object of 'Postcolonial Studies,' a term coined in and for academia, initially in British universities.

Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. The chronological meaning of postcolonial period suggests clearly that it designates the post-independence period. However, it is not only the period after the departure of the imperial powers that concerns those in the field, but also what preceded independence as well.
To Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer,

‘Post’ implies that which is behind us and the past implies periodization. We can therefore speak of the postcolonial period as a framing device to characterize the second half of the Twentieth Century. The term ‘postcolonial’ displaces the focus on ‘postwar’ as a historical makes for the last fifty years. (1)

While dictionaries, even today, define colonialism as a practice by which powerful countries control less powerful countries and use their resources in order to further their own interests, wealth and power, the word ‘colonialism’, in the last decade or so, has assumed several other senses, representing new notions that have been dormant in the power structure. In this context, it is not just political power alone that constitutes power, it is also used for domination and exploitation.

Postcolonialism also deals with conflicts of identity and cultural belonging. Colonial powers came to foreign states and destroyed main parts of native tradition and culture; furthermore, they continuously replaced them with their own ones. This often led to conflicts when countries became independent and suddenly faced the challenge of developing a new nationwide identity and self-confidence. As generations had lived under the power of colonial rulers, they had more or less adopted their Western tradition and culture. The challenge for these countries was to find an individual way of proceeding to call their own. They could not get rid of the Western way of life from one day to the other; they could not manage to create a completely new one either. On the other hand, former colonial powers had to change their self-assessment. This paradox identification process seems to be what decolonization is all about, while post-colonialism is the intellectual direction that deals with it and maintains a steady
analysis from both points of view. In the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, such a
dialectics leads to a new polarization:

In this swing of the pendulum, marginality is Valorised, oppression
almost turns into empowerment. On the whole however postcolonialism
foregrounds the need for recognizing identities, voices and situations
that were not granted by the colonial power (...). (4)

The term ‘postcolonial’ as commonly understood, covers the cultural interaction
between colonized powers and the societies they colonized - the white settler colonies
such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia on the one hand and the non-settler
colonies in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean on the other. However, the more
popular usage of the term, as Gauri Viswanathan suggests and it is quoted in Bahri “to
signify more or less an attitude or position from which the decentering of Eurocentrism
may ensuing” (52).

Postcolonial literature, sometimes called New English Literature is concerned
with the political and cultural independence of people formerly subjugated in colonial
empires and the literary expression of postcolonialism. Postcolonial literary critics
re-examine classic literature with a particular focus on the social discourse that shaped
it. Postcolonial fictional writers interact with the traditional colonial discourse, but
modify or subvert it; for instance by retelling a familiar story from the perspective of an
oppressed minor character in the story. Jean Rhy's Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) was
written as a pseudo-prequel to Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. Often the protagonist of a
postcolonial work will find him/herself in a struggle to establish an identity, feeling
conflicted between an old, native world that is being abolished by the invasive forces of
modernity and the new dominant culture.
In a comparable way, postcolonial theory involves a conceptual reorientation towards the perspectives of knowledge, as well as needs, developed outside the West. Postcolonialism in a very general sense, is the study of the interactions between imperialists and the societies they colonized in the modern period. The postcolonial theory according to Robert J. C Young is a dynamic perspective:

is not so much about static ideas or practices, as about the relations between ideas and practices: relations of harmony, relations of conflict, generative relations between different people and their cultures. Postcolonialism is about a changing world, a world that has been changed by struggle and which its practitioners intend to change further. (7)

Postcolonial literature and theory is concerned with the situation of former nations and cultures whose histories have been irremediably altered by the experience of colonialism. Postcolonialism looks critically at imperialism and its legacy and seeks to undo the ideologies that underpin and justify imperialist practices. Postcolonial writers also work to reclaim the past, by their own terms rather than by the terms superimposed on them by imperialist ideologies and practices.

There are several aspects that characterize postcolonialization. Of the psychological crisis, rootlessness, diaspora and identity crisis are key issues pervading all postcolonial writings. Postcolonial theory is characterized by cultural and historical dislocation. Postcolonial literature has many themes: East-West encounters, multi-identities such as ethnicity, racism, regionality, nationality, transnationality, gender and cultural locations, displacement, fragmentation, internalization and marginalization, memory, home land, house and self-identity and identity crisis. Of the many themes, identity crisis is the major theme in the postcolonial literature. Individualism, alienation
Identity crisis is a psychosocial state or condition of disorientation and role confusion occurring especially in adolescents as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures and expectations and often producing acute anxiety or an analogous state of confusion occurring in a social structure, such as an institution or a corporation. Identity crisis overlaps and runs through both rootlessness and diaspora. Historically, this is considered as one of the results of colonization and regarded as one of the aspects of postcolonialism. Later this has become a major subject for the writers of literature. The subject of identity is very complex as it encompasses the totality of social experiences, much of which are influenced by history. Due to its widespread usage through various disciplines, there has not been an agreement on even its most basic aspects yet. As Ian Williamson and Cedric Cullingford highlight “there is disagreement about the definition, debate over whether the phenomenon is a sociological process or a psychological state, or both, and confusion over the inevitability of the experience” (263). The concept has been used widely in the contemporary literature, sociology and philosophy. Melvin Seeman underlines that “It is a central theme in the classics of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim; and in contemporary work, the consequences that have been said to flow from the fact of alienation have been diverse, indeed” (783).

Diaspora is the important theme of the postcolonial writings. Diaspora, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions, is a
central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself was a crucial diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world. This often led to conflicts when countries became independent and suddenly faced the challenge of developing a new nationwide identity and self-confidence. The widespread effects of these migrations continue on a global scale. Many such 'settled' regions were developed historically as plantations or agricultural colonies to grow foodstuffs for the metropolitan populations and thus a large-scale demand for labour was created in many regions where the local population could not supply the need.

Rootlessness is a concept that is always associated with postcolonialism. It is one of the serious effects of colonial period which was brought to light only in the postcolonial period. The history of the Caribbean and modern African states has so far been consistent as a record of displaced values. From this emotional, cultural, spiritual, environmental, social and economic displacement arose psychological traumas, symptoms of alienation, rootlessness and an endemic colonial mentality. During this postcolonial period the writers wrote much on this rootlessness in their works.

Creolization and globalization enable new forms of identity formation and processes of communal enrichment through pacific intermixtures and aggregations. The meeting points of multiple diasporas and the crossing and intersection of diasporas are sites of new creolization. Robin Cohen states:
Creolization is a condition in which the formation of new identities and inherited culture evolve to become different from those they possessed in the original cultures, and then creatively merge these to create new varieties that supersede the prior forms. (369-373)

The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop their original cultures. Creolized versions of their own practices evolved, modifying (and being modified by) indigenous cultures with which they thus came into contact. The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, 'natural' cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse. It also questions the simpler kinds of theories of nativism which suggest that decolonization can be effected by a recovery or reconstruction of pre-colonial societies. The most recent and most socially significant diasporic movements have been those of colonized peoples back to the metropolitan centres. In countries such as Britain and France, the population now has substantial minorities of diasporic ex-colonial peoples. In recent times, the notion of a diasporic identity has been adopted by many writers as a positive affirmation of their hybridity. Today diaspora refers to any displacement – physical or psychological. In this regard, any movement or factor that engenders double identity or cross culturalism can become diasporic. This in turn leads to overlapping identities, psychological angst and other such crises. Naipaul’s novels and non-fictional works address the growing sense of displacement experienced by newly independent Third World nation’s people. Themes of alienation, mistrust, rootlessness, mockery and self-deception will certainly continue to pervade throughout his works.
Balkanization is “a geopolitical term originally used to describe the process of fragmentation and division of a region or state into smaller regions or states that are hostile or non-cooperative with each other” (Sudarson Raghavan, A01). Balkanization means “divide a territory into small, hostile states” (www.audioenglish.net/dictionary/balkanize.html). In literature, it mainly refers to the cultural or societal fragmentation in a hybrid form. It is also called ‘cultural balkanization’. Cultural balkanization is always a product of hybridization, often between traditional, local elements and global ones. In the case of cultural balkanization, a hybridization of local and global elements usually occurs as groups fostering local or traditional values absorb elements of globalization. Cultural balkanization could be understood as undermining national identity and at the same time as existing in tension with one another.

Cultural balkanization is a term used in the US to describe the tendency to assert local identities over national identity. William Bennett speaks of cultural balkanization as an “erosion of our national self-understanding” (19). According to Friedman, “it refers to the cultural and ethnic fragmentation that is part of the same reality that constitutes globalization” (315). Ger and Belk find that globalization creates division by “increasing social inequality, class polarization, consumer frustrations, stress, materialism and threats to health and environment” (278). These divisions serve as the impetus for the reassertion of local identities.

Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial literature is most commonly seen when members of a colonized society (Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers (the British or the French). Under colonialism and in the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behavior - one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access
to that same power oneself. Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one’s own cultural identity, though in some cases immigrants and colonial subjects are left so confused by their cultural encounter with a dominant foreign culture that there may not be a clear pre-existing identity to suppress.

Mimicry is often seen as something shameful and a black or brown person engaging in mimicry is usually derided by other members of his or her group for doing so. Though mimicry is a very important concept in thinking about the relationship between colonizing and colonized peoples and many people have historically been derided as mimics or mimic-men, it is interesting that almost no one ever describes themselves as positively engaged in mimicry but it is always something that someone else is doing.

Hybridity is an every-day reality that encounter in an increasingly multi-ethnic and pluralistic society. Common heritage of most of the Asian and African nations is that the heritage of colonialism. Colonialism, without doubt, is an encounter between cultures, languages, people and system of thought within the ambit in which the power is vested with the white colonial masters. Colonial administration in Asian, African and South American regions infused European form of thinking, European languages, culture, education and way of life from food to sports into a native 'context'. As theorized by postcolonial critic Homi K Bhabha “Hybridity is a creation of a new cultural forms and realities resulting from colonial encounter” (91). In colonial societies, hybridity may be in the form of retrieval or the revival of the pre-colonial past. This can be in either reviving folk or tribal cultural forms or conventions or adapting contemporary artistic and social productions to suit the present-day conditions of globalization, multiculturalism and transnationalism. Hybridization, Bakhtin defines,
“is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor” (358). Naipaul in a description of contemporary Caribbean society captures this hybridized/half-native/half-Westernized, unsatisfactory identity of diasporic, once-colonized communities.

By contrast to mimicry, which is a relatively fixed and limited idea, postcolonial hybridity can be quite slippery and broad. At a basic level, hybridity refers to any mixing of eastern and western culture. Within colonial and postcolonial literature, it most commonly refers to colonial subjects from Asia or Africa who have found a balance between eastern and western cultural attributes. Different set of hybridity sub-categories are racial, linguistic, literary, cultural and religious.

Historylessness, lack of a definite cultural past, search for unity at cultural level, colonialism, multiculturalism, brokenness of land, fragmentations of minds are some of the dominant features which contribute to the West-Indian ethos. Naipaul in his novels presents himself as a commentator on the postcolonial situation though he is not a reformer. He concentrates on a slavish society of the West Indies, which had become materialistic and a victim of exploitation with no political or cultural identity of its own. Invariably many of his novels portray the struggle for existence of a rootless Indian society in the West Indian context. The struggle presents many tragic faces such as malnutrition, unemployment, ugliness, overpopulation, poverty, slavery, superstitions and meaningless rites and rituals. The themes of Naipaul are divided into two categories, the primary and the secondary. The primary themes are alienation, quest for identity or belonging, slavery or entrapment, colonial politics and religion,
tradition and modernity and rebellion. The secondary themes are materialism, corruption, racism, escapism, love, marriage and sex, death and autobiographical references. The present study takes the postcolonial major theme of identity crisis for analysis.

Naipaul, in his works, describes colonial and postcolonial society, alienation, diaspora and the loss of identity in an environment that is alive and yet purposeless. The writer presents a grim picture of the pathetic plight of the indentured and alienated Indian labourers, who are uprooted, exploited and driven homeless in an unknown land. The prime factor of alienation which is expressed by the eastern Karma as:

It is in the Expressionistic drama of Cocteau and the Absurd drama and fiction of Beckett that alienation, angst, fear, solipsism, self-wounding, man trapped in a meaningless universe, wandering goalless or in circles of habitual action, that the modern temper is fully realized. (16)

As Townsend remarks, alienation refers to:

an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders, including loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social, disorganization, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, and the loss of belief or values. (12-13)

The study of colonial and postcolonial literature inherently involves the study of identity. Identity becomes the fulcrum upon which the postcolonial character revolves. Each character that is created suffers from a certain lack of direction in their lives. They all seem to suffer a crisis of identity when a strong binding traditional culture is absent. This crisis of identity, while not uncommon in other literatures, is
most severe when viewed in postcolonial literature. It is the idea that the identity of an individual is so malleable that postcolonial literature focuses on. The identities of the postcolonial characters are mired in the struggle to form an emotional, cultural and societal identity that reflects the experiences of a distant past they cannot recall.

Naipaul’s absorption into the experience of rootlessness, the alienating effects of colonial past on today's postcolonial people have taken him to Africa, South America, India and all over the world not in search of roots but in search of rootlessness and has yielded a rich harvest of travelogues which are about much more than travel. Naipaul manipulates his rootlessness into an ability to observe with extreme objectivity. Drawing from the margins of society, Naipaul's novels and non-fictional works address the growing sense of displacement experienced by newly independent Third World Nations. Themes of alienation, mistrust, rootlessness, mockery and self-deception will certainly continue to pervade throughout his work. Naipaul is one who writes about rootlessness which is his own problem.

Naipaul's significant body of work is heavily influenced by the circumstances of his life. A Hindu born in Trinidad and later educated in England, Naipaul has an objective rootlessness that enables him to question society's archetypes. Critics have spoken of his feeling of congenital displacement, of having been born a foreigner, a citizen of an exiled community on a colonized island, without a natural home except for India to which he often returns, only to be reminded of his distance from his roots. The strength of Naipaul is the poignancy of a wanderer who tries to go home, but is not taken in and is accepted by another home only so long as he admits he is a lodger there. Naipaul is regarded as a pillar of Britain's cultural establishment, yet has also become a symbol of modern rootlessness. His writings on rootlessness, identity and religion in
the post-colonial world have won him every major prize in the English-speaking world. India - to where he traces his ancestry, has always been a powerful muse, which he acknowledged from his home in London. Naipaul knowingly or unknowingly expresses superbly his own 'problem of root' through the character of Mr Biswas who is considered a nomad throughout the novel and finally finds rest in his own house in Sikkim Street.

A House for Mr Biswas exemplifies bondage of an individual and a society and it also demonstrates how a motif of freedom is achieved. At the individual level it is the story of Mohun Biswas who moves from bondage to freedom and Naipaul explains it with autobiographical reminiscences. Like Naipaul's own grandfather, Biswas confronts slavery right from the beginning. He is a person whose psyche is imprisoned though a superstitious philosophy. His birth at twelve o'clock in the midnight, the six fingers he carries, the prophecy that is told about him are the factors planting the seeds of his constructive philosophy. Moreover, the physical conditions around him lend him to a survival tendency. Under colonialism and slavery survivalism wipes out a person's sense of self and causes alienation. The slavish survivalism and alienation haunt Biswas's life from the beginning. Soon after the death of his father the family is disintegrated. Pratap and Prasad are sent away. His mother Bipti works at Tara's place, Pagotes. Disintegration of a family is also a dominant feature of slave condition both in America and the West-Indies.

Mohun Biswas's bondage is finally confirmed when he is married to Shama. His arrival into the Tulsi family is the second phase of Biswas's slavery. Like a slave or the colonial subject, Biswas cannot exercise the power of his free will or his free will not easily allows to make any choices. Karl Marx in his book Das Capital describes the
pathetic condition of a slave as 'Interpellation' where a person has to make choices when there are no choices really available. Mr Biswas cannot go back to his past, nor can he go to a future, for none of them are available to him. A slave occupies place assigned to him by the master and Biswas prefers to remain constantly in the geographical and ideological orbit of Tulsi dome. At the physical level he is granted no autonomy so far as his living and work is concerned. He accepts the work assigned to him by Mr Seth and Tulsi, moves to their estate one after the other like Albert Camus's wooden lock floating adrift endlessly. Like the existential hero of Camus' all his actions prove to be futile. Like Camus' Sisyphus the more the struggles the more he fails in life. The move from Hanuman House to The Chase, from The Chase to Green Vale, and from there to The Shorthills is the journey of Biswas. These are the places making Biswas placelessness all the time. He cannot claim any identity or sense of belonging. More than Biswas, an individual he becomes one of the Tulsi's sons-in-law who is nothing but a person reduced to the status of a slave. Rootlessness, loss of identity becomes the sign structure signifying Biswas's life.

The theme of alienation is worked and reworked in the novels of Naipaul. Many of his heroes as shown below experience alienation having been separated from the land to which they belong. They find it hard to reconcile themselves with the existing world order. The related themes of homelessness, alienation and dislocation are characteristic of Naipaul’s novels. Kenneth Ramchand suggests that A House for Mr Biswas is a novel of “rootlessness par excellence” (92). Bruce Macdonald considers the novel remarkable for using “colonial psychoanalysis” (23). In A House for Mr Biswas as in The Mimic Men, Naipaul demonstrates the colonized people's predicament and their struggles for a place in the world stemming from their feeling of alienation, isolation, homelessness, rootlessness and placelessness.
The alienated people of Naipaul seek asylum in order to establish their identity. *A House for Mr Biswas* is the portrayal of a single individual’s search for identity, his struggle to arrive at authentic selfhood. It is obvious in Biswas’s reply to his son who asks him, “Who are you? he replies ‘I am just somebody, Nobody at all. I am just a man you know’” (279).

Biswas is an everyman craving for identity in the midst of nonentities. At one stage his crisis of identity is extremely acute but real. Looking at himself in a mirror, he says to Sharma, “I don’t look like anything at all. Shopkeepers, lawyers, doctor, labourers, oversees I don’t look like any of them” (*HMB* 159). It clearly projects the longing for his identity and desire to look like one of them.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, Biswas is poignantly drawn to the memory of a scene he had witnessed from a moving bus at sunset. The image, indelibly works into his consciousness conveys not only Biswas’ helplessness and loneliness, but also gives us his feeling of adult insecurity and the pathos of a boy (a boy like himself) innocent of the realities of the world, “a boy leaning against an earth house that had no reason for being there under the dark falling sky, a boy who didn’t know where the road and that bus went” (190). The image captures not only Biswas’ self-pity but also a desolation experienced because he is without moorings. The many houses he has briefly lived in – Raghunath, Pundit Jairam’s, his aunt Tara’s, have never been that home where he has a tightful place, where he is more than a visitor. From these dwellings of strangers Biswas struggles to construct his own abode; out of the disorder of his life from birth (Biswas was born at an inauspicious hour and the wrong way round) he attempts to make an orderly growth.
*A House for Mr Biswas* deals with an East Indian’s struggle for a place to strike his deracinated root afresh. It also attacks the Indian society’s segregated, traditional way of life which contents to live in its shell and preserve its own special religious identity. Naipaul based *A House for Mr Biswas* on his own experiences in Trinidad. Mr Biswas is the prototype for Naipaul’s father, Seepersad and Anand, Mr Biswas’s son for Naipaul. In his book, *Letters between Father and Son: Family Letters* (1999), Naipaul says that the relationship between him and his father is similar to that of Anand and his father Mr Biswas. Reading the novel in light of Naipaul’s biography, similarities between the real and fictional fathers and sons can be clearly recognized. Both Naipaul’s father and Mr Biswas are born in a village. Both of them change many houses until they have one of their own. Living with wealthy relatives, working as a sign-painter, getting married with the daughters of conservative, wealthy Hindu families; holding a series of jobs are some of the other similarities.

Naipaul, in contrast, offers no simple resolution. Hanuman is assigned a multi-faceted, contradictory nature by which he is simultaneously prankish, sinister and kind - the ambivalent overseer of a house where worlds intersect, albeit uncomfortably, in Trinidad’s changing socio-political and cultural space of which the text is the aesthetic image. This paradoxical play of traits embodied by the Hanuman is actually not uncharacteristic since in the Hindu pantheon he belongs to a “class of ambivalent deities,” as the eleventh avatar of Rudra/Shiva (Lutgendorf 87-88). Although the deity’s benevolence is popularly recognized in orthodox Hinduism, it is with this tricky, duplicitous trait that Naipaul chooses to negotiate the text’s mytho-religious reworking of the Rama and Sita story of exile and homecoming. For Biswas, there is no triumphant return to stability, no illuminated pathway of return to a lost, original home,
symbolized in his disconsolate movement from one imperfect, partially completed house to the next.

The evocation of Hanuman's ambivalent nature provokes a reconsideration of Biswas's condition as merely one of divine abandonment in the wilderness of Trinidad. Rather, one is invited to ask if Naipaul is in fact pointing to the need to reinterpret and rediscover the deity's meanings and functions in the altered realities of a modern, New World order. Hanuman has undergone some sort of imaginative and diasporic transformation or maybe even a creolization in socio-cultural conditions where fresh ways of seeing and daring creative methods are required.

At the ideological level Biswas is not a person totally assimilated in Tulsi dome as are Pundit, Hari, Madhav and Govind. There is an aching consciousness in him to find liberation from Tulsi dome. However, muteness frustrates his desire for revolution can be made meaningful through a liberated action. Biswas does not act, he becomes mute, or he is muted through physical violence and suppression as well as psychological exploitation. Frantz Fanon in his book Black Skin White Mask maintains that salience is nothing but mute agreement or it is the sign of death, which is final salience. Biswas is not able to break the law of Tulsi dome, nor he is able to articulate his desire for liberation concretely. He remains imprisoned.

The novel is not about bondage; it is about liberation of Mohun Biswas. At the Shorthills finally he is able to build a house of his own. The house is not a place but a symbolic place in the world of placelessness. It is a mark of identity in the world of alienation. It is symbolic zone of a liberated psyche. Mohun Biswas moves from the imprisoned zone of Tulsi dome and makes a departure into a new paradise.
characterizing ontological transmutation. Mohun Biswas feels liberated before the final liberation, his death that occurs at the age of forty-six.

Biswas, as Naipaul suggests, is not an individual but the metaphor of the West Indian culture. He also represents that society. Historylessness, pastlessness, fragmentation, colonialism, slavery and cultural dislocation are common to both, Biswas and the West Indies. Liberation of the West India from the British Empire is like the liberation of Mohun Biswas himself. The West Indies finds a place in the Caribbean night. This island gains autonomy politically, society and economically through the disintegration of British Empire. Biswas ultimately gets liberation, which Tulsi dome is totally shortened. The old order passes away, new minds are liberated and happy are born. Rebirth of a culture, rejuvenation of the self is established once again. Hence, the novel is called the West Indian epic telling the story not of an individual but of the entire West Indian society.

Naipaul seems to suggest that searching for creativity (as Mr Biswas does and never gives up) relying on their own originality is one of the basic means to find their lost and alienated identity. As Kumar Parag also underlines “a house is not just a matter getting a shelter from heat, cold or rain. In fact, it is both an imposition of order and a carving-out of authentic selfhood within the heterogeneous and fragmented society of Trinidad” (139). Naipaul, through satire and irony, tries to instill in the psyches of the once colonized people a sense of alienation in the form of normlessness and alienation as separation. Thus, he thinks, they will be able to leap into a phase of creativity which will consequently supply them with original and authentic identities of their own. Individualism, alienation and rootlessness, hybridity and creolization, struggle for survival, diaspora sense of loss and loss of ethnicity are realized in the novel.
The Mimic Men is the fictional memoir of protagonist Ralph Singh. Written in a boarding house in London, it is a retrospective, first-person account of Ralph's life, ranging over his childhood in the fictional West Indian island of Isabella, his university days in London where he meets and marries his wife and his somewhat successful business and political careers back in Isabella. Ralph Singh is also a prototypical colonial character, an intelligent and sensitive person confused by the plural but unequal society he is raised in and for whom identity is a primary issue. Because the story is related through flashbacks and memories, Ralph has the opportunity to weave in reflection with narrative and self-analysis with exposition. In the process of reading, the reader finds certain words and phrases occurring again and again, the repetition establishing the threads of themes that slowly emerge from the novel like a raised embossed pattern. Ralph admits himself that his feelings, his actions, his life fit in with patterns. The researcher endeavours to examine how Ralph's sense of alienation, his experiences as a colonial politician, his struggle with a sense of personal identity and his inability to connect with others are linked as various expressions of Ralph's sense of loss and disconnectedness. These experiences and reactions also fit into general patterns of colonized persons acting within typical colonial situations.

In The Mimic Men the main character Singh has grown up in a colonized society and he has an identity problem. He can fit himself neither into Isabella nor into England when he goes there. He has a strong feeling of displacement and homelessness. All his life, he searches for a place he can call as his home. After years spent both in Isabella and in England and other countries he travelled to, he understands that he can be happy in England. He gets adapted to the English society and overcomes his feelings of conflict and displacement.
The Mimic Men presents and examines a newly independent country in the Caribbean, the island of Isabella, with a pessimistic view the previous colony has now become independent but the formerly colonized people of the island are unable to establish order and govern their country. The colonial experience has caused the colonized to perceive themselves as inferior to the colonizer. Colonial education and cultural colonization have presented the English world, with its rich culture, as a world of order, discipline, success and achievement. As a result, the natives consider their own culture, customs and traditions, religion and race to be inferior to those of their master and try to identify themselves with the empire. Since they are far away from their original homeland, their own original traditions and religions have become meaningless to them and thus they cannot identify themselves with those remote rules and codes. However, as they are different from the master in cultural, traditional, racial and religious backgrounds, they can never successfully associate themselves with the colonizer either. They suffer from dislocation, placelessness, fragmentation and loss of identity. They become mimic men who imitate and reflect the colonizer's life style, values and views. As these psychological problems cannot be solved after independence is achieved, independence itself becomes a word but not a real experience. Without the colonizer, the colonized see themselves as lost in their postcolonial society that fails to offer a sense of national unity and identity.

Ralph Singh, the narrator of The Mimic Men, is a forty-year-old colonial minister who lives in exile in London. By writing his memoirs, Singh tries to impose order on his life, reconstruct his identity and get rid of the crippling sense of dislocation and displacement. In other words, Singh is the representative of displaced and disillusioned colonial individuals and colonization is depicted as a process that takes away identity, culture, history and sense of place. As John Thieme observes, "the novel
considers the relationship between the socio-political and the psychological consequences of imperialism” (113). Therefore, it becomes essential to read the novel not just for its politics but to study and analyse the impact of colonialism on the psyche of colonial people even after independence.

Homelessness is conveyed in *The Mimic Men* through the series of temporary homes that Ralph occupies, Shylock's boarding house, the expatriate-bourgeois house in Isabella and the London hotel room in which he writes his memoirs. Ralph and Sandra are unable to give their home in Isabella a sense of permanence. He reflects, “It had never seemed important to us to have a house of our own. I had no feelings for the house as home, as personal creation” (71). The transition from *A House for Mr Biswas* in which Biswas's dream was to build his own home to Ralph's state of mind in *The Mimic Men*, suggests a deepening sense of exile in the author's imagination. Before Ralph finds the London hotel which he stays in for fourteen months, he is threatened with homelessness. He narrates, “I travelled from small town to small town, seeking shelter with my sixty-six pounds of luggage, always aware in the late afternoon of my imminent homelessness” (249). His situation recalls Edward Said's comment, “The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional” (365).

The culture of homelessness focuses on the journey more than a fixed point of destination. Ralph gives priority to his period of exile in London over his days as a colonial politician and an expatriate in Isabella, “this present residence in London, which I suppose can be called exile, has turned out to be the most fruitful” (*TMM* 271). By the end of the novel, Ralph suggests that the detachment that exile affords, leads him to a higher state of consciousness, “I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes and no
longer wish to know the god of the city. This does not strike me as loss. I feel, instead, I have lived through attachment and freed myself from one cycle of events” (273-274). Naipaul’s landscapes reflect the possibilities of newly formed sociopolitical groups. The original aesthetic of the picturesque re-presents itself in a new, hybrid permutation, what it is termed as the postcolonial picturesque.

Naipaul has raw textual and thematic matter of aesthetics, identity and landscapes to construct theoretical framework of the postcolonial picturesque. This aesthetic grafts the visual signifiers and ideological tenets of the picturesque on to colonial landscapes and then through the common ground of inherent potential draws on Bhabha’s theory of hybridity to shape an aesthetic that is both grounded in and a rejection of the ambivalence of the postcolonial moment. This critical dimension of the landscape reveals the freedom and possibility that Bhabha sees as inherent in the hybridity of newly formed postcolonial identities. The variety of the picturesque lies at the heart of postcolonial identity, a self-representation forged from perhaps the sublimity of imperial power and the beauty of progress, both material and ideological. The variety that these antecedents impart to postcolonial individuals means that “they are now free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference” (Bhabha 239).

Hybridity is in the form of retrieval or the revival of the pre-colonial past. This can be in either reviving folk or tribal cultural forms or conventions or adapting contemporary artistic and social productions to suit the present-day conditions of globalization, multiculturalism and transnationalism. Naipaul describes a Caribbean identity in which roots have been erased and new ideas and ideologies planted. His feelings of alienation, his disdain for both England and Trinidad, and his sense of
responsibility as a post-colonial writer weighed heavily on him, culminating in *The Mimic Men*.

“As a child, Singh responds to his sense of abandonment by dreaming of India, the homeland, and of his origin. He reads books on Asiatic and Persian Aryans and dreams of horsemen who look for their leader” (*TMM* 98). He creates an ideal and heroic past which is in conflict with the real-life condition in Isabella, “he goes to the beach house owned by his grandfather and one day he sees the death of three children who are drowned in the sea while the fishermen do nothing to save them” (108-109). At that point he realizes that Isabella cannot be the ideal landscape he is searching for. As Thieme observes, “the beach scene refers to the myth of Perseus who was saved from being drowned in the sea by Dictys, a fisherman and a hero, who presents a contrast with the passive and selfish Carib-African fishermen. Hence, Singh’s experience on the beach makes him too aware of the distance between Isabella and his true, pure world” (117). Moreover, he is completely shocked when his father sacrifices Tamango, the race horse, although he is aware of the symbolic significance of such an act in Hindu tradition. As Donald A. Mackenzie explains, “the aim of the sacrifice is to secure prosperity and fertility” (90-91). Although Singh idealizes his Hindu past and culture, he is in fact unable to understand Hinduism and thus, as Thieme has observed, “When the horse is killed, the ideal past collapses and the concrete experience shocks the child” (133). In the words of Hughes, “this sacrifice causes Singh to see an Indian world that is in contrast with the noble and ideal realm of imagination” (74-75). Hindu rituals have lost their meaning in Isabella as the people have lost their connection with India, its culture, customs and traditions. Thus, as Bruce King has claimed, by leaving India and going to the Caribbean islands, the Indians are doomed to isolation and dislocation:
The process of losing one's Indianness started with leaving India. That was the original sin, the fall. After that Indian traditions could only either decay into deadening ritual or become diluted, degraded and eventually lost through outside influences and intermarriage with others. (68)

Singh suffers from "genetic dislocation" which, according to Rob Nixon, "refers to the condition of the East Indians in the Caribbean. They crossed the Kala Pani, black water, and thus, they lost their Indianness" (4). Moreover, Singh, as a member of an ethnic minority on the island also experiences "ethnic displacement" which "refers to his status as an Indian in Isabella" (6). By idealizing the past, Singh wants to reconstruct history to establish his identity however, he realizes that such a task is impossible and therefore he becomes disillusioned. Like Singh, his Chinese friend, Hok, reads books on his own origin, China and idealizes his past and is humiliated when it is discovered that he has black ancestors. Browne, Singh's black revolutionary friend, also fantasizes his origin and his room is full of pictures of black leaders. Thus, according to Dolly Zulakha Hassan:

> each boy is in fact obsessed with his own racial origin and the ethnic group to which he belongs and the novel, therefore, implies that the emotional security and a real sense of identity are unachievable in heterogeneous societies of the Caribbean. (253)

Singh also suffers from dislocation and alienation because of his educational background. As a victim of the colonial education system and curriculum, Singh has always been encouraged to imitate the empire and to become a "mimic man":
My first memory of school is of taking an apple to the teacher. This puzzles me. We had no apples on Isabella. It must have been an orange; yet my memory insists on the apple. The editing is clearly at fault, but the edited version is all I have. (TMM 90)

Moreover, Singh’s colonial education has taught him that the mother country, England, is the symbol of order. When he studies English culture and history, he feels that his own culture, if there is any, is inferior to that of the colonizer. Hence, Singh’s colonial education has caused him to become a homeless man with no self-image. Singh keeps asking himself whether he is the product of his colonial education. He both recognizes and criticizes colonial mimicry, but he also knows that he cannot help being a mimic man as he is “a specific product of a particular socioeconomic formation called colonialism” (Cudjoe 100). In his attempt to find his identity and the ideal landscape, Singh goes to London only to realize that the city does not promise anything to an East Indian colonial subject as he can never identify himself with it. In London, Singh realizes that he can never be an Englishman in spite of his public school education and that one can be English only if he is born in England. Louis Simpson has pointed out that the West Indians can only face dislocation in the metropolis:

The descriptions of the immigrant’s life in The Mimic Men show how disillusioning that life could be. Nothing would have prepared the West Indian for the English climate or the dreariness of living in a boarding house. Confronted with greasy wallpaper and a gas meter into which you had to feed shillings to keep warm, he would have had long thoughts. (574)
Singh does not find a complete solution to his psychological problems. His writings reflect the moods of displacement, disillusionment and sadness. Alienated from his own society, Singh travels to different places to overcome his feeling of isolation but he is aware of his "imminent homelessness" (TMM 249).

In *The Mimic Men* Naipaul shows a conflict and a struggle for status. Ralph caught between his rich cousins Cecil on the one hand and the Creole family on the other makes all possible efforts to gain a social status in life through power and money. The American Bauxite Company holds the island only for its riches. They deprive the innocent islanders not only of their wealth but also of their freedom. His utter hopelessness is revealed when he declares:

> We are all going to hell; and everyman knows this in his bones. We're being killed. Nothing has any meaning. That's why everyone is frantic. Everyone wants to make money and run away, But where? That is what driving people mad. (185)

Even election is viewed as a social opportunity and a form of participation in public life which leads to success both financially and socially. Election offers the widest scope for self-fulfilment, with the least demands on talent and qualification. Naipaul says, "We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New world, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new" (TMM 175).

Search for identity follows the feeling of alienation. Biswas struggles in a hostile environment only seeking his identity. Ralph migrates to London seeking identity. Santosh’s perplexity reflects a quest for finding an answer to the problem of self-identity. The identity crisis has been a personal problem of Naipaul’s too. He
symbolises his rootlessness and it spontaneously influences his novels. It is a resplendent symbol which is not within his reach. It looks as though Naipaul is pining for what is not.

The development of a movement for Creolite in the francophone Caribbean, a relatively small setting, but one which nonetheless has global implications and resonances and the celebration of hybridity, or at least its recognition, by Naipaul with the increasing recognition of mixed identity categories among official statisticians and the call for the end of ‘raciology’ by certain academics and intellectuals. It is alluded to the soft but pervasive sounds of diversity, complexity and hybridity, a subtle shift towards a new positive valorization of creolization. The supporting theorization and defense of creolization have occurred elsewhere.

As Eriksen suggests, a more complex reading of mixed identities is provided by the Trinidadian-born Naipaul:

Shocked by India, alienated by England, aloof from the Caribbean, Naipaul became a writer about torn identities. Several of his mature, largely tragic novels, from The Mimic Men (1967) and In a Free State (1971) to The Enigma of Arrival (1987) and Half a Life (2001), are about men (and a few women) who try to be something that they are not, usually because they can see no alternative. (226)

There is a tragic quality to Naipaul’s impossible search for belonging and rootedness but, as Eriksen argues, despite his own pronouncements, which remain sardonic and gloomy, “it can also be said that the tragic grandeur of Naipaul’s best books confirm an assumption, which he himself might reject, that exile and cultural hybridity are creative forces” (226). His poignant novel, A House for Mr Biswas is said
to be based on his father. Biswas emerges as a sympathetic character despite the author's mockery of Biswas’s pathetic mimicry of European ways. As Hannerz maintains:

Creolization also increasingly allows the periphery to talk back. As it creates a greater affinity between the cultures of the center and the periphery, and as the latter increasingly uses the same organizational forms and the same technology as the center ...some of its new cultural commodities become increasingly attractive on a global market. Third World music of a creolized kind becomes world music ...Creolization thought is open-ended; the tendencies towards maturation and saturation are understood as quite possibly going on side by side, or interleaving.

(265-266)

The creolization of the world in the sense described by Hannerz and other writers cited earlier has provided a space for many people to create a new sense of home, a locus to express their uniqueness in the face of cultural fundamentalisms and imperialism. Behind the strident assertions of nationalism, 'old ethnicities' and religious certainties is an increasing volume of cultural interactions, interconnections and interdependencies and a challenge to the solidity of ethnic and racial categories. Mobile and transnational groups are themselves undergoing what has been described as 'everyday cosmopolitanism', while dominant, formerly monochromatic, cultures have themselves become crisis-crossed and sometimes deeply subverted by hybridization and creolization.

V.S. Naipaul states, "The politics of a country can only be an extension of its ideas of human relationships" (Ceraso and Connolly 12). Through an investigation of
Naipaul's treatment of masculinity as illustrated by his male protagonists in *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*, "The politics of a country can only be an extension of its ideas of gender relations as they intersect with race, class, ethnicity, and nation" (13). While an unqualified usage of gender is frequently interpreted as referencing women, Naipaul's attention to the contradictions and negotiations of masculinity undertaken by his male protagonists - coupled with his overly simplified portrayals of female characters - allows us to understand that, for Naipaul, gender refers to men. Focusing on the subtleties of masculine performances between differently positioned men within a single, multitudinous, culture, Naipaul's "careful consideration of the pitfalls of masculinity to directly comment on the emasculating effects of colonial rule and postcolonial consciousness between more and less hegemonic men" (11).

*A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* dramatize the socio-historical effects of colonialism in Trinidad and focus on the plight of Indo-Caribbean men, albeit in different historical moments and class positioning. Through their personal trials and tribulations, the protagonists demonstrate how East Indian men in the British Caribbean performed their gender in reaction to a larger culture of domination, in ways that continued to undermine, as well as strengthen, their individual agency. By engaging with Naipaul's depiction of the performative aspects of masculinity, it explores the ways in which these novels illustrate how gender, specifically masculinity, is intimately connected to questions of cultural survival and of identity formation as interwoven with issues of race, class, ethnicity and nation.

Set in colonial Trinidad, *A House for Mr Biswas* is a painfully humorous account of an ordinary man's epic struggle for independence. After marrying into the large and overbearing Tulsi family, Mohun Biswas becomes increasingly dependent on
his financially stable in-laws. His efforts to break free from Tulsi rule, which result in a constant shifting of vocations and unsuitable residences, almost always end in disappointment. Despite being tied down by his family duties, Mohun refuses to give up his dream of becoming a self-made man and owning a house of his own. In The Mimic Men, protagonist Ralph Singh is “a middle-aged man of Indian heritage who is brought up in Isabella” and completes his education in England (2). At the start of the novel, Ralph is in exile writing his memoirs at a quiet hotel on the outskirts of London. He documents his memories in an attempt to give his life meaning and order. As he recalls his paradoxical childhood, unsuccessful marriage and unsatisfying career as a government minister, he becomes overwhelmed with a feeling of cultural displacement. Ralph's moving and disturbing memoirs expose his uncertainty and disillusionment. His life is the story of a postcolonial man who desperately wants to understand his own cultural identity.

It is not just the protagonists' unique performances of masculinity that highlight their importance for understanding the relationship between colonial and gender relations. The relationship between the two characters - and the two novels, more broadly - is significant. In many ways, Mohun Biswas is a more individualized character than the allegorical Ralph Singh, who comes to represent a generalized depiction of the East Indian elite in the postcolonial Caribbean.

But, as Selwyn R. Cudjoe suggests in V.S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading, both books "examine the same subject at different moments in time and space, at different points in their social evolution" (99). While Mohun Biswas is restricted by his social positioning under colonialism, Ralph Singh represents the plight of "the first generation of freed East Indians, who, bereft of the culture that nurtured the earlier generation,
float aimlessly in the shifting social relations generated by the changing social order" (98-99). Despite their differing socio-historical positions, as East Indian Caribbean men in former or current British colonies, both are culturally marked to only mimic British hegemonic masculinity - deemed white, powerful and bourgeois. As such, their self-awareness of the degree to which they assume, subvert and/or adapt to culturally dominant forms of masculinity calls attention to the ways their individually stylized gender performances are connected to issues of survival.

The socio-historical contexts of *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* - and in particular the power relations that circumscribed the performances of masculinity for both white and hegemonic. An exploration of masculinity within a single culture is complex enough, yet the effect is infinitely multiplied once creolization (the combination and interculturation of different ethnic populations), as well as colonialism (the active enforcement of British imperialism), are taken into consideration.

As individuals disempowered by their race and class in their representative colonial and postcolonial societies, their masculinity is frequently destabilized through competing cultural representations of manhood. The two men suffer in their marginalized positionalities, while simultaneously benefitting from and adapting to such reciprocal, intimate and intercultural mixing. It is through these negotiations that the term destabilization is employed, not in a Butlerean sense, to signify emancipatory fissures in the heteronormative matrix, but rather to signal the crisis-laden ground through which Indo-Caribbean men both affirmed and were denied agency. Significantly, the individual roles and relationships the protagonists maintain represent, on a microcosmic level, the larger cultural and political discrepancies fuelled by
creolization and colonialism. By self-posturing, it refers to aspects of the novels in which either the narrator or the protagonists draw attention to their corporeal stylizations and effects.

The expectations of Mohun Biswas are not great. All he wants is a house of his own, some dignity, some privacy, where the irritations of his in-laws can be viewed from afar. Set in Trinidad, we follow him through a plethora of jobs; we are with him as son, husband, father and testy family man until his final triumph - a peculiar house of his own. This is the fullest portrait there is of an East Indian family in the process of creolization.

Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* expose conflicting and contradictory performances of masculinities in a colonized, creolized culture. Focusing on Naipaul's male protagonists, the complex interconnections between gender performance, nationalism, race, class and ethnicity destabilize Indo-Caribbean masculinities and exacerbate power imbalances at a personal and cultural level.

Cultural balkanization reasserts local identities at the expense of national identities, which have often been created as the result of unstable political compromises. Although the connotation of cultural balkanization is negative, the process it describes has been experienced both negatively and positively. Naipaul's works take the reader geographically across continents - Trinidad, England, India, Africa and so on. Naipaul makes a corresponding journey inward as the breadth of his vision increases, as a world-view emerges, as seemingly unrelated experiences and observations coalesce to form patterns that make sense. The writer moves from the local to the global in the external geographic sense and in the internal journey from a narrow perspective to a broader more encompassing vision.
The problem of a displaced and non-replaced cultural identity is poignantly depicted in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Mr Biswas, a portrayal of Naipaul’s own father, is a man caught up in three cultures and in the process dispossessed of all three. Unable to integrate culturally in Trinidad where he lives, rejecting Hindu culture which he dislikes and which cannot help him in his ambition to be a writer, he is equally unable to identify with British culture, the only means available to him to achieve his ambition.

As a representative masterpiece in postcolonial literature, *The Mimic Men* depicts the predicaments of the island Isabella in the course of transition from a British colony to an independent country. Cultural displacement, identity crisis and dependence on the metropolitan country contribute to its unreal independence. During the transitional period from a British colony to an independent country, both the people and the country are forced to resort to mimicking the Western model in people’s identity search and political reconstruction.

In the novel *In a Free State*, of Bobby’s childhood only one incident stands out: he was bitten by his mother’s (not his parents’) dog and he still carries the wound of this bite, a deep scar on his calf and an irrational fear of dogs. In mythical and archetypal accounts, the dog is the ‘principal animal’ of some distinctly negative, blood-shedding goddesses, such as Gorgon and Hecate, who are widely viewed by psychoanalysts as manifestations of the life-denying mother figure in the human psyche. Significantly, too, fear and pain, which define Bobby’s childhood, also throw a long shadow on his adult life. As a young man, Bobby is a displaced and fragmented individual who undergoes a major nervous breakdown for eighteen months. A breakdown of this kind, which is defined by Bobby as death, has been frequently
interpreted by psychoanalysts as the human psyche's experience of being swallowed up by the Terrible Mother.

Naipaul, a descendent of Indian immigrants in Trinidad, has a complicated cultural background. Naipaul grew up in the conflicts and fusion of postcolonial Indian culture and European culture. In many of his writings he presents the past and the present situation of the postcolonial societies and focuses on the sufferings of the former colonies. Immigration proves a pleasant experience only to a few immigrants who succeed in assimilating themselves with the new geographical, cultural, social and psychological environment.

Feelings of entrapment in the novels of Naipaul take many forms. Biswas feels totally entangled in the Tulsi clan. Ralph Singh is lost in his claustrophobia. Bobby, Linda and Santosh are no exception. Each has his own special invisible prison. Naipaul has chosen Africa, the Dark Continent and its inhabitants as the locale and the subject for many of his writings, especially for his later novels. It offers a rich source of information mainly to juxtapose the black and the white and their opposing values which very often form the theme. It adds variety to Naipaul's theme and locale. The slavish tendency of imitation leads to disaster and frustration. To him, the Caribbean society is static and its inhabitants are generally, Philistines. Such a sterile and barren society cannot contribute anything concrete. They perceive their own existence as futile. He develops a sort of aversion towards that society and emphasizes the struggles, the ordeals and the absurdities of living in the third world countries.

In The Mimic Men, the experience of island living is, therefore, ambivalent, since it is the sense of isolation and the island's association with a peripheral zone that impels islanders to leave and experience life in the outside world. In the studied texts,
it is worth confronting how the protagonists’ experience of displacement and the received colonialis attempted education shape the ways they imagine both the island and the metropolis with obvious implications for the making up of their identities.

Considering Naipaul’s novel *The Mimic Men*, addresses the issue of mimicry in a very straightforward way contrary to various novels and this becomes evident from the novel’s title itself. In *The Mimic Men* the projection of mimicry onto hybridity has considerable effects on the configuration of the self, as it is illustrated by the fictional modeling of Naipaul’s protagonist, Ralph Singh. Singh tries to mimic the colonizer as much as possible since he was a child, fact that prevents him from assessing his behaviour and from defining his own self until his early forties. His tendency towards mimicry results, in great part, from the negative representation he made of Isabella, the island where he was born. To him, apart from his family connections with the owners of a factory that bottled Coca-Cola and that had social prestige, the island was a place that is linked to the idea of deprivation, lack of opportunity and underdevelopment. It was a kind of prison from where the character wanted to escape by any means. Before obtaining his scholarship and going to London, he escaped the island by imagining glorious ancestors, by changing his own name without telling anything to his parents, by trying to identify with wealthy relatives and by despising his father’s attitude towards his mother’s family and its social position. Ralph’s childhood was, in sum, marked by the impersonation of a character that helped him to cope with his origins and the islandness he was ashamed of.

Parallel to his negative imagination of the island was the opposite supposed aggrandizement of people who live in the metropolis, which prevented him from understanding the ridicule underlying some of his attitudes. It is not gratuitous that
Naipaul frames his narrative by clearly mocking Ralph’s behaviour when he first went to London. In fact, it is only when Ralph lives as an exile in London, after having crossed the sea more than once between the island and the metropolis and acted as a leading politician on Isabella that he becomes totally aware of his former behaviour and of its implications on political and personal levels. His attempt to write, while living in a boarding house in one of the London suburbs, translates his need to bring order to his entire life and to overcome a crisis of identity that he has experienced from an early age, making him feel like a shipwrecked man. The most interesting aspect is that the feeling of being adrift had, in Ralph’s opinion, been already experienced by his father even if in a distinct context.

As Ralph narrates his life in flashback, even though the past is not depicted in a chronologically successive order, it illustrates how his memories were disorganized; the reader learns that his father was idealized by missionaries who inhabited Isabella. He was described, in a missionary lady’s diary, as someone who had the marks of grace, someone who would not hesitate to protect missionaries, so that people could “receive the Gospel of grace” (TMM 94). In other words, the missionaries’ depiction of Isabella has undoubtedly acquired a mythic tone, since the island was considered a kind of — “Biblical land”, of original paradise, which ennobled their mission (and, in indirect terms, the civilizing mission despite the resistance some colonizers offered to the missionaries’ presence) (93). The missionaries’ account illustrates how colonizers and colonized were, in a certain way, stimulated to play - characters with obvious repercussions on the configuration of their identity. Singh examines and analyses the colonial and postcolonial periods, historical, cultural and political backgrounds, economic problems and psychological conflicts and finally concludes that writing can be decolonization itself. He realizes that colonial societies like Isabella suffer from lack
of cultural, historical and racial homogeneity. Although he fails to reconnect himself to India, the homeland, or to connect himself to London, the metropolis, by writing his memoirs, Singh finally takes control of his sense of dislocation as he realizes that there is no ideal place with which he can identify himself.

Ralph Singh has been made the voice of alienation. He is the one who has failed to discover the essence of life in all his endeavours. The themes of alienation, homelessness and mimicry have always preoccupied Naipaul but the perspectives are different. Besides the familiar themes that still haunt Naipaul’s works, there are themes that appear for the first time - the broader postcolonial themes of power and freedom and neocolonialism. This establishes a relevant connection between Ralph Singh and Naipaul, the author himself. While in his other works, Naipaul maintains separateness from his characters that provides objectivity to his technique in use of irony to showcase the follies of the characters. But in The Mimic Men, Naipaul makes no attempt to maintain such isolation of identity. The autobiographical portion covers his early days in England, his meeting Sandra, his marriage and breaking up of it. The merger of identities is further underscored by the fact that many of Naipaul’s attitudes and tastes have been transferred on to Ralph Singh.

The twin themes of failure as a man and failure as a politician are analysed in The Mimic Men. In this work, the overall tone is significantly more pessimistic with Ralph Singh eventually losing his marriage, his money, his status and his homeland in a narrative of personal helplessness, devoid of hope. Singh’s failure as a politician forces him into an ignominious role, permanently exiled from the country of his birth. Naipaul claimed in a 1987 interview with Melvyn Bragg that it is easy to “write about a world which is more shattered and exploding and varied, but to write about it in fiction, is
very difficult,' more so than writing about 'ordered societies' or 'enclosed societies’” (261-262).

All the five pieces in In a Free State suggest the complicated nature of postcolonial existence. All shy away from presenting an ideal colonial or pre-colonial past, even as they suggest the uncertainties and anxieties that have come with freedom. Where characters had no responsibilities under colonialism, having the courses of their lives determined by others, postcolonial life means accountability as well as freedom and is often fraught with uncertainty and even danger. Individual heroics, like the actions undertaken by the epilogue narrator on behalf of the Egyptian children in, may have no effect or may lead to further disappointment or disaster. The formal components here are defiantly separate, the five pieces taking up stories of different characters in a variety of locations and never adding up to a single message or to anything else, for that matter. It is seen the correspondences, but most of those involve misunderstandings, uncertainties and anxieties - the markers, for Naipaul and postcolonial existence.

Santosh, as at the beginning of his tale, “One out of Many”, is well aware of the happiness and security he has lost. In his regret for the life he left behind in Bombay and his alienation in his new, free life in Washington, he is able to be calm and his narrative voice communicates that calmness. His narrative style is Narayanesque, rather like the dialogue Naipaul uses in his Trinidad novels when his characters are speaking in Hindi; a clear, rather pedantic and formal use of English, with its own undramatic, regular rhythm, which refuses to panic. He attempts to account for his new circumstances - “the particular moment in my life, the particular action that had brought me to that room. ... I could find no one moment; every moment seemed important. An
endless chain of action had brought me to that room. It was frightening; it was burdensome" (*IFS* 55). He is not happy, but he understands and takes responsibility for himself and does not try to deflect the blame onto other people, institutions or abstractions. The ‘endless chain of action’ clearly implicates himself as an actor; although it would have been open to him to blame his employer, or the government that sent his employer to Washington, or the accident of his birth in a poor country, or the imperial system. Naipaul believes the colonial state of mind is one which does not accept responsibility.

In *In a Free State*, Santosh, the domestic servant who has journeyed to Washington in the trail of his employer, knows he can never be part of its "television life" (45). Cut off from his roots in Bombay where he "was once part of the flow, never thinking of (myself) as a presence", Santosh is terrified by the burden of freedom, responsibility and identity which exile imposes on him (47). Out of terror, he marries a "hubshi" and resigns himself to the deadening prison of the other country, whose tempo, goals and norms are totally alien to his communal self. "Washington is not Bombay" as his employer, a Government official, had warned him before Santosh pleaded to be taken there (16). With a wife and children back home in the village to whom he can never return, Santosh, in Washington, is either in hiding or seeking escape, until his marriage makes him a legal citizen.

The theme of identity plays equally an important role in *In a Free State*. In this novel, one comes across a steamer carrying people of different nationalities like the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Lebanese and the Spanish. For these people, the concept of home has lost some of its original force but still they seek to create alternate centres of identity. Santosh discovers his initial identity only through his reflection in the mirrors,
seeing himself as an attractive man. Besides this, he seeks his identity in money, status, achievement and the citizenship of the United States but things go wrong. He experiences hopelessness and fragmentation. Santosh has no home to return to. He is homeless, alone and lost. Bobby and Linda also struggle with their identity-quest and discover the fact that their identities are to be found in the alien land of Africa. The problem of identity haunts even Dayo and his brother. Morris comments them as though the characters have fully realized that their life in which one cannot have both safety and freedom together, “There is a distant realization that one can be safe, one can be free but one cannot be both” (7).

One of the terrible things about being a Colonial ... is that you must accept so many things as coming from a great wonderful source outside yourself and outside the people you know, outside the society you’ve grown up in. That can only be repaired by a sense of responsibility, which is what the colonial doesn’t have. (Rowe-Evans 27)

He gives Santosh, with his background of a secure and stable world, the most profound understanding of his lot and of his own part in bringing it about, of the protagonists of the three central stories of this novel. Santosh is not a ‘colonial’. He is materially richer in Washington than he was in Bombay, but he has lost the feeling of belonging to a society. Having made his decision, even though it was made in ignorance, he knows he must accept his new life, its emptiness and its unpalatable mysteries, “it is as though I have had several lives. I do not wish to add to these” (IFS 57). The nameless narrator-protagonist of “Tell me who to Kill” is a more bereft and shattered individual than Santosh. He goes to England from his West Indian home to help his younger brother Dayo, whose ‘studies’ he is financing; but although he is
able to earn well in London, when he buys his own shop his life goes seriously wrong. Once again, material security is beside the point.

He has paid for his colonial status with insanity, the fate Naipaul himself feels he narrowly missed by becoming a writer. He says in an interview:

One must make a pattern of one’s observations, one’s daily distress; one’s daily knowledge of homelessness, placelessness; one’s lack of representation in the world; one’s lack of status. ... If daily one lives with this, then daily one has to incorporate the experience into something bigger. Because one doesn’t have a side, doesn’t have a country, doesn’t have a community; one is entirely an individual. A person in this position risks going mad. (Rowe-Evans 31)

Dayo’s brother has not been able to ‘make a pattern’; he does not know whom to blame for the wreck of his life - and being a colonial, he does not take responsibility for himself; therefore he has gone mad. His madness makes him a chaotic narrator; the fractured form of his story reflects the state of his mind.

Colonialism and its consequences inform every aspect of this journey. They inform the evolving relationship between Bobby, the gay government official whose sympathy with and respect for Africa and Africans co-exist with his coercive adventures with young African men and Linda, whose colonialist perspective underlies an uncomplicated racism and sense of privilege. They also inform this pair’s dealings with the Africans and Whites they encounter and the descriptions of the landscape they travel through. Great natural beauty co-exists with the crumbling artifacts and institutions of empire. Anxiety and uncertainty inform Bobby and Linda’s trip from
beginning to end as they must try to get back to their compound before a curfew imposed in the wake of a violence that grows more severe over time.

Bobby and Linda experience alienation in *In a Free State* which gets expressed in their aimless travels. To them freedom has no significance except that it means aimless travel in an alien land. Santosh, the transplanted Indian from the pavements of Bombay, feels alienated in the United States in a strange environment. His struggle for existence in an alien land is obvious. To him, the concept of freedom is only an illusion. It even leads to revulsion and a separation from his own sense of belonging.

*In a Free State* is a novel where people are mad after power. This power-hunger spoils the tranquility of the people and endangers their security. Here, the warring factions fight for power without knowing the sanctity of power. According to Morris Robert, to Naipaul,

> Power is a dialectical phenomenon, but it is also a manifestation of chance and revelation. It is a frightening phenomenon of time and place. It is a destroyer of substance, a creator of shadow men. It is a self-generating an entity feeding upon itself, only to devour itself and all aligned with it. (69)

To achieve power by hook or by crook any one may attempt to bring chaos, leading to restlessness in a stable state or in other words rebellion. Rebellion as an expression or reaction of power is one of the important themes of Naipaul. Rebellion in Naipaul’s fiction is an act of stubbornness. The result of uncompromising is a doubt, an assertion of independence and the change in orthodox attitudes.
To be a colonial, said Naipaul in an early interview, is to have every move monitored from the imperial metropolis: it is "to know a total kind of security. It is to have all decisions about major issues taken out of your hands, to feel that one's political status has been settled so finally that there is very little one can do in the world" (TLS 897). To escape this facile determinism, the colonial — or, in this book, the newly ex-colonial — pursues freedom through travel. In In a Free State, this pursuit of elsewhere, a quest for a greater individuation and independence, leads only to alienation, and dislocation and the expatriate, in his reverse-crossing, meets much the same fate in his attempt to satisfy the mysterious yearnings and cravings he brings with him to the ex-colony. The result is that the plight of the uprooted former colonial becomes a metaphor for modern restlessness and homelessness and exile are perceived as a contemporary state of mind, afflicting all.

Identity becomes an overwhelming emotional force in the character's lives that it begins to drive every action that the characters take. This search for a true identity forces their decisions and guides their lives in directions that seem almost irrelevant. The struggle for an identity apart from the colonial power becomes paramount. In the works of Naipaul, he explores that the modern man is suffocated by the intellectual scenario of the past and therefore he is unable to see the present clearly or step towards the future. He insists on need of a tradition, a myth and history as the external starting points for the 'self' to become real. He feels the necessity to define a personal identity in one's own life. He adopts determined characters in his fiction who expose their loss of identity in various ways.

Naipaul uses local elements, folk tales and stories to enrich his themes. The island life is made the central focus. Though he is aware of the high ideals of urban life,
he rarely concentrates on the urban society. He is not happy about the city folks and their life of sinful pleasures. To him, city life contributes only to chaos and confusion. His interest is mainly on rural life. As a writer with a vision, he feels inspired by the common illiterate people and their struggles to exist. Many of the heroes of Naipaul experience alienation and detachment from the rest of the world. It causes a great havoc in the lives of major characters. Biswas has been depicted as a misfit and unacceptable citizen. He encounters a series of hostilities and ends up as a failure.

Naipaul, in his novels, ridicules the immigrant Indian society as seen by him. From laughing with his people, Naipaul shifts to laughing at his people and their positions. He believes both intelligence and responsiveness to cultural elements totally absent in the West Indian society. To him generally colonies are peopled by the refuse of the mother country, but Trinidad is peopled by the refuse of other colonies. As Rupert Schaefer says, “Naipaul writes as a cosmopolitan, his experience relating to five continents. This universality is reflected not only in his themes but also in his vision. Naipaul once referred to his works as one big book” (26).

The dominant themes of postcolonial writings are alienation, rootlessness and fluidity and an identity crisis caused by these factors which were the outcome of colonial rule. So postcolonial writings gained currency and relevance after the 1970s when the once colonized countries began to challenge the perspectives and representations that were favoured by the once-colonizers. Postcolonial writers and their writings also analyse the inherent psychological problems that were concomitant to colonization.
Most of the postcolonial writers came from Asian or African or Colonized countries. Some of these writers are also diaspora writers who have left their native lands to settle in the West. Their separation from their native soils makes these writers nostalgic and also critical. Naipaul is one such writer who has both a longing and a skeptical view of the past. His protagonists exemplify the alienation and the rootlessness that haunt diasporic characters. Naipaul’s characters are authentic because alienation and displacement were Naipaul’s problems too, his fore parents were from India, they had settled in Trinidad as indentured labourers and Naipaul later left his second home to live in England.

The three novels *A House for Mr Biswas, The Mimic Men* and *In a Free State* deal with these prominent postcolonial themes. The themes and the protagonists show how traditional structures such as joint family, religion and native environment have collapsed and how their collapse has led to further disintegration of basic social structures. These social structures which bound people together gave them a sense of identity, security and belonging have no relevance anymore. Hence postcolonial characters, as shown by Naipaul are drifters with ambiguous identities. The succeeding chapter elaborates the psychological angst in the characters of the novels.