Chapter V

Eurocentrism in *In a Free State*

As Ashcroft et al. (2003) mention in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, the word Eurocentrism is the conscious or unconscious process by which Europe and European cultural assumptions are constructed as, or assumed to be, the normal, the natural or the universal. The first, and possibly most potent sign of Eurocentrism, as José Rabasa explains (1993), was the specific projection employed to construct the Mercator Atlas itself, a projection that favoured the European temperate zones in its distribution of size. This map of the world is not merely an objective outline of discovered continents, but an ‘ideological or mythological reification of space’ which opens up the territories of the world to domination and appropriation. ‘The world’ only acquired spatial meaning after different regions had been inscribed by Europeans, and this inscription, apart from locating Europe at the top of the globe or map, established an ideological figuration, through the accompanying text and illustrations, which firmly centralized Europe as the source and arbiter of spatial and cultural meaning.

By the eighteenth century this conception of a collective ‘Europe’ constructed as a sign of superiority and in opposition to the rest of the world’s cultures had become firmly consolidated. Then, as now, such collective constructions existed in a troubled or ambivalent relationship with an alternative stress on the nationalism of emerging individual European nation-states and their particular cultures. European colonization of the rest of the globe, which accelerated in the eighteenth century and reached its apogee in the nineteenth, actively promoted or facilitated Eurocentrism through exploration, conquest and trade.
Imperial displays of power, both in the metropolitan centres and at the colonial peripheries, and assertions of intellectual authority in colonialist institutions such as schools and universities, and through the civil service and legal codes, established European systems and values as inherently superior to indigenous ones. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) examines the ways in which Eurocentrism not only influences and alters, but actually produces other cultures. Orientalism is ‘a way of coming to terms with the orient that is based on the orient’s special place in European western experience’ (Said 1) or ‘the western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient’ (Said 3). This authority is, in Said’s view, a product of a systematic ‘discipline’ by which European culture was able to construct and manage the Orient during the post-Enlightenment period.

Eurocentrism is masked in literary study by concepts such as literary universality, in history by authoritative interpretations written from the point of view of the victors, and in early anthropology by the unconscious assumptions involved in the idea that its data were those societies defined as ‘primitive’ and so opposed to a European norm of development and civilization. Some cultural critics have argued that anthropology as a discipline in its classic, unrevised form came into being in such a close relationship with colonization that it could not have existed at all without the prior existence of Eurocentric concepts of knowledge and civilization.

Eurocentrism is also present in the assumptions and practices of Christianity through education and mission activity, as well as in the assumed superiority of Western mathematics, cartography, art and numerous other cultural and social practices which have been claimed, or assumed, to be based on a universal, objective set of values.
Naipaul though through his birth and ancestry is a part of colonised world but his education, and mental training he seems to be on the side of colonizers and to be the mouthpiece of a Eurocentric view. He is blamed and even hated for having no loyalty to his home country and his ethnicity. He calls India, his ancestral home in his book *The Area of Darkness* as, ‘Poorest country in the world. World largest slum with ever receding degrees of degradation’ (44). Additionally, it is claimed that he does not seem to show sympathy for the oppressed, as he generally looks at them “with contempt”, and criticizes them with a severe language. Naipaul is an author who has often put harsh criticism on the post-colonial societies. For instance, his biting remarks about his homeland are notorious as Philip quotes:

“If you're from Trinidad you want to get away. You can't write if you're from the bush…. I used to spend so much time trying to analyse why the world I was born in was not real.” (Phillips 43).

Naipaul’s writings like the most of the colonialist discourses tend to project the Europeans and the European cultures as normative standards. He presents the colonized as people lacking normality and civilization. Unlike other postcolonial writers he does not seem to sympathize with the colonised and rather succumbing to his Eurocentric inclination, projects the colonizer’s race and culture as superior and degrades and criticizes the colonized as the lesser “other”. In *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*, Chinua Achebe accuses Joseph Conrad and Naipaul of racism on the grounds that in certain respects, they use their remarkably powerful creative myth of the African as pathologically primitive. He calls Naipaul a “purveyor of the old comforting myths” of Africa’s former colonizers, who uses his creative works to prove the supposed validity of Conrad’s observations regarding Africa in *Heart of Darkness*. (Achebe,Hopes2).
His writings whether fiction or non-fiction reinforces the colonialist ideology of superiority, along with the representation of Africa and Africans as stereotyped and with marginalised people and culture. The West-Indian writer and critic George Lamming criticized Naipaul’s early fiction bitterly:

His books can’t move beyond a castrated satire. (...) When such a writer is a colonial, ashamed of his cultural background and striving like mad to prove himself through promotion to the peaks of a ‘superior’ culture whose values are gravely in doubt, then satire, like the charge of philistinism, is for me nothing more than a refuge. And it is too small a refuge for a writer who wishes to be taken seriously. (Lamming 225.)

Selwyn Cudjoe overtly argues that the European world-view ruins Naipaul’s ability to truly see certain realities of the Third world countries:

Naipaul chose to see colonial society from the eyes of the colonizer rather than those of the colonized…as a consequence, his work…is of limited value. (V.S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading 113, 119)

In response to his criticism on third world countries, Naipaul has received a lot of bitter criticism from many critics. For instance, Edward Said has “called him a ‘scavenger’ among the ruins of empire,” to which Naipaul has responded that “optimism is easy for those who can catch a plane home and forget what they have seen,” and has said, ”I do not have the tenderness more secure people can have toward bush people” (Worth 28). Also, Caryl Phillips has accused him of “inability to hold his own prejudices in check,” and commented that “The reappearance of Naipaul's tendency to belittle people and places is disappointing, as is his continued sponsorship
of himself as a writer whose passage towards maturity was uniquely difficult” (Philips 43).

Derek Walcott, a black Caribbean writer, has produced a series of poems about a person he names V. S. Nightfall. One example would be enough to indicate the intensity of his criticism on Naipaul:

You spit on your people,
your people applaud,
your former oppressors laurel you.
The thorns biting your forehead
are contempt
disguised as concern. (Gorra 74).

His Eurocentric vision clearly comes across in his novel In a Free State. In this novel Naipaul has failed to adopt sympathetic stance with regard to the Africans whose colonial experiences were perhaps the most brutal in the whole history of colonial violation. His tone is Eurocentric and so racial which is exhibited in analogy he suggestively draws between the wild dogs and Africans. His restriction as a postcolonial writer lies in the fact that he makes no efforts to understand the inner working of the subaltern African society that were completely disillusioned by colonial rule. In an interview, Naipaul says, “Africa has no future” (Phillips 43). He makes this statement right after visiting some African countries and seeing their dismaying situation after independence. He generalizes this observation for all the Third World countries and furthers his criticism: “These are people who know how to use a telephone but can neither fix nor invent one” (Said 40).

The novel like the other colonialist writings privileges the Europe and the European codes, and ideologies while the Africans and their culture are presented as
lesser and inferior stereotypes, lacking the intelligence and just mimicking the superior colonial culture. Like Naipaul all the European characters in the novel like Linda, Colonel, Martin, Carter, except Bobby are racist and have Eurocentric world view.

As the name depicts the story of the novel ‘In a Free State’ is set in one of the recently independent countries of Africa like Uganda or Rwanda which is undergoing a sever political turmoil for power supremacy between the two tribes of Africa, the king and the president. Fanon believed that to a greater or lesser extent black people had internalized the racism and accepted the inferior status. Fanon says that White men consider themselves superior to black men and Black men have to prove to white men the richness of their thought, culture and the equal value of their intellect. Fanon points out “it was not modernization as such but colonialism that dislocated and distorted the psyche of the oppressed” (Black Skin 122). Further, he says the impact of colonialism has nullified the colonized.

The king is almost a mimic man with all his English thoughts, language and manners. His Englishness makes him consider himself as the next potential ruler for the country, as he thinks only someone like the English colonisers could replace them. He is shown following the western life style, manners and culture all his life just to please the English masters in order to gain their liking and support but quite contrary to his expectations, though they seem to have fondness for him still they support the more powerful president for the next rulers. Besides all African people like Peter, the Head boy, Timothy, the waiter, Carolus, the bar boy and other black Africans on the road as Fanon believed that to a greater or lesser extent internalizing the racism and the inferior status are seen mimicking the colonisers blindly, highlighting the
underlying gap between the norm of civility presented by the European enlightenment and its colonial imitation in distorted form.

Most of the European characters in the novel like Linda, a supercilious compound wife from Collectrate, Bobby, an administrative officer of central government, a British who run a hotel, Martin, a British working at Radio, Carter an American all seem to be engrossed in Eurocentrism. Although Bobby is the only European, character with a veneer of humanism but his humanism unfortunately disappears in unavoidable circumstances and his Eurocentrism embedded his subconscious mind emerges to reveal that he is almost like all other thorough bred Eurocentric characters.

Linda, the central characters in the novel is English and wife of Martin and a resident of Southern Collectrate. She is thorough bred English and a racist having Eurocentric vision towards the non-Europeans. She has racial prejudice against the Africans and considers them as the people who swear their oaths of hatred against the Europeans, and eat filthy things like the blood, the excrement and the dirt. She remarks: “They are going to swear their oaths of hate. You know what that means don’t you? You know the filthy things they are going to do? The filthy they are going to eat? The blood, the excrement, the dirt.”(29)

She stands in direct contrast to Bobby another central character that has a humanitarian attitude towards the non-Europeans in the novel. She considers the non-Europeans as inferior and primitive, living in the forest and not having any knowledge of agriculture. Moreover she thinks Africa as a backward place without any roads, houses and shops. When she comes to Southern Collectrate after Martin’s posting she is amazed to see the fields, the roads, the houses and the shops. Besides, she looks
down upon the African painter, John Mubende-Mbarara, and feels that he is a mere primitive and bad painter incapable of painting anything new other than his family’s ribby cattle so it really does not matter if he stays back in his quarter as no one bothers to see his paintings anymore:

Linda said, ‘when Johnny M.began, he was a good primitive painter and we all loved his paintings of his family’s lovely ribby cattle. But he churned out so many of those he got to be a little better than primitive. Now he’s only bad. So I don’t suppose it matters if he does continue to paint his cattle in the native quarter.’(17)

She does not like to mingle with the black Africans and hates the filthy smell coming out of their body and feels that the Africans smell like the rotting vegetables:

You may be right. But I used to think I wasn’t very sensitive, getting this smell of Africa that the Marshalls and everybody else said they so loved. But i got it this time, when we came back from leave. It lasts about half an hour or so, no more. It is a smell of rotting vegetation and Africans. One is very much like the other.”(52)

So once while returning from the Hunting Lodge, when Bobby gives lift to the African boy of the lodge, she does not like it. Besides, when the African boy insists to pick up another African friend of his and urges to take the car in the opposite direction to drop them, Linda becomes furious and asks them to get out of the car. She comments, complaining of the filthy smell emitted from their body: “‘what a smell! Linda said. Absolutely gangsters. I’m not going to get myself killed simply because I’m too nice to be rude to Africans.”’(50)
She even wants Booby to stop being nice, polite and to the African policemen who are no better than just the mimic men with black uniforms and their capes and caps. Moreover, she does not like the facts the English are thin and haggard while the Africans are fat. She is often seen criticising the Africans as fat people. She uses derogatory words like ‘savage’ for them. She looks down upon them and wants them to be lean and not fat. Even her husband seems to be a racist and Eurocentric like her. He too does not like the Africans and even feels ashamed to share the space with them because of the filthy smell they emit:

I like to think of my savages as lean. You wouldn’t believe it now, but Sammy was as thin as a rake when he came back from England. Martin showed the president round the studios. Sammy, of course, doesn’t know a microphone from a door-knob. Do you know the first thing Martin said afterwards? It’s so embarrassing to say. Martin said, “I’ll say this for the witch-doctor. He smells like a polecat.” Martin! Well, you know, that sort of thing makes you feel ashamed for everybody, yourself included. (53)

She is unsympathetic towards the Africans and feels that the Africans do not have any genuine concern for anything or anybody. They are just attention seekers who make all the hue and cry just to look interesting and there is nothing serious behind their actions. Everything is just to make news and be in limelight. Narrating one of the incidences during an earthquake in Africa she informs Bobby that how her houseboy loses his family in that. She being very sympathetic and takes him to the police station to know the whereabouts of the affected people. She keeps visiting the police station but the houseboy soon seems to forget all stuff and stops worrying. Everyone in Africa seems to forget about the incidence as if nothing of the sort had
ever taken place. Thus all these make her think that may be there isn’t any such incidence in reality, all the news in Africa is mere fabricated stories:

You weren’t here for the earthquake,’ Linda said. ‘I’d just come. The houseboy came to me in the morning with tears in his eyes and said that his family lived in one of the villages that had been destroyed. I took him to the police station, to see whether they had a list of casualties. They didn’t, and everybody was very rude. I tried every day for a week. There was no list, and even the houseboy stopped worrying. Nothing in the “Two-Minute Silence”. Nothing on the Radio. Everyone had just forgotten about it. Was there an earthquake? Did it matter? Perhaps all those hadn’t died, and it didn’t matter if they had. Perhaps the houseboy was just trying to make himself interesting. Perhaps nothing that happens here is more interesting than any other thing that happens. Perhaps in a place like this there isn’t any news. Sammy Kisenyi can put out the Lord’s Prayer every day and calls it the news. (58)

Like Linda, Colonel, an Englishman who runs a hotel Africa is a thorough racist and Eurocentric. He nurtures typical Eurocentric thoughts for Africans as primitive just coming out of the bush, barbarous, savage, uncivilized, eating filthy things, dancing naked, ungrateful people, without any language and swearing oaths of hatred against the Europeans etc. He looks down upon the non-Europeans and mocks at them. He is seen mocking before Linda about the Huns, the nomadic Asian people on their eating habits. He calls them uncivilised people fighting over food and even creating stampede for it. He calls them big eaters who eat up everything on the buffet and even his profit. Thus he has to strictly remind them that the food here is in fixed proportions:
They would eat up your profits,’ the colonel said. ‘We used to do a buffet for them. Terrible idea. Never offer the Hun a buffet. He isn’t happy until he’s eaten every last scrap. He believes the new ham on the buffet is for him alone. There used to be a stampede. I saw two women fight. No, no; clear away the buffet as soon as you see the Hun coming. Meet the horde at the door and say, “It’s strictly fixed portions today, gentlemen.”

He is a racist and feels that the Africans are dirty people who neither know to keep themselves clean nor their surroundings. He says to Linda that he is very well aware of the untidiness of the rooms upstairs as he does not go upstairs. These rooms have been looked after by Peter and he is quite sure that Peter does not keep them clean. Speaking of the Peter’s untidiness he says how he used to visit Peter’s quarter for inspection but he could not bear the filthy surrounding and thus stopped going. It’s ironical to find that though he has been complaining about the Africans as the untidy and dirty people but he fails to keep himself clean and is seen wearing dirty oil-stained clothes and emitting foul smell by Bobby. Booby observes:

The colonel’s hands were blotched, the skin loose; they trembled as they pressed the counter. Bobby was aware that the colonel was smelling. He saw that the colonel’s singlet was brown with dirt; he saw dirt in the oily folds of skin on the colonel’s neck”

He also makes fun of the tall African boy’s clothes who comes to the bar for whisky in a ‘black suit, a dirty white shirt and a black bowtie’ below ‘a ragged army raincoat’ and ‘army style boots’ saying : “‘He’s been coming here for a month or so. Ever since he picked up those clothes.”
He is also suspects the non-Europeans as people always swearing the oaths of hatred against the Europeans. Thus he is seen suspecting everyone’s intention starting from the tall African boy who comes to the bar, to all his non-European servants. He suspects Peter, his head boy and thus when he comes to take permission to go to a cinema, he insults him and does not allow him because he suspects him to hold meetings outside and conspire and plot against him. Besides when one night the South African servant knocks at his door wearing a rain coat and jacket and holding his elbows close to his side, he suspects him too and he kills him. Moreover, he openly swears of his hatred against the non-European servants and even threatens Peter saying if he tries to behave like the South African servant than he too will be shot dead like him:


Though the colonel feels that the Africans are barbarous and cruel people always swearing their oaths of hatred against the Europeans but it’s again ironic to find that the colonel himself indeed is seen swearing his oaths of hatred openly against Peter. Colonel remarks, ‘This is how I swear my oath,’ the colonel said. ‘under these lights, in the open, before witnesses. Tell your friends’. (110)

Besides, he is barbarous and cruel too and is seen proclaiming proudly of his cruelty as a part of the civilisation mission. He believes that the non-Europeans are
savage, primitive and backward people, who do not know anything about civilization. They live and dance naked, eat filthy things, stink badly, know no language, keep untidy etc. So he believes it’s the European’s task to civilise them for which they are here which in terms of Rudyard Kipling is referred as the “White Men’s Burden.” He feels that in doing so if it requires being cruel or barbarous then it’s for their betterment and thus a very noble act. He boasts before Linda of such heroic acts of training undertaken by him to train the horsemen for places like Salonika, India, and other such places. He tells her how sometimes they had to strap the men to the horses which made them bawl and even developed inch thick rashes on their body but eventually they made riders out of them:

I remember how we’d train men for Salonika, Indi, and places like that,’ the colonel said.’ Sometimes we had to strap them to the horses. Ah-wa-wa! You’d hear them bawling at the other end of the ground. Some of them would develop rashes an inch thick. But we’d make riders out of them. We’d get them off to Salonika, India, or wherever it was.(104-105)

His conversation with Peter also reveals he often punishes his servants by locking them in the refrigerators, sometimes whipping them, and even not allowing them to grow crops which might be enough reasons for them to hate him.

He seems to be very proud of his civilization task and tells Linda that it’s all because of his training that Peter has become so polished and refined but when he had come here with his fourteen children, he was not so. He was much uncivilised, and even didn’t know how to hold a pen. He was very dirty and used to go to black hole to eat filthy and dance naked, but then he taught him, gave him shelter in
quarters, provided him a job, looked after his children and because of all his teachings and training, Peter is now able to speak so well with an English accent just like him, and keep himself neat and clean:

He has fourteen. He’s living with three of those animals now. So polished. So nice. So well-spoken. You wouldn’t believe he doesn’t even know how to hold a pen in those hands. You wouldn’t believe the filth he comes out of, but you like dirt, don’t you Peter? You like going in to some black hole to eat filth and dance naked. You will steal and lie to do that, won’t you? (108)

He also informs Linda about the cook in his hotel who too was an uncivilised boy looking like fresh from the bush and had never sat on a chair before but he turned him into a nice cook. He wonders of their fate after his departure.

He keeps reminding all his servants that they should consider themselves to be lucky to be with him and should be grateful for all he has done for them. He makes them publically speak of all the favours made by him. He asks Peter to tell to every visitor the story of his wife’s death. He also reminds him that how after his death he will starve and will move back to bush: “While I live you stay there. You won’t move in here, Peter. I don’t want you to bank on that. If I die you will starve, Peter. You will go back to bush.”(108)

Bobby, a British administrative officer of central government, though seems to have humanitarian outlook towards the non-whites but at other critical times fails to do so and his Eurocentric assumptions embedded in his subconscious mind come to forefront. He is a homosexual and likes to pick up the African boys. He is fond of the African culture, wears ‘native shirt’ and even speaks ‘pidgin’. He expresses his love
for Africa saying how he once had a nervous breakdown while at Oxford and was saved by Africa. He wants to stay in Africa forever. Further he says unlike other Europeans he does not want to dictate authority on the Africans but indeed wants to serve the people in getting food, building schools and hospitals:

I am here to serve,’ Bobby said. ‘I’m not here to tell them how to run their country There’s been too much of that. What sort of government the Africans choose to have is none of my business. It doesn’t alter the fact that they need food and schools and hospitals. People who don’t want to serve have no business here. That’s sounds brutal, but that’s how I see it. (23)

He is not racist like most of the Europeans and is sympathetic to the non-Europeans and quite frequently expresses his desire to be reborn as black people. While talking to the South African Zulu, Bobby expresses his desire to be born as a black person:

When I born again-‘Bobbystopped. He had begun to talk pidgin; that wouldn’t do with the Zulu. He looked up. ‘If I come into the world again I want to come with your colour.(8)

He respects the back Africans and feels that they respect him too. He citing his immediate African boss ‘Ogguna Wanga- Butere ‘remarks: “He is my-“boss”. I show him respect. And I believe he respects me”’ (31). He is very friendly and warm with the Africans. Whenever he comes across the Africans whether on road or he waves his hands at them, though fails to receive the same friendly gesture in return. He does not mind giving lift to the Africans in his car. He even tries to converse with them .He even gives lift to two African men while returning from the Hunting lodge that Linda expels out of the car. He does not like Linda’s racist attitude towards the African boys
in the car and expelling them out of the car and talking about their smell as rotting vegetables. He, indeed, says that he finds their body smell similar to the smell in a warm shuttered room which he likes a lot. He further suggests Linda that if she can’t withstand the smell of Africa it would be better for her to leave Africa and go South.”

It was the smell, in a warm shuttered room, that Bobby liked. He said, ‘Perhaps it is time for you to go south.’ (53)

Further when he finds Linda being critical about the Africans as people who eat dungs, dance naked and swear the oaths of hatred against the Europeans, he becomes enraged. Bobby and he intervenes saying, ‘They were serfs over there,’ Bobby said his own temper building up. ‘They were oppressed for centuries.’ (87)

Moreover he feels that if the Europeans think the Africans have any prejudice against them then the Europeans themselves are responsible for that. Though the Europeans most often lecture the Africans about corruption but they don’t seem to follow what they preach and are found guilty of corruption:

I very much feel that Europeans have themselves to blame if there’s any prejudice against them. Every day the President travels up and down, telling his people that we are needed. But he’s no fool. He knows the old colonial hands are out to get every penny they can before they scuttle south. It makes me laugh. We lecture the Africans about corruption. But there’s a lot of anguish and talk about prejudice even they rumble our little rackets. And not so little either. We were spending thousands on overseas baggage allowances for baggage that never went anywhere. (31)

He likes Africa more than England and feels it even grander than England but he dislikes the fact that in order to maintain it’s grander, the native Africans had been
forbidden to enter. Being insecure and frightened, even the famous African painter, John Mubende-Mbarara refuses to come to the capital and wants the people to visit his native quarter to see his work. He feels Linda has acquired so much of hatred, racism and Eurocentrism maybe because she has been reading Conrad so much.

Though in most part of the novel is seen to have a humanitarian and sympathetic outlook towards the non-Europeans by offering money to the African boys on the road for their education and asking them not be frightened of him and showing his love for their race by expressing his desire to be reborn as black people but still his Eurocentric thoughts for black people as primitive and without language comes to forefront when he makes the following comment on seeing the black African boys on the road:

Africa was for Bobby the empty spaces, the safe adventure of long fatiguing drives on open roads, the other Africans, boys built like men. You want lift? You big boy, you no go school? No, no, you no frighten. Look, I give you shilling. You hold my hand. Look, my colour, your colour. I give you shilling buy schoolbooks. Buy books, learn read, get big jobs. When I born again I want your colour. You no frighten. You want five shillings?’ Sweet infantilism, almost without language: in language lay mockery and self – disgust.(11)

Besides his seemingly sympathetic attitude vanishes as soon as he is enraged by the Africans and his true racist feeling suppressed in his mind comes to the forefront. The incidence that takes place while Bobby and Linda are at a filling station to get petrol unveils the humanist mask, and exposes the racist and Eurocentric side of Bobby. Bobby is infuriated to see the scratch marks on the wind screen and he shouts
at the African boy of the king’s tribe and threatens to sack him and send him back to his people. ‘These people shouldn’t be employed. They and their king have had it all their own way for too long, but their little games are over now. Look at my windscreen.’ (63)

Moreover, it also appears that he wears the humanistic mask only to meet his sexual hunt for the African boys, thus when he finds that Carolus, the bar boy has not come to sleep with him in his room but indeed has come to learn French and English from him, he becomes furious and shouts at him to get out of the room or else he will whip him:

“Anger swept through Bobby; and his anger grew at the sight of Carolus’s heavy face.

He ordered: ‘Pencil.’

Carolus had one waiting.

‘Now get out!’ Bobby said, handing back the pencil and the chit.

Carolus didn’t move. His expression didn’t alter.

‘Go!’

‘You give me.’

‘Give you? Give you nothing. Give you whip.’ (127)

The Eurocentrism in the novel emanates from Naipaul’s own Eurocentric views. Selwyn Cudjoe, in his popular work entitled V.S Naipaul: A Materialist Reading, (1988), portrays Naipaul’s concern for the Imperial world, in his works: “A
Negative symbols and imagery used to describe Africa and its people are the outcome of Naipaul’s own racism and Euro-centrism. Besides, it is seen that no African characters are introduced nor elaborated and discussed thoroughly. Africa is watched and observed from Eurocentric viewpoint that gives Europe a superior position over Africans which Edward Said says is one of the purposes of Orientalism. Africans are depicted in a way that they are the total contrast of the European white people. The Black Africans as Fanon illustrates in his book Black Skin White Mask succumbing to effect of colonialism are simply seen imitating the colonizer’s:

When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person. The entire purpose of his behaviour is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man. (foreword, viii)

Most of the non-European characters in the novel are seen to be the victims of cultural hegemony and although they have attained political freedom from the British domination but still enslaved by intellectual colonialism are found mimicking the coloniser.

Even the most powerful, people like the king and the president, are shown as mere mimic men imitating European manners, language and lifestyle. The King too end up becoming a mere mimic man trying to be English in manners, style and speaking English, just to please the English coloniser’s favour and to win their support to become the next ruler of Africa. The president’s new photograph shows
him in ‘jacket, shirt and tie, with his hair done in the English style’. The other elite, educated men of power like civil servants, politicians, non-executive directors and managing directors of recently opened branches of big international corporations also seem to follow the European manners in order ‘to be noticed’ and ‘to be courted’ by the Europeans:

The Africans drank shorter, prettier drinks with cocktail sticks and wore English-made Daks suits. Their hair was parted low on the left and piled up on the right, in the style known to city Africans as the English style.

The Africans were young, in their twenties, and plump. They could read and write, and were high civil servants, politicians or the relations of politicians, non-executive directors and managing directors of recently opened branches of big international corporations. They were the new men of the country and they saw themselves as men of power. They hadn’t paid for the suits they wore; in some cases they had had the drapers deported. They came to the New Shropshire to be seen and noted by white people, however transient; to be courted; to make trouble.(4-5)

Moreover, the African policemen are seen mimicking the English with their black uniforms, capes and caps, and keeping the English hair style with their hair scraped together in a high springy mound on one side, with a wide, low parting on the other side:

When we were in West Africa for those few months,’ she said, patting powder, squinting at the hand mirror. ‘You would never have said that the Africans there were remotely English, but as soon as you crossed the border into the French place there you saw black men just like ours sitting on the
roadside and eating French bread and drinking red wine and wearing little French berets. Now you come here and see these Black English grooms.(36)

All the African men like Peter, Timothy, Carolus, Luke who work under the Europeans are found highly influenced by European culture and are found following them like puppets.

Peter, the Head boy at the Colonel’s hotel seems to be a perfect outcome of the civilization mission undertaken by the colonel. He is very different from the other African servants of the colonel. He is not black, fat, dirty, stinky, wearing dirty clothes like other African boys but in fact he is dark brown, slender, very neat and polished, and speaks pidgin in the colonel’s accent. He wears simple clothes with much style. Besides, his well-tailored khaki trousers are clean and ironed, the collar of his grey shirt is clean and firm. He keeps parting in his hair and wears shining brown shoes. He moves like an athlete and as a part of his training greets with a smile on his face:

A tall, slender African, dark-brown, not black, came out into the dinning-room from the kitchen. He moved lightly, like an athlete. He nodded and smiled at the Israelis, at the Bobby and Linda, and went to the colonel’s table. The mobility and openness of his face made him look less like an African than a West Indian or An American mulatto. He wore simple clothes with much style. His well-tailored khaki trousers were clean and firm. His cream-coloured pullover suggested the sportsman, the tennis-player or the cricketer. There was a parting in his hair, and his brown shoes shone. (105)

The relationship between the colonel and Peter reveals the way in which the colonising society imposes its worldview on the people it subjugates, making them
objectives of observation and denying them the power to define themselves. The colonisers are the subjects, those who take action and create realities out of the beliefs they hold to be important. The colonel has made Peter internalise that whatever he does he does it for the Peter’s own good and that he should be grateful for all that. Thus despite all his ill treatment of the colonel, Peter keeps on listing before the visitors the favours rendered to him by the colonel. The colonel purposefully makes Peter say so in order to highlight his civilization mission:

‘What do you think of me, Peter?’

‘I like you, sir.’

‘You take me in when I was small. You give me job, you give me quarters. You look after my children.’(108)

The colonel whips him, humiliates him in the public by asking him to narrate the story of his wife’s death before every visitor, he threatens to kill him, he swears his oaths of hatred against him, but despite all the ill treatment and humiliation, Peter neither complains nor raises his voice against the exploitations. He is no better than a vegetable in the colonel’s hotel. He has no freedom to say what he feels, do what he wishes. He seems to have internalised the Colonel’s thoughts that all that is done is for his own good and betterment.

Carolus, the bar boy is a victim of cultural and linguistic hegemony. He is very fond of reading European books and has many tattered books of mathematics, English, French which he keeps with him in the bar. He is found reading a mathematics book in the Bar. He thinks that reading and education in schools will fetch a big job:
I go school next year,’ the boy said, showing off now, looking down his nose, sticking out his lower lip, and pulling back the geometry book with the fingertips of both hands. ‘I buy more schoolbooks. I get big job.(120)

His curiosity for learning French and English from Bobby is misunderstood by Bobby as a sign of sexual invitation by striking the conversation. Bobby calls him to his room for sex in the pretext of teaching.

The writer’s Eurocentric remark on the Africans present in the Seminar held at the capital as “the Africans were well-dressed and dignified, with little to say’ and his description of the Capital as ‘an English-Indian creation in the African wilderness’ which neither owed anything to African skill nor required it set the very theme of Eurocentrism at the beginning of the novel. Besides, when he says that independence to Africans implies attaining of complete civilisation, he seems to confirm the white men’s burden concept of the Europeans, a mission undertaken by the Europeans to civilise the non-Europeans especially the Africans thus justifying the colonialism:

Africa here was décor. Glamour for the white visitors and expatriate; glamour too for the African, the man flushed out from the bush, to whom, in the city, with independence, civilization appeared to have been granted complete. It was still a colonial city, with a colonial glamour. Everyone in it was far from home.(4)

Moreover the stereotype negative portrayal of the Africans as the primitive and uncivilised people just coming out of the bush and living in the houses abandoned by the Europeans with the worn and thrown articles also reveals Naipaul’s Eurocentric vision:
The town was inhabited. Many of the houses that looked abandoned were occupied, by Africans who had come in from the forest and had used the awkward, angular objects they had found, walls, doors, windows, furniture, to re-create the shelter of the round forest hut. Within drawing-rooms they had built shelters; they had raised roofs on verandah half walls. Fires burned on pieces of corrugated iron; bricks were the cooking-stones. Many of the men wore ragged army clothes, still wet from the rain, pockets stuffed and drooping. A bicycle leaned in a doorless doorway, as within the stockade of a hut. (95)

He presents the Africans as; mostly wearing picked up or cast off clothes of Europeans:

The African was dressed like those labourers that morning being marshalled into the Lorries. But his clothes looked more personal and less like cast-offs. His striped brown jacket was stained in many places and the bloated tips of the wide lapels curled; but the jacket fitted. The pull-over, rough with little burrs of dirt, fitted; and the shirt, oily and black around the collar, with two or three old tidemarks of sweat, was like a second skin. Seen from the car, the labourers on the road were expressionless and blank, their black faces in shadow below hats pulled down to the crown. But the African in the office carried his round-topped hat in his hand, and his face was exposed. It was a face as plain as the president’s in the photograph, showing age alone rather than a quality of experience. Liveliness and emotion lay only in the eyes. (40)

Further he ridicules them as people, having undistinguishable features and eating filthy things, dancing naked and swearing oaths of hatred, and showing them as
inferior to the Europeans. He mocks the African other forest languages and almost calls them no language and compares them to sometimes like squealing. He also ridicules the way the African radio announcer who speaks English like an angry stutter reading word by word and sometimes syllable by syllable:

Downstairs someone turned on a radio. An African voice burred and boomed through the hollow wooden building, stumbling over the six o’ clock news from the capital, or the comment that followed the news: a voice reading word by word, evenly, and sometimes syllable by syllable, often trapping itself and then impatiently eliding. ‘Feu-dal…ter’rists…se’ssionist…Ab’am Lincoln…secu’ty forces …exte’m’nated…vermin.’ The words came up to Bobby like an angry stutter. Against the competition of the radio the hotel boys banged about more and laughed more shrilly and squealed harder and longer in their forest language.(93)

The remark on Zulu’s speech, a South African refugee working as a bar boy in New Shropshire as ‘not easy’ and ‘fidgety’ hopping from one topic to another and never relating one thing to other and his appearance with his cloth cap at times making him look like a ‘dandy’ and the other as ‘an exploited labourer from the South African mines ’ still at times as an ‘American minstrel’ while at other as ‘a revolutionary’ projecting his elusive personality affirms Naipaul’s Eurocentrism:

Conversation with the Zulu wasn’t easy. There too he was fidgety. The king and the president, sabotage in South Africa, seminars, tourists, the natives: he hopped from subject to subject, never committing himself, never relating one thing to another. And the cloth cap was like part of his elusiveness. The cap made the Zulu appear now as a dandy, now as an exploited labourer from the
South African mines, now as an American minstrel, and sometimes even as the revolutionary he had told Bobby he was. (5-6)

Even Peter’s story of losing his wife because the European doctors were racist and refused to see her as the hospital was meant only for the Europeans and asked him to take her to the Indian doctor also brings out the ill effect of Eurocentrism and racism. Peter narrates: “One night she was very sick. I get car and take her to the hospital. They say no. Hospital for Eu’peans only. Huts for natives. Indian doctor take her. Too late, sir. She died.” (109)

Besides, Naipaul has describes all the African men as dirty, stinky people. ‘The boy was big and he moved briskly, creating little turbulences of stink. The cuffs and collar of his red tunic were oily; oil gleamed on his cheeks and neck.’ (100)

The title In a Free State denotatively means a country free for self-governing but on connotative level it also means freedom from all forms of slavery be it psychological, social, spiritual, economical, and the like. Ironically Naipaul’s ‘free state’ does not grant any kind of freedom to its resident. All the residents appear to be enslaved by colonial hegemony. As the country has been freed recently so some of the Europeans are still present in the country counting their last days of expatriation in Africa. All the characters are seen to be the slaves of some or other sort of colonial psychosis. The European characters are enslaved by Euro-centrism, while the non-Europeans enslaved by intellectual colonialism are seen mimicking the European characters.

The slavish attitude indeed emanates from the writer’s own slavish mentality. He is a slave of European vision. His Eurocentric world view is the cause of his brutal and unsympathetic portrayal of Third World countries of Trinidad, India and Africa.
Naipaul being a Eurocentric writer does not seem to celebrate the independence of the country and presents the newly freed nation in its most chaotic state with its on-going violence for power between the African president and the king. Naipaul does not nurture any sympathy towards the Africans and presents them in the most passive forms. Even the powerful people like the president and the king have been reduced to the stature of mere mimic men who are trying to outdo each other to prove their worthiness as the next rulers of the country.

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All the non-European characters like Peter, Timothy, Carolus, and the other African men and women are just shown to be without any sign of intelligence or self-assertion. They are presented as either docile people with their existence not more than vegetables or barbarous uncivilised people swearing their oaths of hatred. Naipaul uses many derogatory words for the Africans like savage, filthy people emitting foul smell, doing naked dance, eating dirt. In this respect he appears to be a racist like Conrad.

Moreover, most of the European characters like Linda, colonel; Martin and at times even Bobby seem to have a staunch Eurocentric perspective. Naipaul through all the European characters tries to reinforce the colonial ideology of civilization
mission. Bobby is the only character that stands in contrast to other European characters by having a sympathetic outlook towards the non-Europeans. In this respect he reminds us of ‘Cyril Fielding’ the liberal humanist of Foster’s *A Passage to India* who tries to establish a friendly relation with the Indians but ironically all his endeavours end in futility and the passage which is symbolic of a friendly union between the colonizer and the colonised fails to establish. Similarly Bobby’s humanistic outlook turns out to be a mask that he wears to bait African boys to satisfy his sexual desires. Africa which once appeared life to him and which made him think ‘I see my life hear’ after being beaten by the president’s army men changes his mind and compels him to leave Africa for ever. Like Foster’s *A Passage To India*, a friendly passage is not established between the colonizer and the colonised and as Rudyard Kipling says “The Ballad of East and West”, ‘Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet’ the novel ends with a note of pessimism.