

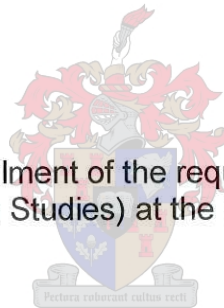
**SEPARATE AND WARRING SELVES**

IDENTITY CRISES IN AFRICA  
IN SHIVA NAIPAUL'S  
*NORTH OF SOUTH: AN AFRICAN JOURNEY*

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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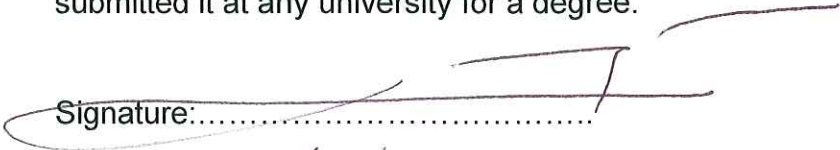


Supervisor: Professor Dirk Klopper

December 2009

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:.....

Date:.....25/11/2009.....

## Abstract

This project seeks to analyze the representation of identities in Shiva Naipaul's travel narrative *North of South: An African Journey* (1978) as encoded in the binaries of primitive / traditional; civilized / modern; settler / native; civic / tribal and neo-colonial / liberated. By analyzing this select series of identities, this project aims to explore the fractured nature of identity as constructed in the post-colony. It will argue that the identities are rendered unstable by the ungrounded nature of the post-colonial space in which they are located. Naipaul concludes his travel narrative by qualifying the post-colonial situation as an abortion of Western civilization in the trope of Conrad's Kurtz. Naipaul implies that any identity in Africa is a simulacrum, a phantom double, a copy of something that was not there to begin with. He attempts to articulate the diverse cultures that he encounters as though he were apart from them without recognizing that he is essentially and inextricably a part of the various cultural articulations themselves. It is easy to criticize Naipaul, therefore, as a non-starter. With the advantages of hindsight, however, it is possible for the contemporary reader to recognize these instabilities as evidence of the post-modern phenomenon in which reality is not an absolute. As a modernist writer, Naipaul's efforts to understand these instabilities of identity as an articulation of culture are circumvented by a Sisyphean struggle wherein he attempts to establish a sense of ontological alterity in the narrative yet implicates himself, as well as his invocation of archival literature and hence his ultimate position of disillusionment, hopelessness and doom.

## Opsomming

Hierdie projek poog om die verteenwoordiging van identiteite in Shiva Naipaul se reisverhaal, *North of South: An African Journey* (1978), gekodeer met die binêre van die primitiewe / tradisionele ; beskaafde / moderne; setlaars / inheemse; staats / etniese; en neo-kolonialisme / vryheid, te analiseer. Deur die analise van die gekose reeks identiteite, neig die studie om die gebroke aard van identiteit in 'n post-koloniale omgewing te ondersoek, en te redeneer dat die identiteite bemoeilik word deur die ongegronde natuur van die post-koloniale ruimte waarin hulle voorkom. Naipaul omvat *North of South* om die post-kolonialistiese situasie te kwalifiseer as 'n aborsie van die Westerse beskawing in die metafoor van Conrad se Kurtz. Naipaul impliseer dat enige identiteit in Afrika 'n simulacrum is, 'n spookbeeld, 'n kopie van iets wat nooit was nie. Hy poog om die menigte kulture wat hy ondervind te omskryf asof hy van hulle verwyder is, sonder om te besef dat hy volledig deel uitmaak van die geleding van hierdie kulture, en dit is daarvolgens maklik om Naipaul as 'n mislukking te kritiseer. Met die duidelikheid van 'n moderne leser se terugblik is dit wel moontlik om hierdie onkonsekwentheid as bewyse te sien van die post-modernistiese verskynsel waarin realiteit nie 'n absoluut is nie. As 'n modernistiese skrywer is Naipaul se bemoeienis om hierdie onbestendigheid van identiteit as 'n omskrywing van kultuur te verstaan belemmer deur 'n Sisyphestryd waarin hy poog om 'n sin van die andersheid van die aard van die werklikheid in die storielyn te vestig, maar tog impliseer hy homself asook sy gebruik van argiefmateriaal, en vandaar sy uiteindelijke posisie van ontnugtering, hopeloosheid en verwoesting.

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## INTRODUCTION

### SEPARATE AND WARRING SELVES IDENTITY CRISES IN AFRICA

Shiva Naipaul asserts that:

Transitional states are full of pain, riddled with illusion. We can lose one self without gaining another. Our development can be indefinitely arrested at the stage of caricature.(Naipaul 54)

His views find expression in the diverse identities that animate his travel narrative, North Of South: An African Journey (1978), a cynical, pessimistic yet humorous and erudite montage of colourful anecdotes fused by the motif of a journey in post-independence East Africa. In Naipaul's portrayal, the identities are rendered unstable by the ungrounded nature of the post-colonial space which they inhabit, a space that Foucault terms "a heterotopia of compensation" and describes as a failed attempt "to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled" (Naipaul 243).

This failure of a projected order, which is a failure of the colonial enterprise as such, manifests itself as various identity crises in the narrative. Naipaul describes the characteristics of these identity crises when he writes about a Victorianized black entrepreneur named Alberta whom he meets in Kenya:

So, like nearly all the rest – like Andrew, like the student of literature who did not read books, like Stephen with his keenness to "exchange ideas", like Joe with his golfing cap and rigid settler politics –

she would suddenly fade out of focus, slip beyond imaginative reach. None of them could, properly speaking, be said to have a stable personality. They were made up of a number of separate and warring selves. Hence the wild veering between farce, piety and up-to-date cynicism.(Naipaul 164)

While offering a critique of the post-colonial subject, Naipaul betrays his adherence to an essentialised notion of identity that characterised the colonial enterprise to begin with. Consequently, Naipaul's representations themselves require analytical scrutiny. Inasmuch as he provides a lens by means of which the post-colonial subject may be apprehended, it is a lens that has been engineered to bring into focus his particular concerns.

The concept of identity is multivalent and may be approached from many points of view. In contemporary post-colonial theory, it tends to refer both to the individual and the collective, the person and the culture, and their profound connectivity. As Stuart Hall explains:

To say that the individual is culturally constructed has become a truism. We are accustomed to hearing that the person in Bali or among the Hopi or in medieval society is different – with different experiences of time, space, kinship, bodily identity – from the individual in bourgeois Europe or in modern America. We assume, almost without question, that a self belongs to a specific cultural world as much as it speaks a native language: one self, one culture, one language.(Hall 92)

Hall's own work aims to put the unitary self into question, showing how the post-colonial subject, in particular, is a hybrid subject, occupying multiple sites of determination and comprising multiple temporalities (See Hall's Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practice [1997], for



example).

Taking as given Hall's problematisation of the relationship between self and culture, this project will focus on representations of identity in North Of South; paying attention, in particular, to representations around a series of binary formations: civilized / primitive; civic / tribal; settler / native; modern / traditional; neo-colonial / liberated; enlightened / ignorant. By analysing Naipaul's deployment of these binary formations, this project aims both to question their validity and to expound on the failure of the colonial venture in East Africa as seen by Naipaul, a failure projected by Naipaul as an identity crisis, a psychic disorder that Fanon, too, has invoked and that he characterizes as "a zone of occult instability"(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 183).

Naipaul's narrative is located in the post-independent moment. In his preface, he claims that his reason for writing the narrative is to explore what the terms 'liberation', 'revolution' and 'socialism' actually meant to the people, i.e. the individual citizens of each African country who experienced them, as well as the relationship between black, white and brown. He believes that the only way to find the answers is to experience the people at grass-roots level. The world that he encounters is not on a flaming trajectory of post-liberation ecstasy, as one would expect. Rather, in his portrayal it is an anticlimax of disillusion and despair, a world quite out of touch with reality. The overwhelmingly negative portrait of post-colonial Africa that Naipaul presents may strike the reader as caricature, but its interest and relevance lie in its incisive portrayal of the dialectic between former colonisers and colonised, however exaggerated the presentation of this relationship may be for rhetorical effect. An important aspect of this relationship is Naipaul's sense that resistance to one form of cultural imperialism can easily mutate into a slavish adoption of another form of cultural imperialism, evident, in particular, in the bizarre ambiguities of African socialist. Naipaul is concerned above all with the anomalies of creolisation and cosmopolitanism.

The narrative contains elements of the modern and post-modern. By utilizing

parody in a structured way as a weapon of satire that militates against the universalisation of bourgeois norms and values, and through its consistent evocation of psychoanalytic concepts and metaphors, the narrative is rooted in the modernist tradition. However, Naipaul's eclecticism, as embodied in his discursive approach, also embraces pastiche and its peculiar blank ironies, which seems to anticipate the post-modern. The technique effectively buttresses the thematic instabilities and inconsistencies and purposively obstructs identification with any single character bar Naipaul as narrator.

The theme on which this project will concentrate is Naipaul's sense of the instability of various identities. The early linguistic groundwork laid by de Saussure, and the seminal developments of Lacan, Derrida and Foucault, encouraged the deconstruction and implosion of the Cartesian introjection: *cogito ergo sum*, I think therefore I am, especially in terms of the plurality and instability of the complete, sovereign and autonomous self, and the ontology of metaphysics. Their work provided a portal to novel and exciting articulations and understanding of identity through which many of the myths of colonial ideologies were destabilized and refuted.

Throughout, Naipaul's narrative makes use of intertextual allusions in advancing and illuminating the argument. From the bleak, apocalyptic visions of Conrad, through to the gritty urban rhythms of Mwangi and the inflamed rhetoric of Fanon, speeches and declarations of independence, and then, of course, the romantic African encomiums of Karen Blixen and the comparatively sober revelations of Elspeth Huxley, each contributes a small but significant ingredient.

The project invokes ideas put forward and developed by Jean Baudrillard, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, James Clifford, Stuart Hall, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, as well as critiques of North Of South, notably by Tom Odhiambo and Rob Nixon.

My study is framed by James Clifford's notion of articulation and the way in which it problematises Naipaul's assessment of the cultures that he

encounters in Africa. Clifford's extensive ethnographical research primarily focuses on certain cultures in Southeast Asia and North Africa but his ideas can easily be transposed to any study on identity. Clifford offers a complex view on contact-histories through his proposal that the terms "invention of culture" and "invention of tradition" should be replaced by the terms "articulation of culture" and "articulation of tradition" respectively (Clifford, On The Edges Of Anthropology 44). This proposal is post-modern in that it seeks to supplant an absolute value. Invention implies that something was created from nothing by an external force whereas articulation suggests the fitting together of sometimes disparate phenomena, as typically encountered in the colonial and post-colonial contexts.

On one hand, it appears that Naipaul sets out to write the travel narrative with the intention of experiencing the cultures of the post-colonial African countries that he visits and arriving at conclusions based on these experiences as though his mind is some sort of *tabula rasa* on which an ethnographic record can be produced. On the other hand, the narrative clearly illustrates that his preconceived ideas have been projected onto his characters – not necessarily actual people – that he has imagined; in this sense, the characters have become vehicles for conveying his message. Naipaul is quite clear that his intentions are to interpret his experiences in the light of the introductory questions that he poses in the preface to the narrative, thus he implicates himself. This point is critical to my thesis as I will use it to demonstrate why Naipaul is not able ultimately to recognize the new forms of cultural articulation emerging from Africa.

The first chapter examines the binaries primitive/traditional and civilized/modern in the context of Naipaul's view on modernisation and traditionalism in post-colonial Africa. Naipaul's view seems contradictory because he often alludes to what he frequently expresses as a clear dichotomy and hierarchy between modernisation and traditionalism. Yet he intermittently suggests that traditionalism and modernisation are interrelated cultural re-interpretations. These shifting positions highlight not only the instability of the identities represented in the text but also the instability in

Naipaul's attempt at circumscribing identity. Naipaul is implicated in the very question he poses.

Chapter two focuses on the White Man's Burden and its implications for the binaries of settler/native, civic/tribal. As Clifford suggests, social movements cannot be sustained without certain criteria for distinguishing us from them (Clifford, On The Edges Of Anthropology 62). However, generalizations and essentialism are key conceptual strategies that were utilized in colonial and post-colonial Africa. The psychopathology underpinning their development and the ideologies that they evolved are inherent in Naipaul's satirical representation of certain racist attitudes embodied in various identities that seem to be shaped by the prejudice of the White Man's Burden.

The third chapter examines Naipaul's critical stance on the body politic of the various countries that he visits through the eyes of the identities that he encounters and also various manifestations of the binary of neo-colonial/liberated. In Naipaul's view, the re-interpretation of culture in the face of modernisation seems to create inconsistencies, contradictions, falsities and general instability in the body politic. The political connecting and disconnecting that brought the liberation movements and subsequent governments into being also incited neo-colonialism.

The key question of this project is why Naipaul's sense of the instabilities of various identities in the countries that he visits has led him to develop such a negative perspective of the post-colonial situation.

## CHAPTER 1

### TRADITIONALISM AND MODERNISATION

Naipaul frames most of the identities that he chooses to represent within the context of a particular understanding of the relation between modernisation and traditionalism. He seems to follow modernist (Enlightenment) thinking in construing the relationship between modernisation and traditionalism as a binary opposition in which modernisation is privileged over traditionalism. In this view, modernisation can be defined as a socio-political and economic ideology which seeks to legitimate the evolution of societies from a state of barbarism to increasing degrees of civilization, i.e. in this view, modernisation is a process of change from a savage state through stages of political and economic development to a civilized state. In other words, the relationship between savage and civilized is hierarchical, with a positive value ascribed to the civilized. His view positions the locus of identity, which is interdependent with society, in a condition of flux. The instability of this condition of flux renders identity malleable, fluid or labile. His view exposes how ideology alters the object onto which it is projected as well as how ideology itself is altered in the process.

This view of modernisation is often conflated with Westernization and thereby establishes grounds for prejudice and violence in relation to cultures that encounter the West. This conflation ignores the extraordinary complexity and heterogeneity of contact-histories, and leads to the conclusion that the post-colonial state is an abortion of Western civilization. The displacement of an indigenous culture by a relatively Westernized one, in this view, is the *sine qua non* of the modernisation of society.

Naipaul's representation of modernisation reinforces the perspective of cultural change as an active/passive engagement between opposing factions.

When describing modernisation through this prism, Naipaul leaves no room for negotiation or compromise. The idea of one culture conquering, obliterating and replacing another culture is linked to modernist notions of the supremacy of the sovereign subject relative to the inferiority of the object and the existence of clearly defined and absolute poles of reference. On one hand, Naipaul seems to adopt this perspective in North Of South. However, he also offers a more complex view of the relation between the primitive / traditional and the civilized / modern.

To understand what this more complex view might entail, it is useful to turn to an observation made by ethnographer James Clifford in On The Edges Of Anthropology:

Today I would tend to use the language of articulation rather than the language of invention... Articulation is the political connecting and disconnecting, the hooking and unhooking of elements – the sense that any socio-cultural ensemble that presents itself to us for a while is actually a set of historical connections and disconnections. A set of elements has been combined to make a cultural body, which is also a process of disconnection, through actively sustained antagonisms. Articulations and disarticulations are constant processes in the making and remaking of cultures.(Clifford 44)

This view is best characterised as articulation theory. Clifford explains that phrases like “the invention of culture” and the “invention of tradition” are rooted in modernist ideologies that visualize cultural revolution as an all-or-nothing transition. Clifford replaces the language of invention with the language of articulation. In this view, any socio-cultural ensemble, like the post-colonial space, for example, is a set of historical connections and disconnections, the hooking and unhooking of elements. Through the process

of combining, certain elements form a cultural entity, which also implies a process of dissociation. Clifford also explains that these processes are critical and constant in the evolution and dissolution of cultures which is more universal than viewing culture as limited to a specific context.

Drawing on Clifford's definition of articulation, the post-colonial space in North Of South and its constituent elements can be interpreted as a set of historical connections and disconnections. This view can be termed a post-modern perspective of cultural change, and is certainly more complex than the paradigm of the binary opposition. As an alternative paradigm for modernisation in North Of South, articulation is important because the binary of the primitive/traditional in the post-colonial space is not necessarily read as being substituted by the binary of the civilized/modern. The engagement of the binary of the civilized/modern and the primitive/traditional is one of mutual implication. The civilized/modern re-interprets the primitive/traditional. Similarly, the primitive/traditional affects and re-interprets the civilized/modern. The indigenous cultures of the African countries that Naipaul visits are not portrayed in fact as having been obliterated by the colonial cultures, whatever he might say. The text itself demonstrates that the relationship between the two is far more reflexive, continuous and changeable.

Although Naipaul seems, on the one hand, to present the African societies he visits as failed experiments in modernisation, where the authenticity of tradition has been replaced by the inauthenticity of cultural mimicry, on the other hand his descriptions can be read as illustrations of the process of articulation. In terms of the latter reading, these societies are creating new hybrid cultural forms. Naipaul accuses his subjects of employing a language that does not match the reality of which it speaks. In a way, a similar slippage is evident in Naipaul's text.

At certain points in North Of South, Naipaul's representation of acculturation (i.e. the colonized people's having to adopt the cultural patterns or paradigm

of the colonizers) is indicative of a sophisticated understanding of the role of the colonized peoples in the process of acculturation. The considerable disparities of power between the imperial nations and their colonies have often made it difficult for the colonized peoples to resist a cultural encounter and the concomitant acculturation. However, it would be deceptive to represent the colonized people as helpless victims of cultural imperialism. In many instances, they have selected and re-interpreted foreign concepts, representations and products, assimilating them into their own experiences to form novel metaphors of meaning and agency in their own worlds. Acculturation is a labile process involving socio-political connecting and disconnecting, creating myriad new manifestations or, using Clifford's lexicon, cultural articulations.

Naipaul illustrates the idea of acculturation quite succinctly in an anecdote about his being coerced by a huckster in Nairobi's Kenyatta Avenue to accept a shoeshine. When Naipaul refuses to pay the exorbitant fee for a shoddy job, the huckster produces a dubious typewritten testimonial and card listing the "services" and concomitant charges. Naipaul qualifies that the documents "were as much an investment as the charms which, in another age, he would have commissioned a witch doctor to concoct for him. Behind the modern vocabulary – "secret formula", "special ingredient", "discount", "guarantee" – lay more elemental beliefs... He had brought his ancient magical outlook into the new world of the city. Old wine had been poured into a new bottle."(Naipaul 52) There is a strong indication here of cultural displacement in the light of modernisation, yet the indication is that the displacement resulted in cultural re-interpretation rather than utter cultural destruction. However, Naipaul's views on this apparent modification (the evolution of the primitive into the modern) are hardly complimentary. In fact, he suggests that it is altogether ridiculous.

A particularly relevant metaphor that Naipaul employs in the travel narrative is the above notion of the primitive/traditional as being a mature wine in the new



bottle of the civilized/modern. In the metaphor, there is a strong sense of displacement, but the displacement is not absolute, since wine is a distillation process of many elements over many years. The displacement involves the fusion of elements in a novel synergy of meaning. Naipaul revisits the idea of culture being an articulation in that he personifies an example of the socio-political connecting and disconnecting that fashions the multitude of new identities that manifest in the post-colony. Naipaul's view on imperialism is thus not a simplistic ascription of agency to the colonizers but also transfers complicity, compromise and responsibility to the colonized peoples. This existentialist position would be more balanced, neutral or impartial were it not for Naipaul's consistent judgement of it throughout North Of South.

Naipaul spends a considerable amount of effort in differentiating between the primitive/traditional and the civilized/modern for the purpose of establishing a frame of reference for the differences that he perceives, quoting and paraphrasing from the writing of Danish baroness and author Karen Blixen, particularly the work for which she is best known (at least in the Anglophonic world), Out of Africa (1937), her memoir about the seventeen years of her life that she spent in Kenya, then British East Africa. Naipaul's decision to make use of her writing is significant because the story of Out of Africa, and American director Sydney Pollack's subsequent film adaptation of 1985, has greatly influenced perceptions of colonial and post-colonial Africa in the Western world. Naipaul utilizes a particular quotation in which Blixen attempts to impart certain legitimacy for what she terms "the primitive world" relative to the modern world to lend credibility to his perspective:

The primitive world is a realistic world. Within it, vision and ambition and desire are controlled. Magic and superstition operate within a known sphere and on a familiar scale. The tribal man knows what is possible. He is at home. His means fit his ends. He is sane. It is this wholeness that we

really ought to admire. His dignity arises from it. The primitive, existing within his own terms, cannot be mocked. His is a complete and undefiled self-realization. This may help to explain some of the traditional differences between the European attitudes toward the Masai on the one hand and the Kikuyu on the other.(Naipaul 53)

Blixen's tone in the quotation is persuasive, suggestive and matter-of-fact and her attitude is a knowing one. The quotation begins by describing the primitive world as realistic and proceeds to define its parameters, placing the tribal man at the centre of this world and justifying the tribal man's self-realization in the context of the plenitude of this world. The quotation evokes the lexicon of psychonomics (the psychiatric field that deals with mental action and the relations of the individual mind to its environment) in a fairly romanticized way since it is a projection of Blixen's imagination. Blixen effectively idealizes the tribal man and the primitive world of which he is an inextricable part.

The ontological alterity underlying the text in this quotation cannot be ignored in that it is fundamental to the construction of the ideology of the sovereign subject. In Orientalism (1978), Palestinian cultural critic and literary theorist Edward Said developed the argument that the West has constructed a "primitive Other" as an antipode to its "civilized Self", among other reasons to justify the countries' imperialist foreign policies; here, the Orient represents the primitive Other and the West, the civilized Self:

In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved

in) any occasion when that peculiar entity “the Orient” is in question. How this happens is what this book tries to demonstrate. It also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.(Said 3)

Blixen’s quotation establishes the grounds for what she sees as the authenticity of the primitive world and the tribal man. The primitive world – interestingly – circumscribes the tribal man. In other words, Blixen is the sovereign subject of the text and she has positioned herself beyond, and encompassing, the primitive world in order to authenticate it in relation to her Self. The “wholeness that we really ought to admire” is ostensibly the yet penetrated Other and its reality. This world in which the Other exists is not shaped by the mind of the Other. Rather, it is the *world* that shapes the *mind* of the Other since vision and ambition and desire are controlled within it. Moreover, this primitive world is merely a construct as perceived by Blixen so it is simply a vision of a world that she idealizes and not necessarily anything factual or true.

Naipaul and Blixen construe the primitive world and the tribal man as authentic. Their view is controversial because it is based on a presumption that such a world can be defined or that a factual historical paradigm of such a world could ever be accounted for as a true representation. In the quotation, Blixen conjures a vision of the primitive world in such a way that it cocoons the tribal man as though Blixen is omnipresent beyond this world. The most important aspect of Blixen’s view of the tribal man in the primitive world is that it exists in relation to Blixen; the tribal man is authenticated in relation to Blixen’s Self. The view thus reveals more about Blixen’s desire, aspirations and ideology. She deliberately sets herself and her world off against the tribal man and his world in a manner that perpetuates her superiority. By extension,

Naipaul looks down on the primitive world and the tribal man. Essentially, Blixen's view is a romantic idealization. It seems that Naipaul inadvertently fails to recognize the inherent contradiction of this particular construct of the primitive world and the tribal man.

Blixen actively separates the primitive/traditional society from the modern one (to which she admittedly belongs) and defines the primitive world relative to the modern one in her view for a specific reason. In so doing, she is able to describe the primitive/traditional society as being authentic prior to its contact with a modern one and being inauthentic once the forces of modernisation have been catalysed within the primitive world. The colonial encounter is thus seen as the cause of the inauthenticity of the primitive world. She writes from a modernist perspective in that she views her Self as sovereign; she fails to see that the Other (the primitive world, the tribal man) that she has constructed is an integral part of her Self (as an element of the civilized world, being the civilized woman), that the subject/object binary opposition that she has established is profoundly illusory.

Since the primitive / traditional society in her view is separate from the modern one (of which she is a part) and defined in relation to the modern one, it is easy for her to assume that the primitive / traditional society is only authentic prior to its encounter with a modern one, and being inauthentic once it has been changed by being forced to modernize. In On The Edges Of Anthropology, Clifford suggests circumspection in this regard. Cultures should not be viewed in the light of their perceived authenticity or inauthenticity. Rather, their continuity with all cultures, at all times, is more important:

Manuela Ribeiro Sanches: Does it then make any sense to speak of "authentic" or "inauthentic" cultures?

James Clifford: This way of seeing things seems to

me to escape the notion of inauthenticity which comes with the idea of invented or reinvented cultures and identities. And so, if one thinks of what I studied in some of my first writings on religious conversion, Melanesian peoples engaging with Christianity, one has to give up notions of before and after, leaving the old life behind and being reborn in the Christian faith and so forth. I'm inclined to rethink all that now in terms of articulation, so that in the conversion process elements of tradition get hooked onto elements of modernity and then, as modernity evolves in diverse directions including so-called post-modernity, elements of modernity can get rehooked onto elements of tradition, notions of place, new forms of indigeneity. This avoids the whole either-or, all-or-nothing, zero-sum game of cultural change in a way that, I think, is true to the messiness, the shifting power relations, the dialogical and historical open-endedness of contact-histories.(Clifford 45)

James Clifford explains that the idea of cultures being authentic or inauthentic is indivisibly interconnected with the concept of invented or reinvented cultures and identities. He elaborates by referring to his research on religious conversion, particularly his observations on the engagement of Melanesian peoples with Christianity. Academics often differentiate between a before and after, i.e. a period "before" the Melanesian peoples encountered Christian missionaries and their dogma, and a period "after" the Melanesian peoples encountered the Christian missionaries and their dogma and ostensibly converted and adapted to specific Christian dogmatic expectations of the way that life should be led. There is a sense, in this view, that the old life of the

Melanesian peoples has been abandoned in favour of being reborn in the system of the denominational Christian faith.

Clifford believes that this kind of approach should be revised under the auspices of articulation theory. He proposes that, during the conversion process, elements of tradition cohere to elements of modernity so that the diffraction of modernity, even into post-modernity, will enable elements of modernity to re-cohere to elements of tradition, ontologies of place, novel manifestations of indigeneity. Clifford proposes this perspective as a solution to the problem of an either-or, all-or-nothing, zero-sum simplification of cultural transition in a manner that he believes is a true reflection of the intricacy, the disorder, the volatile power relations, the dialogical and historical inconclusiveness of contact-histories. By propounding Blixen's perspective of the primitive world and the tribal man, Naipaul appears to contradict himself in as much as his descriptions in fact resonate with Clifford's ideas on cultural continuity.

Blixen's explanation of the European attitude towards the Kikuyu and the Masai as included in the quotation that Naipaul uses, illustrates Clifford's notion of the "zero-sum game of cultural change". It was perhaps natural for Blixen to view the primitive world as an entity separate from herself and her world because she was a settler, a colonizer approaching the indigenous people as an external phenomenon, and she could justify the "authenticity" of the primitive world and the tribal man because she generalized that the Kikuyu were re-invented (and thus rendered "inauthentic") when they chose to modernize, implying that they acculturated (i.e. adopted the colonizer's cultural patterns) and more specifically, Westernized. She read the Kikuyu's state "before" they encountered the Europeans as being "authentic" and their state "after" the European encounter as being "inauthentic" instead of perceiving it as a "new form of indigeneity".

In a rather rhetorical and essentialised argument in which the tonal qualities of the descriptive phrases verge on the romantic and appeal to the sentimental,

Naipaul embodies the primitive in the text as the Masai:

The Masai – a condensation of the dark heart of Africa – have consistently aroused the admiration of Europeans. They have seemed (borrowing the language of Joseph Conrad) “savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent.”... Almost every trait of the Masai lent itself to panegyric: their physique (tall and slim); the Hamitic regularity of their features; their nomadism; their militaristic code; their history of conquest and their predatory relationship with neighbouring tribes like the Kikuyu; their steadfast resistance to the arts and habits of modern civilization; even their diet (milk and blood) was a contributing factor.(Naipaul 53)

Naipaul’s tone is evocative and he positions himself in the role of observer though his subjectivity is somewhat condescending. Naipaul subsequently juxtaposes the primitive with the modern in the figure of the Kikuyu:

The sedentary Kikuyu, living closer in proximity to the Europeans, were more adaptable – and vulnerable – to outside influence. They were condemned for their avarice and their cunning; and they paid the inevitable price the primitive must pay when he dilutes his authentic existence. That price is well illustrated by an incident recorded by Elspeth Huxley in *The Flame Trees of Thika*. One day she rides into the Kikuyu Reserve with a party of fellow settlers in pursuit of an absconding murderer. The chief duly presents his visitors with a young man he claims is the culprit. After the interview, the young man turns to go.

'Good night, sir. Save all sinners.'  
'Good heavens! Where did you learn that?'  
'Good morning sir. God save the King!'  
'A mission boy!' cried Hereward.  
'Yes, bwana... I can read a book, I can write a letter.'  
'You see?' said Hereward. 'What did I say? First thieves, and now murderers.'(Naipaul 54)

In this quotation, Naipaul's attitude is judgemental and self-righteous and his tone, moral and indignant. The detribalisation and subsequent "modernisation" of the Kikuyu is what Naipaul sees as a replacement of authenticity by parody. Naipaul uses the metaphor of a performing circus animal to convey a scathing diatribe against black Africans who have relinquished their tribal identities to invest themselves with a civic one. Naipaul elaborates on the metaphor essentially implying that black Africans that have undergone this transition are like chimpanzees "trained to ride a bicycle, drink tea, jump through a hoop and dance a jig"(Naipaul 54). Apart from the fatuity and apparent social Darwinist evocation, Naipaul also implies that these black Africans are in some sort of hypnotic state of heightened suggestibility as they unquestionably follow orders. There is also sufficient room to read the metaphor psychoanalytically. Without the immutability and surety that arises from the wholeness of a true identity, one that is not based on a constellation of falsities, the reality of the individual is fixed in a state of delusion. Though Naipaul's observations might aid in coming to terms with the actuality of an identity forced to adapt as a consequence of a colonial encounter, it might also be read as simplistic, naïve and racist, especially since it draws on texts that can be read in the same way, like those of Elspeth Huxley and Joseph Conrad.

In conjuring the writing of Joseph Conrad, Naipaul unwittingly betrays his



misrepresentation. In an essay in which Rob Nixon demonstrates that Joseph Conrad, “as a displaced writer, an immigrant and traveller turned Englishman, and someone fascinated by the psychological dimensions of colonial experience as well as by a notion of the ‘primitive’”(Nixon 178), has provided V.S. and Shiva Naipaul with their most direct point of entry into the mainstream of British literature, Nixon explains the danger in perpetuating essentialised ideas that have not been revised. Firstly, Nixon describes the core misrepresentation:

The Naipauls’ self-conscious affiliation with Conrad has resulted in their projecting a tradition wherein the governing figure, the “Heart Of Darkness”, and a cluster of reiterated phrases around it have passed from one fin-de-siècle fictional representation of an African colony into the “factual” rhetoric of travel literature.(Nixon 178)

Nixon then elaborates how the perpetuation of the image of the “Heart Of Darkness” negates Africa:

In slipping from fiction to the literature of “fact”, this trope and its constellation of phrases have accumulated a normative force, confining Africa to an invented consistency that militates against certain kinds of information as well as historically and regionally more specific representations. The net effect is the image of a continent still debilitated by a measure of figurative arrest.(Nixon 178)

A “continent still debilitated by a measure of figurative arrest” is a misrepresentation that ties directly into Naipaul’s view of arrested identity, as Nixon suggests:

(Conrad's) syntax casts these societies... as the agents of their own cyclical destruction. Such places are without history and incapable of becoming full (as opposed to "half-made") societies largely because they are locked into a hermetic system of self-destruction... (Conrad's) imprint lies on the path ahead... Conrad is presented as neither an invented nor a chosen starting point but a natural one. Naipaul's statement, then, portrays in miniature how this particular intertextual tradition is dogged by circular, self-confirming tendencies.(Nixon 179)

At the core of Naipaul's particular argument surrounding the "primitive" Masai and "civilized" Kikuyu lies his notion that, whether under duress or volitionally, the act on the part of many Africans to divest themselves of tribal identity in favour of a civic one (i.e. to detribalize and become "modern"), a re-interpretive act, is a replacement of authenticity by parody. Naipaul compares the young mission man to "a human parrot", "a performing circus animal", "an animal that has been snatched from its proper existence"(Naipaul 54). The implication, therefore, is that modernized Africans are living in some sort of delusional state. Without the stability and security that comes from the plenitude of a true identity (i.e. one that has not been re-interpreted), the reality of the individual is rooted in "the dimmer reaches of fantasy"(Naipaul 56).

Naipaul proposes that the black subject in Africa is in a very precarious position. The black subject's identity, according to Naipaul, is dichotomised by the ideologies of modernisation and traditionalism. The condition of an identity being bipolar can certainly be described as a state of abnormal psychology and alludes to disassociative identity disorder (popularly referred to as having multiple personalities). The connotation is that the black subject will be

inclined towards abnormality because of its failure to integrate its identities into a wholesome and functional plenitude. However, the black subject operates in a known sphere, the modernized world and Naipaul questions the black subject's experience in this world.

The experience, Naipaul suggests, is enabled by a coping mechanism that involves a chameleon-like shift from one identity to another, depending on circumstances. The fluidity essentially occurs on an ontological level as the black subject transmutes from one reality to an alternate reality. The psychology behind such an assumption as the one that Naipaul puts forward might consider the profoundly intense nature of the trauma of colonization, the apoplexy in the face of military aggression, the chronic series of compromises activated by insidious coercion, and the logical evolution of a defensive mechanism to ensure survival in a reality whose foundations have been conspicuously revealed to be unstable and vulnerable.

One of the characters that Naipaul meets, of the kind that had ostensibly assumed a modern identity, is a Kenyan District Commissioner (DC) in a small lakeside town:

The D.C., swollen rather than plump, moved with pained slowness. All that remained to him of his rumored Masai ancestry was the narrow nomad eyes – eyes born to the searching scrutiny of luminous plains. They possessed a curious goatlike intensity, and their gaze seemed disturbingly out of place in a domestic setting. But I could detect nothing in him of the angry cobra, the male leopard or the fighting bull. Civilization had had a bad effect on the D.C.(Naipaul 96)

Naipaul's tone is mocking and condemnatory and his attitude, dismissive. Through the medium of this character, Naipaul introduces a subtextual

contrast that is essentially an evaluation of the mutual exclusivity of the binaries of the nomadic and the civilized, and the savage and the domestic. This character is a Kenyan District Commissioner (DC) in a small lakeside town. The most important aspect of the DC is that he has assumed a modern identity by having abandoned his Masai ancestry and legacy and Naipaul views him in an anachronistic, and more specifically, atavistic light. Naipaul is direct in expressing his view that the DC is a miscarriage of civilization's effect on him. By returning to Karen Blixen's eulogy to the primitive world and the tribal man, Naipaul judges the DC's supplanting of his nomadic/primitive past with his modern present and his lack of agency in attempting to reconcile the two, as having given way to a corrupt semblance of normality. The semantics of Naipaul's representation are consequential in that the word 'civilization' is derived from the same ancient Latin root as 'city', meaning 'settlement'(from the [Online Etymology Dictionary](#)), and the antithesis of domestic – 'savage' – is indirectly invoked in the passage, implying 'wild' from 'silva', Latin for 'forest' (in the [World Book Encyclopaedic Dictionary](#) 1851).

Naipaul's perspective on traditionalism seems to be contradictory in the light of his assessment of black subjects that have opted for a traditional identity. He visits a rural community in Tanzania whose livelihood depends on subsistence farming. Naipaul comments on the ideological backwardness of the community in a way that demonstrates his understanding of traditionalism as an ideological construct and not necessarily as an expression of innate identity. The peasants of this community have resisted modernisation in favour of traditionalism, which boils down to an ideological predilection, not an inherited way of life. This contradiction in Naipaul's representation of traditionalism discourages any absolute sense of security and stability in reading the primitive/traditional as genuine:

The pastoral beauty of the land hinted at the ideological backwardness of its inhabitants. In this area, according to a Party official who had done a

political survey, the life of the community was “torn between two opposing forces, traditionalism on the one hand and modernisation on the other.” Despite the Party’s best efforts, “traditionalism” seemed to have the upper hand. The peasants here displayed little or no understanding of TANU policies, being ignorant “of the concepts contained in the Arusha Declaration and the paper on Social and Rural Development.”(Naipaul 227)

Naipaul’s tone is critical and haughty. In contrast to his previous portrayals of the primitive unsullied by modernisation, it appears that Naipaul infers in this passage that the notion of traditionalism might also be an ideological choice that it is not necessarily atavistic. At the same time, no apparent explanation for the peasants’ resistance to modernisation, other than an implied illiteracy, is provided. Traditionalism, in this sense, then, is a re-constitution of the past, a political connecting and disconnecting, orchestrated by some colonized peoples in response to external forces. It is a choice made by the inhabitants in the face of attempts to modernise them.

Naipaul expounds on his view of traditionalism as an ideological construct. In one sense, Naipaul portrays traditionalism as a reactionary ideology. Black subjects who abhor the aggressive forces of the modernisation/Westernization conflation have reacted by constructing an identity that superficially appears to be the antithesis of these forces, deriving from a perception of the black subject’s historical way of life. Traditionalism, in this sense, is a reinterpretation of the past. But this idea speaks of a socio-political connecting and disconnecting that gives birth to a new socio-cultural ensemble, similar, in fact, to Clifford’s articulative approach.

In a colourful vignette of the encounter between himself and an Office Furniture Salesman named Andrew, Naipaul highlights an archetypal identity

that applies to many characters in North Of South. His purpose is to advance the idea that modernisation and traditionalism confound the African identity. The archetype in question is the trickster or shape-shifter and is projected here with profoundly negative connotations:

Andrew paused by one of the pornographic displays. He picked up a magazine.

“You will buy this for me?”

I was too tired to argue. I bought it for him. He slipped it into his briefcase.

Andrew accompanied me back to the hotel. “Tomorrow,” he said, “I go home to my *shamba* (a traditional homestead) near Kisumu. Every weekend I go there.” He laughed. “I am a different man when I work on my *shamba*. When I take off all these clothes, you will find it hard to recognize me. You will write to me?”

... He was an unstable compound of urban and peasant man.(Naipaul 66)

The transient, fickle and beguiling nature of such an identity is underscored. Andrew wears the mask of a modern migrant worker during the week, after which he divests himself of the trappings of modern civilization (“these clothes”), for those of a traditional one. His fluctuation from the modern to the tribal identity appears self-imposed, as is his becoming the Other (“When I take off all these clothes, you will find it hard to recognize me” implies that he perceives himself as Other to the modern identity).

In her classic summary of the primitive, Karen Blixen maintains that the tribal man's self-realization is complete and undefiled. "His means fit his ends... He is sane." (Naipaul 53) Her hypothesis substitutes material context with psychology – in this case – of the humanistic variety. The primitive world is justified for being a realistic world. In the context of alterity, the Other indicates not simply the notion of divergency, but of an absolute difference that is by definition unknowable and, thus, unrepresentable.

There is thus a profound irony in Naipaul's (and Blixen's) view. French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan evolved a theory of a mirror stage as a permanent structure of subjectivity. In his fourth annual seminar, La relation d'objets, Lacan states that "the mirror stage is far from a mere phenomenon which occurs in the development of the child. It illustrates the conflictual nature of the dual relationship". Naipaul and Blixen's representation of the primitive Self and the civilized Self are similarly structured. The mirror stage is a metaphor that seeks to explain the evolution of the ego through the process of objectification. In the metaphor, an infant is displayed by its mother in front of a mirror. The infant develops a misunderstanding or misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) by alienating itself from its mother's supportive hands (which it cannot see) and assuming it can stand by itself so that a delusion of an autonomous subject is instituted in its psyche and this fantasy of being an autonomous subject endures into adulthood. In that moment of Self-formation/Self-recognition, the infant gazes on the mother - who now comes to represent the Other - to endorse its image. The primitive Self can be substituted for the m(Other) and the civilized Self can be substituted for the infant/ego/autonomous subject/sovereign Self/Same. The primitive Self is constructed by, and in relation to, Blixen and Naipaul's perceived civilized Self. Naipaul reveals that the civilized is a paradox, inseparable from - and interchangeable with - the primitive.

The civilized has been constituted in a way that seeks to alienate itself from the primitive, to see it as separate, sovereign and autonomous, yet it is the

primitive that enables the civilized to define the civilized. As an extension of the Self, therefore, Blixen's idea of the primitive world speaks volumes about her solipsistic view of the Self; that is, self-referentially speaking, because the primitive, in this instance, has been constructed by, and in relation to, the civilized Self. If the primitive is self-realized and only defiled when penetrated by the civilized, then the civilized itself is a paradox, in that it relies on the constitution of its other in order to affirm its self.

Naipaul quotes extensively from post-colonial Kenyan author Meja Mwangi's novel Going Down River Road (1976) which focuses on an anti-hero named Ben, a black African urban man. Ben has detribalized and obliterated every aspect of the tribal identity in himself. Naipaul clarifies that his reason for choosing the novel to illustrate his opinions is because of "the sociological portrait it offers of African urban man"(Naipaul 40).

Ben is not merely detribalized; he is flushed of any memory of tribal existence. He is portrayed by Mwangi as the teleological result of his own instincts: "Ben is the sum total of his lusts for food, for drink, for sex and for money"(Naipaul 40). Naipaul equates the modern identity assumed by the urban black subject in Africa with Mwangi's depiction. Ben is essentialised as the negative inversion of the primitive, a trope in which black Africans are stereotyped as being more instinctive and intuitive than rational. The white man by comparison is logical, governed by reason and a proponent of a system of rational analysis. Naipaul inculcates a discord in the black African subject's identity which bears on communication in that it renders language void of meaning (Naipaul 52).

African American singer, actor and political activist, Paul Robeson promotes this stereotype when he writes, demonstrating the extent to which it had been internalised, thereby maintaining rather than challenging the debilitating binary, in 1934:



The white man has made a fetish of intellect and worships the God of thought; the negro feels rather than thinks, experiences emotions directly rather than interprets them by roundabout and devious abstractions, and apprehends the outside world by means of intuitive perception instead of through a carefully built up system of logical analysis.(Foner 86)

The instability of the tribal/civic identity is evinced in the hostility of the shoeshiner. In not having received the fee that he was convinced Naipaul owed him, he launches a scathing attack:

“I call the police for you. They throw you in jail. They beat you up. They kill you. I myself kill you...”  
The Kikuyu was no ordinary huckster. In the end, the vast majority of hucksters do negotiate, do bargain. The Kikuyu was different. He was not prepared to negotiate, not prepared to bargain. Why? Why carry outrageousness to the point of absurdity and even self-sacrifice?(Naipaul 52)

Naipaul's tone is rhetorical but also disapproving. The extremism of the shoeshiner's reaction and the overt irrationality of his argument are a reflection of the discord in his identity; “his ancient magical outlook” obstinately refuses to accommodate Naipaul's reasoning because he believes that “the printed word (i.e. the card with the list of purported services) imparts legitimacy”. Naipaul explains that “language has been divorced from meaning”(Naipaul 52).

Naipaul illustrates that the modernisation of a traditional society does not necessarily result in the replacement of the indigenous culture with a more Westernized one. He employs a peculiar metaphor of the co-existence of re-

interpreted realities to make his point. The tribal society located in Africa (in Naipaul's words, the "Dark Continent") is assimilated into the African wilderness. This wilderness is compared to a themepark and the tourists that visit the themepark represent modernized society in the metaphor. In a visit to the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania, Naipaul remarks:

The crater was shot through with an air of theatricality: it was as if the animals were aware of their importance, of the spectacle they were supposed to provide. All about us I could see the explosions of dust produced by other Land Rovers, emphasizing the artificiality. The crater had been transformed into a kind of Disneyland.(Naipaul 236)

Naipaul's tone is descriptive but deprecatory. Baudrillard wrote of Disneyland that it is the "effect of the imaginary concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the limits of the artificial perimeter"(Baudrillard 14). This major point of his argument is clarified in his essay when he writes: "This world (Disneyland) wants to be childish in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the 'real' world, and to conceal the fact that true childishness is everywhere."(Baudrillard 13). The tourists tend to view the animals, as they view primitive Africans, in the context of their wildness. The antelope do not graze in the city limits, rather they graze beyond the fences of the game reserves, and they exist in another world, a wild world, whereas the tourists live within the confines of a civilized one. There is also significant emphasis on the "theatricality", the "spectacle", the "artificiality", the simulated nature of the experience, as much an underscoring of the contrived nature of the world as the sense of escapism. In effect, however, Naipaul's comment elicits the inherent ambiguity of the comparison. The distinction between the "wild" world of the Ngorongoro Crater and the "civilized" world of the tourists is merely superficial; the symmetry is underlying.

Nevertheless, Naipaul problematizes the identity of the native (read primitive)

by this imaginary distinction:

Nairobi... is a tourist town... a fantastical place, a kind of papier-mâché confection. Its quintessential expression is the international hotel. In the eyes of native and tourist alike, international hotels are dream palaces. But the tourist has this advantage: he *knows* it is a dream; he knows that at the end of two or three weeks he will fly away and return to an everyday world. The native cannot make the distinction. The abnormal becomes the stamping ground of his visions of “progress” and “development” because it is only the abnormal he sees.(Naipaul 67)

Naipaul's tone is didactic and chiding and his attitude, arrogant. French philosopher Michel Foucault introduced the term “heterotopia of compensation” into the post-structuralist discourse (see Des Autres Espaces [Of Other Spaces], for example). Foucault uses the term heterotopia to refer to spaces of otherness, which are neither here nor there, abstract and concrete, mental and physical, like when one takes a telephone call, for example. International hotels in post-colonies are heterotopias of compensation because they are abnormal spaces that dissolve the boundaries of the illusion between post-colony and former colonizer, revealing the continuum of both worlds. Naipaul, having stayed in numerous international hotels during his sojourn in Africa, spends ample effort on portraying them as nodes of escapism through which the civilized Self disperses into the primitive Other and the primitive Other infiltrates the civilized Self. Naipaul's construction of a place/space in which two worlds collide, establishes a universalism, but also sustains a dualism.

In an essay entitled Holding The Traveller's Gaze Accountable In Shiva Naipaul's “North Of South: An African Journey”, Tom Odhiambo expounds on the notion of space as a multidimensional entity with social and cultural as

well as territorial dimensions, particularly as a subject of concern in recent scholarship in the fields of post-colonial literatures and history, and social and cultural geography:

Space has been linked to power, as in the writing of Michel Foucault, and there is a growing body of historical and literary criticism which deals with peculiarities of colonial space and its relationship to, and representation through, the eye – and the pen – of the imperial beholder'.(Odhiambo 52)

Foucault qualified these spaces through his notion of heterotopias as “counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted”(Foucault 239). He describes one of its functions as a means “to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory.”(Foucault 243).

This space of illusion in the context of Naipaul’s representation is compounded with the problem of power relations between Self and Other, the West and Africa and civilized and primitive because a hierarchy exists in which the primitive is disempowered and the civilized is privileged as Odhiambo explains through the way in which the colonial countries supplanted the discourse of the colonized Africans:

Most travel writers whose works are based on Africa have continued the established tradition of using the peculiarly imperialistic lens of observation, whose major characteristic is a portrayal of the non-European space in a relationship of inferiority to the imperial one. This literary practice, even in the past, was not a

preserve of writers of travelogues but was also employed by European cartographers who mapped Africa 'within an Enlightenment logic that subordinated the world to the frames of representation designed by (European) Subject'... The colonial representation, by ascribing to Africa values that were derived from its own European context, 'emptied' and 'de-voiced' Africa, leaving the landscape with the bush and animals or 'non-speaking people'.(Odhiambo 53)

Naipaul problematizes the native's (read primitive's) identity by generalizing that the black subject in Africa lacks the financial means to gain the privilege of patronising the international hotel so that his/her perspective is warped in not being able to grasp the superficiality and transience of these places/spaces, and thus the identity is ultimately mired in delusion. Delusion is a psychological reference that Naipaul implies so as to highlight his negative perception of the inconsistencies, construction and manipulation of the black subjects that he encounters. His view fails to account for the escalating financial prosperity of the black bourgeoisie heretofore non-existent in most African countries and its access to privileges, like international travel and international hotel patronage.

In these themeparks – the game reserves – animals (“the non-speaking people”[ibid.]) serve as the commodified objects of consumption:

In East Africa, the concern with wildlife has become obsessive. The animals of the region cannot be ignored for too long. They press in on the visitor; they command attention. Or perhaps I should say that it is the obsession that presses in on the visitor, that commands attention... Speeches by prominent politicians refer to the animals as “our heritage” – virtually a “cultural

heritage.”(Naipaul 236)

Naipaul’s tone is sarcastic and irreverent. The construct of the animals serving as a cultural heritage is evidence of cultural re-interpretation in the light of modernisation. The animals have become objects of entertainment, too. Ironically, Naipaul proposes that this has had a negative effect on the African:

The African, except where he remains primitive enough to fit without disturbance into the “eco-system” – and, hence, lends color to it while dying at a conveniently premature age – is a pest and a threat to other people’s enjoyment.(Naipaul 238)

Naipaul’s tone is reproachful. The primitive identity is conflated, and thereby, confused with animals.

Animal and man blend into each other, actors in one and the same primeval spectacular. The much loved Karen Blixen consciously paired the native and the animal. In *Out of Africa*, the opening chapter is titled “Kamante and Lulu”: Kamante is a brutalized Kikuyu herdboys she takes into her house; Lulu is a stray gazelle she befriends – and also takes into her house. She writes about the two with equal charm, and in exactly the same way. They are both what she calls “links with the wild”.(Naipaul 237)

The African has been devalued in Western eyes as a result of this process:

The obsessive concern with wildlife leads insidiously to the degradation of the human population. In the eyes of the beholder, the more backward tribes become mere adjuncts to the

animals.(Naipaul 237)

Put differently, Naipaul explains that animals in the post-colony serve as commodified objects of consumption in a manner that verges on obsession. The gaze of the tourist (read civilized/modern) is centered on mastery in a subject/object correlation, so the derision of “obsession” in this context is directed at the tourist. It is also directed at the black subject, though, as inheritors of the political kingdom. Naipaul explains that the notion of animals as a cultural heritage is a political construct. In a sense, it is conscious and willing atavism. The role of animals as a cultural heritage can be seen as a form of cultural re-interpretation in the light of modernisation. In the description of the themepark, animals not only function as the commodified objects of consumption, but they also perform the role of objects of entertainment. Naipaul argues that this has had a negative impact on the black subject in Africa. The black subject as the primitive has been conflated and confused with animals. Naipaul even goes so far as to castigate Karen Blixen for her responsibility in conflating the Masai with animals for the purpose of envisioning and depicting them as links with the wilderness into which tribal society has assimilated in Out of Africa. By silencing/de-voicing the black African Subject, the European Subject assumes a position of control. Naipaul protests that this conflation and confusion of black Subject and animal has devalued and degraded the black subject, from the Western perspective because animals occupy the lowest echelon in the established natural chain of value.

This practice isn't a far cry from the Africana curiosities and freak exhibits that toured Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The kind of construction that Naipaul protests recalls these so-called human zoos of the colonial era, which have long been swept under the carpet of collective colonial guilt, even though the morbid fascination manifestly persists. At the time of their popularity, however, human zoos were considerable attractions. Most Westerners first encountered the exotic (the future “native”) at colonial fairs at which the exotic were exhibited as “ethnographic” curiosities. The “scientific” racism of the establishment eventually became a social ideology

that affected millions of people that came to view these exhibits. Naipaul demonstrates how the situation has been inverted because, in the past, this “entertainment” was brought to the “civilized” world, and in the present, the “civilized” world travels to the entertainment. One illusion has been supplanted and re-interpreted by another.

Like the ‘Hottentot Venus’, Sara (pejoratively in the Afrikaans diminutive form, Saartjie) Baartman, a KhoiKhoi slave who was exhibited as a curiosity in the United Kingdom and France during the 1800s (see Holmes’ The Hottentot Venus [2007], for example), the primitive identity is negated and degraded for the sake of trifling amusement, superficially and more profoundly fascination with the Other. Historian Pascal Blanchard writes:

Human zoos, the incredible symbols of the colonial period and the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, have been completely suppressed in our collective history and memory. Yet they were major social events. The French, Europeans and Americans came in their tens of millions to discover the “savage” for the first time in zoos or “ethnographic” and colonial fairs. These exhibitions of the exotic (the future “native”) laid the foundations on which, over an almost sixty-year period, was spun the West’s progressive transition from a “scientific” racism to a colonial and “mass” racism affecting millions of “visitors” from Paris to Hamburg, London to New York, Moscow to Barcelona.(Blanchard 338)

The profound irony in this morbid curiosity has broader implications, as already stated, but just to re-emphasize in the words of Afro-Martinican author Aimé Césaire who writes discursively about the boomerang effect of colonization. He explains that the colonizer experiences guilt in the act of colonization and thus develops a perspective of the colonized as an animal,



becomes habituated to treating the colonized as an animal, and thereby evolves into an animal. Both “animals” – colonizer and colonized - bite back, though. It is this complicity of the colonizer and the colonized, this irony, that Naipaul also seeks to convey. Césaire explains:

Colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it... The colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization, that I want to point out.(Césaire 20)

It would be remiss not to consider the particularly atavistic inflection that Naipaul’s view of certain iniquities in postcolonial societies assumes:

This sense of people’s having lost touch with reality, of a constraining dam’s having burst, arises whenever one contemplates the lusts that disfigure African societies – and not only African societies, but the societies of the poor and backward in general... Desire unhinged from constraint takes on a surrealist tinge. The land grab that has followed Uhuru (independence), the slaughtering of elephants for the ivory trade, the tales of bribery, embezzlement, extortion and corruption that daily fill the pages of *The Nation* signal a collapse of self-control verging on collective derangement.(Naipaul 56)

Naipaul's tone is alarmist and provocative. The cause of these iniquities is not explained in terms of the deplorable socioeconomic conditions from which they arise. Rather, by essentializing the cause of the iniquities as the "lusts that disfigure African societies", the primitive identities become the scapegoat. The primitive identity is debased and dehumanized in this eschatological view of a spiralling lack of self-control. The metaphor strikes an analogy of the primitive identity gradually going insane and the primitive society gradually falling into chaos ("collective derangement") which, presumably, acts as an antipode to the more constructive, more sane, rationality and order of the civilized identity and society. Naipaul redeems his argument from being castigated as racist essentialisation by extending his critique to "the societies of the poor and backward in general" as well. He thus restores his argument from mere racist essentialisation to a form of class critique.

Richard Dyer elucidates this double-reading of black essence when he remarks "how easily a positive view of black folk and African culture as a radical alternative to materialistic, rationalistic, alienated white Western culture slides back into sambo, Uncle Tom, brute and beast"(Dyer 102). Essentialisation can be precarious, but it is also occasionally necessary, as Clifford explains:

One can't communicate at all without certain forms of essentialism (assumed universals, linguistic rules and definitions, typifications and even stereotypes). Certainly, one can't sustain a social movement or a community without certain apparently stable criteria for distinguishing us from them. These may be, as I've said before, articulated in connections and disconnections, but, as they are expressed and become meaningful to people, they establish accepted truths.(Clifford 62)

Even so, it is difficult not to classify Naipaul's essentialisation as neo-Conradian atavism as Rob Nixon does by eliciting the prefigurative power of

Heart Of Darkness in a discussion of Naipaul's preface to North Of South:

Shiva's effort in his preface to expose the real Africa beneath the indigenous people's veneer of rhetoric foregrounds a problem that recurs in neo-Conradian discourse. Repeatedly, a writer's appeal to the "Heart Of Darkness" trope, far from consolidating his argument, mystifies it in an overdeterminedly figurative direction. Likewise, when Naipaul seizes upon the literary phrase "heat and dust" in trying to capture the undistilled essence of Africa, he unwittingly introduces a rhetorical filter scarcely different from the platitudes he has sworn to dispense with. As a result, his preface, ostensibly an asseveration of disinterested empiricism, becomes instead a showcase for his shaping preconceptions.(Nixon 180)

Tom Odhiambo is severely critical of Naipaul's use of pre- and colonial era literature on Africa in North Of South as he believes that it significantly undermines Naipaul's attempt to portray post-colonial East Africa accurately:

The result is a travelogue filled with a great sense of personal disappointment with the political, cultural, economic and social conditions in post-colonial Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia – the countries that he visits... The key proposition in this paper is that Naipaul's biography does not offer any redemptive characterisation of both the African space and the people that he writes about precisely because it summons a biased archive as evidence for its own claims.(Odhiambo 51)

Likewise, Rob Nixon condemns Naipaul's "dense sub-text of allusions to prior European representations of Africa"(Nixon 180), particularly his considerable reliance on Conrad's Heart Of Darkness:

Inevitably, Heart Of Darkness heads the list of what Shiva considers to be pertinent antecedent accounts of Africa. Furthermore, it alone of all the Western texts Naipaul mobilizes in his effort to define the continent, is a work of fiction. North Of South is strewn with amputated bits of Conrad. In speaking of an avaricious shoe-shine boy, Shiva remarks how "his greed did not recognize any limits. Anything, everything, was possible: he had lost touch with reality", clearly echoing Conrad's statement in Heart Of Darkness that "anything – anything can be done in this country". A page later, Naipaul drops, in passing, the phrase "orgiastic frenzy".(ibid.)

Both Odhiambo and Nixon imply that Naipaul's dependence on antecedent literary representations of various realities in Africa inevitably lead him to project those ideas and impressions into a reincarnation in the form of North Of South. The problem with Naipaul's use of allusions to Heart Of Darkness is that the novel's enduring generalizations of Africa continue to obscure the truth and perpetuate misconceptions that are often used to justify oppression or violence. One of the most sweeping generalizations about the African continent is that something so diverse on many levels can actually be generalized. Africa is more often than not treated as a homogenized bloc and Nixon explains how this injustice detracts from the value of specific cultural identities:

(Naipaul) posits all of Africa as a singular, integrated ethical system. From there it is an easy

step to characterizing Africa as constitutionally deceitful... In most Western discourse Africa remains – in no small part because of the Heart Of Darkness legacy – the most internally undifferentiated continent; it is still commonly treated as a great monolithic slab... And so Marlow's dilemma over the relation between lies and unspeakable truths is pressed, some seventy-five years later, into the service of a blanket dismissal of the entire continent... Thus, not only do these invocations of Heart Of Darkness elide crucial differences between the authoritative claims of factual and fictional rhetoric; they also disregard significant geographical differences and historical change.(Nixon 181,182)

Odhiambo similarly expresses concerns about Naipaul's interpretation of Africa as a place of stasis and stagnation:

Naipaul “remains faithful to the Conradian image of Africa as a doomed continent, a place where nothing seems to have changed even after colonialism had introduced modernity, industry, and technology... North Of South constructs “an essentialised Africa using images of absence of progress, degeneration and primitivity”.(Odhiambo 53)

Nixon explains why the Conradian representation of Africa as a doomed continent presents an ontological problem since the narrativizing of place creates an imagined sense of place in the mind of the reader so that when the reader becomes the traveller, this imagined sense of place is projected onto the actual place and the narrative thus shifts from being abstract to being concrete:

A word gives a name to a place and can also transform the place into literature – which, in turn, is substituted for the place. After Homer, in certain parts of the Mediterranean you are no longer travelling in Italy or Greece but in the *Iliad* or *The Odyssey*. And it could be said that today, after Conrad, you are not just in Zaïre, or Malaysia, but in Heart Of Darkness or in Lord Jim.(Nixon 188)

The traveller to Africa is faced with the dilemma of preconceived ideas about Africa, some drawn from the imagination, most drawn from exposure to biased literature. The influential writing of Conrad conjures an image of Africans as corrupt and Africa as corruption itself in the sense of it being a threat of progressive savagery to the civilized. Nixon elaborates on this self-righteous position by explaining why Naipaul resorts to Conradian essentialisation in his struggle to grasp a sense of place:

Naipaul invokes Conrad to give moral ballast to his personal disdain and ethical hauteur, his confidence that he stands aloof from the global cycle of corruption which has left the crudely polarized “civilized man” and “primitive” locked in a fateful embrace... Naipaul’s realization of the insider’s ignorance of Conrad and their capacity to do without Conrad’s mediations removes them and their society from the bounds of comprehension... Instead, Naipaul can contain his alarm by recasting his estrangement not as a relationship but as an attribute of the environment. And by substituting incomprehensibility for alienation, he can conveniently take deeper refuge in Conrad, confirming that author’s prescience by perceiving, all about him, an impenetrability which he

interprets as an unchanging quality of place rather than an expression of the distance between a traveller primed by Conrad and a society both ignorant of the latter's writings and bearing the scantiest relation to them.(Nixon 187)

The challenge of any perspective on essentialism is that it is rooted in a particular ideology. In North Of South, Naipaul appears to be self-consciously representing certain racist attitudes that he encounters in post-colonial Africa, for the purpose of satire. At other times, he seems to be unaware that he is perpetuating these racist attitudes and Western tropes that have their roots in ancient times but are well structured and symbolized in literary works like Heart Of Darkness. When Naipaul essentializes the iniquities that he describes, his position is shaped by his ideology as a cosmopolitan writer. Naipaul's interpretation seems to be shaped largely by the ideas of the White Man's Burden, which in turn are shaped by specific perspectives on essentialism, which he seems inadvertently to endorse. It is to the notion of the White Man's Burden that I wish now to turn.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

In North Of South, Naipaul's representation of the black and white subjects in Africa shifts between two racist constructions of the primitive Other. The first perspective construes the primitive as a belligerent monstrosity whose existence justifies militaristic aggression in the act of colonization. It is a Eurocentric stereotype that harks back – at least – to Pliny the Elder (Wylie, Shaka And The Myths Of Paradise 19). It is probably the longest held view of the primitive, and evokes all the negative connotations historically assigned to the primitive, like barbarism, savagery, depravity and destructiveness. This propensity for belligerence is accepted as an intrinsic part of the primitive's nature, an instinctual characteristic. Genocide in African countries is thus often viewed as a natural expression of the primitive temperament, as Naipaul demonstrates in the following conversation of two young women on their way to Kenya, one of whom assumes a knowing attitude about the 'African':

“Both Ruanda [sic] and Burundi have had their massacres,” her guru said. The disciples shuddered. “Mind you,” her guru added, “they only kill each other as a rule. They never touch Europeans – or hardly ever. In Burundi do the tall ones kill the short ones or the short ones kill the tall ones? I know Burundi does one thing and Ruanda the other.”(Naipaul 28)

In the passage, the personification of Ruanda and Burundi reinforces this perspective by generalizing the behaviour of all the citizens of Rwanda and Burundi. Naipaul refers to the massacres in Rwanda and Burundi as examples in recent history of the consequences of a primitive identity charged with belligerence. The primitive identity as a belligerent monstrosity is not only shaped in this view as being a threat to others, but also as a menace to itself. Naipaul implies that the White Man's Burden was an ideological construct



designed to mobilize popular support of imperialism.

“The White Man’s Burden” is a poem written by the English poet Rudyard Kipling on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, and originally published in the popular magazine McClure’s in 1899. The poem justifies the U.S.A. conquest of the Philippines and other former Spanish colonies as a noble enterprise even though it identifies the tremendous costs involved. In employing particularly Christian condemnatory and rallying rhetoric reminiscent of the Crusades, the poem paints a Eurocentric picture of the primitive as childlike. This condescending view consequently proposes that Europeans have an obligatory role to play in the advancement of non-European culture by raising the non-Europeans to an equal level of civilization. This perspective was used to vindicate European ascendancy in the Imperial Age (Leonard 636).

The concept of the White Man’s Burden can also be seen as an extension of the concept of *noblesse oblige*, a French term used to imply that along with economic privileges, prestige and power come social responsibilities (Honoré de Balzac, Le Lys Dans La Vallée, 1836), though, in this case, it is employed derisively in the sense of patronising or hypocritical social responsibilities.

The second perspective that Naipaul introduces is the tribal identity as primitively innocent, the commonly held view of Africa as Eden, as Paradise, in which the African had lived as if in some sort of blissful utopia before the European encounter. Naipaul illustrates this view through a conversation with a European that he encounters. The European - in a nostalgic or wistful tone - explains:

When I first came to Africa, I would go on safari for months at a time, out to the hills beyond the big lakes. Some of the tribesmen who lived there had never seen a white man before. I was the first... It is nice to know girls when they are still virgins. But a sensible man accepts that one day they will not

be virgins any more. I am glad I had a chance to see something of the old virginal Africa.(Naipaul 253)

Zimbabwean-born academic Dan Wylie has suggested that the search for the paradisa is one of the West's most protean, archetypal 'core metaphors'(Wylie, Savage Delight 48). For the most part, it carries profoundly religious connotations. The search for the paradisa expresses a desire for reversion, a pursuit that is consciously and inevitably impossible. Africa – as a dreamscape of the paradisa – presented a convenient object of transference for this desire. By assuming the role of the paradisa, Africa paved the way for Europeans to project all sorts of archetypal fantasies onto the primitive. Prior to the colonial encounter, most of Africa was a world unknown to the Europeans, and it constituted a colourful dreamscape of the paradisa mytheme. It thus served as an object of psychological transference for this profound aspiration. In effect, though, it was a reflexive assignment, as Wylie explains:

The use of the paradisa mytheme, then, for centuries an essential element in European thinking about alien peoples, is a mask, a complex gesture of social-psychological defence. Like most defense mechanisms, it becomes a crucial component of self-identification, difficult to acknowledge and shed.(Wylie, Savage Delight 63)

The desire for the paradisa was often a pretext for the Europeans to take up the White Man's Burden of conserving or protecting the "innocence" of the primitive. Thus the desire has an ethnological component, and, as James Clifford argues, ethnology is allegorical in that it attempts to "speak the other" as a way of speaking one's self (see The Predicament of Culture [1988], for example).

The pursuit of the paradisa appears to be one of the most critical

undertakings in the history of the West, emerging as an archetypal metaphor at the core of Western society. The quest for the paradisaal is a profoundly religious impulse. It expresses a deep sense of nostalgia, a harking back, a return to the past, an aspiration that is inevitably impossible to fulfil. The longing to revert to a state of innocence is attached to a sense of guilt related to the loss of innocence and an insecurity related to the inevitability and consistency of change. It is possible that the transient nature of any socio-cultural ensemble inspires these profound insecurities because it brings into question and affects the stability of identity and, by extension, the accepted, but illusory, sense of the sovereignty of the Self.

The paradisaal mytheme has profound implications for the notion of ontological alterity in the light of the civilized/primitive, civic/tribal, settler/native, master/slave binary opposition codes of identity. Wylie explains the use of the paradisaal mytheme as a pivotal element of European thinking about exotic peoples, as a mask, a complex gesture of socio-psychological defense. He qualifies this belief by proposing that – like most defense mechanisms - it is a crucial component of self-identification, difficult to accept and shed. In a sense, the search for the paradisaal can be interpreted through the terminology of Lacan's mirror stage in that it represents a desire for the integration of the Self, a return to a state prior to the perceived duality of Self and Other and thereby the fragmentation of the Self, an escape from a world structured around Manichean dualism.

This conflict of Self emerges through the pursuit of the paradisaal as the rationale behind the European's assumption of the mantle of the White Man's Burden to conserve and defend the perceived innocence of the primitive. Like the colonial fairs of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the project appears to be ethnographic in orientation, which extends to the primitive identity and the perceived wilderness of Africa from which it is inseparable. The ethnographic endeavour reveals as much about the Self as it does about the Other.

Though there is an element of nostalgia in the desire for the paradisaal, there is

also another dynamic at play, fear. J.M. Coetzee has argued that (South) Africa's 'alien, impenetrable' character made colonists particularly 'apprehensive that Africa might turn out to be not a Garden but an anti-Garden, a garden ruled over by the serpent, where the wilderness takes root once again in men's hearts (Coetzee, White Writing 3). The attraction of a perceived primeval innocence is counterpoised by a fear of regression and degeneration, of becoming uncivil. Ironically, however, it is the act of colonization that "decivilizes" the colonizer, as Césaire implies in his notion of progressive dehumanization:

First we must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism... At the end of all the racial pride that has been encouraged, all the boastfulness that has been displayed, a poison has been instilled into the veins of Europe and, slowly but surely, the continent proceeds towards *savages*. (Césaire 13)

Naipaul expresses a peculiar counterpoint to this perspective. The primitive, having succumbed to the allure of European civilization, has been corrupted. However, the settlers of the Highlands only classify a native as corrupted – "spoiled" – when s(he) rebels against their authority. In reference to a domestic named Simon, tea plantation owner Mrs. Palmer complains to Naipaul in a supercilious tone:

Simon seems to have a block about using those tongs. I can't understand it. I've told him so many times. Still, Simon has one great virtue. He hasn't been spoiled. Not as yet, anyway. I'm keeping my fingers crossed. It's amazing how quickly they do get spoiled, though. There used to be an old

saying in this country: put a native in shoes and that's the end of him. Nowadays, of course, they've all got shoes and we aren't even allowed to call them natives.(Naipaul 71)

Naipaul summarizes the settlers' view of black Africans as savages, vestiges of a primitive time in history, and he qualifies the settler's view through his settler characters who believe that the black Africans would have remained savage were it not for the civilization (read imperialism) that the colonists implemented.

The civilized identity assumes a sense of entitlement in its perceived task of civilization, a kind of *Manifest Destiny*, as Mr. Palmer, a tea farmer, assures Naipaul in a persuasive or insinuating tone:

There's lots of lovely land in the southern Sudan. And it's virtually empty. It's like this place was seventy-five years ago. It's *crying out* for European settlers.(Naipaul 77)

The idea of vast unoccupied territory is conspicuously suspect because of the absent African. Odhiambo's critique of Naipaul's approach highlights the debilitating nature of such a dismissive attitude:

His criticism of the European colonial project of invading 'other' lands and subjecting them to 'civilization', employs a logic similar to the one used by European traveller/adventurer/colonialist in describing the African landscape... Garuba, in writing about "colonial and post-colonial geographies in African narrative", says, "The gesture of textually emptying territories and creating virgin lands waiting for European

penetration is a well-worn colonialist strategy as is the projection of fantasies of savagery and cannibalism upon unknown territories". It is the subscription to this model of representation of Africa that makes Shiva 'silence' the many Africans, Asians and Europeans that he meets on his journeys in East Africa. The men and women that Shiva endows with speech are used to prop up his thesis about the intellectual vacuity of Africans and the moral degeneration of non-Africans who have been contaminated by their association with the Africans.(Odhiambo 64)

How, Naipaul asks, is the primitive to be civilized, in the opinions of the civilized? Elspeth Huxley, quoted by Naipaul, resolves the question:

They (the natives) were the obvious solution to the labor problem. How were they (the natives) to be tempted out of the reserve to assist in the task of civilization? Huxley's father resorted to his old phonograph...(Naipaul 44)

Naipaul's tone is opprobrious in that he explains that Elspeth Huxley implies that the natives should be enslaved. Before continuing to explore the notion of the White Man's Burden, Naipaul investigates the general impressions of his characters on whether Africans *can* be civilized. These impressions are exposed in the familiar trope of the (negatively-coded) antithesis of Western abstraction. Naipaul considers the Kikuyu labor force at Thika:

Their own dwellings were circular, had always been circular. Geometric regularities filled them with superstitious dread; they seemed quite unable, for instance, to plow in straight lines – a failing that led the Huxleys to speculate on the

relationship between geometrical regularity and civilization.(Naipaul 45)

Naipaul's tone is sardonic. Whereas Mr. Palmer superciliously attributes the perceived incompatibility to the binary of the civilized and the primitive being mutually exclusive:

One must be realistic. It's no good living in cloud cuckoo-land. Most of them are less than a generation removed from the bush. What else can you expect?(Naipaul 47)

Naipaul offers a more balanced perspective by juxtaposing an urban legend with a supposedly factual report that illustrates the occasionally tragic consequences of ignorance:

Stories of African conceptual incapacity have acquired something of the abstract quality of fable. There is a famous one about wheelbarrows. Several versions of the story exist, but the moral is always the same. The version I heard went like this. Some Africans are building a road. Their European adviser watches them running to and fro carrying basketfuls of stone on their heads. They are quickly exhausted and have to take frequent rests. He goes away and returns with a wheelbarrow. He explains its advantages. Dozens of wheelbarrows are supplied. Some days later his foreman comes to him in a state of great agitation. The workers, he reports, are on the verge of physical collapse. Naturally enough, the European adviser is astonished. He rushes off to the site to see what has been happening. And what does he find when he gets there? He finds that the African

workers have been trying to carry the fully loaded wheelbarrows on their heads... The story is clearly apocryphal. (I have seen many Africans handling wheelbarrows in a perfectly normal manner). Nevertheless, certain other stories, not apocryphal, occasionally do make one pause – like that (reported in *The Nation*) which told the sad tale of three African workers who had incinerated themselves while trying to weld a tank that was full of gasoline.(Naipaul 47)

Naipaul's tone is ironic. Fanon denounces likewise when he writes:

In certain regions of Africa, *drivelling* paternalism with regards to the blacks and the loathsome idea derived from Western culture that the black man is impervious to logic and the sciences reign in all their nakedness.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 130)

Naipaul re-emphasizes his view that many colonial-settlers came to realize that their self-appointed task of civilizing the native was irreconcilable with the fundamental principles of overlordship. On the contemporary new-forged “equality” between black and white in Kenya, Naipaul writes:

Naturally, not everyone approves. The long-settled British, those to whom the Norfolk Hotel is a last embattled outpost of settler civilization, remain aloof and tight-lipped. The blame is generally – and quite rightly – placed on those Europeans without adequate colonial experience – the Swedes, the Danes, the Germans, even the Swiss. One Swiss lady had caused a minor ripple of scandal when she disappeared into the bush with



her African lover.(Naipaul 63)

Still, other characters, like Mrs. Palmer, highlight the ostensible convenience of civilization by haughtily considering the alternative:

Where would our friends be without us? They would still be in the Stone Age... They would still be fighting wars and killing each other.(Naipaul 77)

Civilization (read imperialism) is necessary to maintain order for a primitive people with an intrinsic propensity for belligerence. The view persists that Africans are savages, relics from a primeval time. Without civilization, Africans would remain savage. Ultimately, then, the position is social Darwinist in nature:

“It is true,” he said warmly. “Where would they be without us? They need us. We are *indispensable*.” He pronounced “indispensable” French style. “Without us they would still be *swinging from the trees*.”(Naipaul 23)

The metaphor compares black people to apes and monkeys that swing from the trees and the Darwinist reference is to the simian-like creatures from which human beings evolved. Naipaul suggests that the imposition has manifested an inferiority complex in both the white man and the black man. Martinican psychiatrist and revolutionary Frantz Fanon explains this mutual implication of inferiority as follows:

There are times when the black man is locked into his body. Now, “for a being who has acquired consciousness of himself and of his body, who has attained to the dialectic of subject and object, the body is no longer a cause of the structure of

consciousness, it has become an object of consciousness". The Negro, however sincere, is the slave of the past. None the less I am a man, and in this sense the Pelopponesian War is as much mine as the invention of the compass. Face to face with the white man, the Negro has a past to legitimate, a vengeance to exact; face to face with the Negro, the contemporary white man feels the need to recall the times of cannibalism.(Fanon, Black Skins, White Masks 225)

The imposition of social Darwinism and the hierarchy that it establishes in terms of race creates a mutual implication of inferiority in the white and black man, according to Naipaul. Fanon believes that the black man gained consciousness of himself through the process of colonization and, in so doing, attained to the dialectic of subject and object. The body of the black man thus becomes an object of consciousness whereas it was a cause of the structure of consciousness beforehand. Thus, according to him, the black man is a slave of the past. Relative to the white man, the black man has a past to legitimate.

The paternalism of the settler fashions a childlike native. Similarly, Naipaul portrays the *nouveau riche*, the new bourgeoisie, the new black middle class as an agent for recycled imperialism. In Kenya, he encounters the Wabenzi and their ideals through one of their admirers:

"What would you do... if you made a lot of money?"

"I'd buy a big farm and grow tea on it... I would buy a Mercedes-Benz... Then I'd get all the beautiful women... The Wabenzi always have beautiful women. ("Wabenzi" is the pleasantly jocular term

used to describe the nouveau-riche black middle class... They signal their status by the acquisition, at the first opportunity, of a Mercedes-Benz. Hence, the Wabenzi – the Benz tribe.)... My wife will be looking after the *shamba* [homestead].”(Naipaul 64)

The mention of tea farming as a goal is a unifying textual resonance recalling the Palmers' occupation, the object of which is clearly to express the bourgeoisie's usurpation of the settler's pedestal. Naipaul further criticises the lack of compassion, arrogance, ignorance and sophistry of the new money:

The beggars are a “blot on the landscape” – not, it will be observed, on the conscience: the lady, clutching her shopping baskets as she gets into her car, fails to make the elementary connection between social distress and the existence of widespread beggary. In the same way, the Member of Parliament who sees birth control as a plot against the black race fails to make the connection between population explosion and black degradation.(Naipaul 83)

Naipaul's tone is trenchant. In these tropes of how modernisation confounds the identity of the black subject in Africa, Naipaul launches a critique of the nouveau-riche black bourgeoisie in the countries that he visits. Naipaul chooses to portray them in a negative light, by implying that they have become agents for recycled imperialism. The bourgeoisie signal their status in society through the acquisition of expensive material things. The things that they purchase, however, are commodities and assets from Europe. Naipaul establishes a discord between the black bourgeoisie and the black working class. He depicts the situation where a middle class woman fails to make the connection between social adversity and excessive beggary and a prominent

politician's paranoid misinterpretation of birth control as a conspiracy to bring about the demise of the black race and the dangers of population explosion to evoke a sense of identity crises, a delusion or illusion.

Through the black working class character that admires the black bourgeoisie, Naipaul invokes another hypocrisy of identity. The character expresses a desire to aggrandize himself through financial wealth; the purpose of which would be to invest in a tea plantation. Naipaul cleverly draws a connection between the livelihoods of the colonial-settlers (tea-farming) and the socioeconomic aspirations of the black bourgeoisie. Naipaul implies that the black bourgeoisie do not possess authentic identities as they have usurped the colonial-settler's position. In so doing, they manifest the same patterns of behaviour as the settlers. Naipaul criticises the black bourgeoisie by implying that the colonial-settler has fashioned a childlike native that unquestioningly attempts to imitate the colonial-settler; now that the native has grown up, it has become the spitting image of the colonial master.

In an interesting inversion of atavism, Naipaul captures the ideals of a specific settler identity:

The Highlands had attracted a breed of settler who sought to re-create in an African setting the kind of landed-gentry existence that was becoming increasingly unfeasible in crowded, industrialized Britain.(Naipaul 145)

Karen Blixen expresses the sentiments of this particular identity in typical romantic fashion:

"It was not the society that had thrown them out," Karen Blixen (the spokesman of the type and herself an aristocrat) wrote of her two friends, "and not any place in the whole world either, but time

had done it, they did not belong to their century... they were examples of atavism, and theirs was an earlier England, a world which no longer existed.” For such people, the Highlands provided an opportunity to reconstruct a type of existence ruined by creeping suburbia, labor unions and general elections. It stimulated elemental dreams of master and servant and wide, untrammelled acres. Primitive Africa invoked primitive dreams of overlordship. It was like going back to the beginning of the world: Africa was a clean slate on which anything could be written. Displaced and debased aristocratic longings could take root and flourish here.(Naipaul 146)

Naipaul’s inclusion of Blixen’s description of two of her friends, both of whom were British aristocrats that had settled in Kenya, is telling of his view of the settler’s predicament. Their desire was to re-create the kind of landed-gentry way of life that their ancestors had led in England before the universalization of bourgeois norms and values— in their dreams, there would be vast acres of land in Africa on which to establish estates, there would be no political opposition to their will, and labour would come cheaply and it would be unpoliticized – they effectively projected their aspirations onto Africa. Their dream was to produce their old way of life anew on the “clean slate” of Africa. However, their dream was not only an illusion, but also a delusion. It was illusory because it is impossible to reconstruct a world of the past as it *existed*, it is only possible to re-create the past as it is *imagined*. It was a delusion because the turning away from reality; the blurring of the boundaries between reality and fantasy, is not merely escapist, but psychopathological. Thus Naipaul roots the settler identity firmly in the obscurity of abnormal psychology, releasing its inner anarchy.

In his exploration of the expansive topic Of Other Spaces, Foucault introduces

the term “heterotopia”:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do not exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.(Foucault 239)

An especially pertinent role of the heterotopia is:

To create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This... would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner.(Foucault 243)

In effect, then, the settler identity of which Karen Blixen and Naipaul writes sought to establish a heterotopia of compensation. By intending to disseminate their conception of classic feudalism in Africa, the settlers were not necessarily reincarnating or reinvigorating it, they were, in fact, in the process of birthing something else. There is, of course, an underlying cycle of

imperialism on whose impetus it was borne. The desire to create a space of compensation is psychopathological. Naipaul explains:

It (the aristocratic vision of the Highlands) has survived white expulsion and black possession. Nostalgia clings to its rolling hills; the dreams of a would-be aristocracy lie buried close to the surface. It is amazing how many whites (even those who left long ago) still speak of it with a quasi-mystical assumption of a special "belonging". "I live in Africa not because I want to be called *bwana* by black men. Nor do I live here simply because I happen to have been born in the country. I live here because it is so extraordinarily beautiful. The beauty of Africa gets into your bones... it becomes part of you. It's awfully difficult to explain. Beauty – the word rarely fails to crop up in conversation with the long-settled expatriate. But it is not an ordinary "beauty" that is being referred to; not a straightforward aesthetic response that is being described. It is a special form of perception, of yearning, that is almost an illness.(Naipaul 147)

Naipaul's pathos is strained and insincere for the sake of dramatic irony. As is the case with the identity of the Asian settler, Naipaul portrays the white colonial-settler identity as dichotomized. At the one end of the spectrum, the white colonial-settler desires a synthesis with the native, the primitive, the Other, by promoting the neo-liberal agenda of liberty and equality for all on both an individual and institutional level, also maintaining a belief that it is indispensable. However, the white colonial-settlers also polarize themselves through a collective siege identity characterized by continued feudalism and hierarchical separation from the native, remoteness, aloofness and supreme irresponsibility for past events. Naipaul almost always represents them as

standing apart from the Other, with a certain self-absorbed remoteness, either tight-lipped or supremely disinterested, neutral or untouchable. It has the effect of emphasizing their antagonism, but also, their culpability.

Naipaul suggests that native resistance to the rule of law (common or statutory, as imposed by the judiciaries of the countries in which they live; judiciaries based on European law systems) is often coded with the association of the rule of law with foreign hegemony. He explains the inherent disorder in post-colonial nation-states as the result of a rebellious identity assumed by former colonised people against technocratic injunctions:

The NO SMOKING, FASTEN SEAT BELT signs were ignored by the financial advisers, who, as the plane taxied along the runway, strolled with proprietorial ease up and down the aisle. Out of the mouth of one, strange to say, protruded an electric toothbrush.(Naipaul 22)

Naipaul's tone is mocking. The disregard of these (black) financial advisers for the established code of conduct aboard a docking aircraft only comes to the fore in the context of their arrival in Africa. Naipaul thus positions their disorderly behaviour in conjunction with the system of which they are an operative part.

Finally, it is not to the lumpen-proletariat (i.e. the section of the working class that lacks class-consciousness), tainted by petty-bourgeois ideology, that Naipaul directs his main critique. On the contrary, he targets the peculiar societal groups that possess a fine understanding of class-consciousness; that is, the liberators, the "native" intelligentsia in whose hands lie the key to salvaging a situation in dire straits, and the neo-colonialists whose dubious activities sustain the situation in favour of exploitation. Like the neo-colonialists, Naipaul's black bourgeoisie and intelligentsia seem to be preoccupied with exploitative enterprises and self-aggrandizement at the expense of the working class, and ultimately to their own detriment. It is their



body politic in which Naipaul is profoundly suspicious, as well as the forces of neo-colonialism in which they are complicit. The African intellectual has betrayed Fanon's vision of a rising national consciousness, driven by the intellectual, and aspiring to international status:

The most urgent thing today for the intellectual is to build up his nation. If this building up is true, that is to say if it interprets the manifest will of the people and reveals the eager African peoples, then the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values. Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately the source of all culture. (Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 199)

National liberation by the intelligentsia on behalf of the people is Fanon's proffered solution. Naipaul is considerably critical of the liberation movements driven by the "native" intelligentsia, their body politic and the problem of neo-colonialism. It is to the problematic of neo-colonialism that I will now give attention.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BODY POLITIC AND NEO-COLONIALISM

J.M. Coetzee establishes an interesting context for reading the nature of the state as a continuous, inescapable and all-consuming entity when he writes:

Every account of the origins of the state starts from the premise that “we” – not we the readers but some generic we so wide as to exclude no one – participate in its coming in to being. But the fact is that the only “we” we know – ourselves and the people close to us – are born into the state; and our forbears too were born into the state as far back as we can trace. The state is always there before we are... It is hardly in our power to change the form of the state and impossible to abolish it because, vis-à-vis the state, we are, precisely, powerless. In the myth of the founding of the state as set down by Thomas Hobbes, our descent into powerlessness was voluntary: in order to escape the violence of internecine warfare without end... we individually and severally yielded up to the state the right to use physical force (right is might, might is right), thereby entering the realm (the protection) of the law. Those who chose and choose to stay outside the compact become outlaw... What the Hobbesian myth of origins does not mention is that the handover of power to the state is irreversible. The option is not open to us to change our minds, to decide that the monopoly on the exercise of force held by the state, codified in the law, is not what we wanted after all, that we

would prefer to go back to a state of nature... We are born subject.(Coetzee, Diary Of A Bad Year 4)

This concept of a continuous state supersedes the idea of a nation-state, which is an ephemeral geopolitical construction. The origin of the nation-state is ideological and shaped by a particular body politic. Naipaul is severely critical of the body politic of the bourgeois intelligentsia that governs the post-independence nation-states that he visits. Naipaul blames them for the decadence of the socio-economic situation in the countries that he visits. Tom Odhiambo explains:

The characterization of the East African and by extension the African social, political and cultural scenes as degenerative and decayed seem to naturally follow from Shiva's own depiction of Africans as innately backward and impermeable to change. North Of South reads and is projected by Shiva as a critique of the political institutions, philosophies and personalities in post-colonial Eastern Africa. The political practices and policies of the independent Kenyan, Tanzanian and Zambian governments, namely 'African Socialism' in Kenya, 'Ujamaa' in Tanzania and 'African Humanism' in Zambia are roundly condemned as half-baked ideologies.(Odhiambo 61)

Naipaul contends that Africans have grafted external solutions onto pre-existing social realities, particularly in terms of political philosophy and government. He suggests that the cursory application of these solutions has led to the development of an untenable situation, since – according to him – the locality of culture in African countries is merely a Western construct (in the form of the nation-state):

China's peasantry, inured over millenia to disciplined labor and highly centralized state control, acutely aware of its cultural identity and its superiority to neighboring nomadic peoples, is far removed from a tribal confederacy of low technical and intellectual attainment, only now reluctantly learning the advantages of village life. The "individual psyche" of the Chinese peasant cannot but be radically different in structure from the "individual psyche" of an African tribesman whose sense of nationality can hardly be said to exist. Maoism can be successfully superimposed on the one because it feeds on a receptive personality; when its techniques are applied willy-nilly to the other, it declines not only into caricature but into tragic absurdity.(Naipaul 290)

Naipaul's tone is vituperative in this scathing diatribe. He implies that the nation-state is irrelevant to the realities of Africa, proven by its internal instability. Naipaul sees the geopolitical boundaries of the nation-states in Africa as ignorant of the cultural realities and histories of the indigenous peoples. He is even more critical of the supposedly Marxist ideologies that many post-colonial African countries endorse. Following independence, countries such as Tanzania sought to replace the capitalist systems that their oppressors had instituted. Nationalists believed that a form of socialism represented a return to the essence of what it meant to be African. The concept of the black African identity as communalistic became profoundly interconnected with socialism. The objective was to install socialism as it had been theorized. However, its implementation in Africa represented a re-imagining and re-interpretation. Naipaul consistently rejects the notion that socialism is an inherently African socio-political and economic philosophy. The emphasis that Naipaul places on the idea that socialism is not an

inherently African set of doctrines, or an intrinsically African philosophy, but that it has been imposed on – and metamorphosed by – a different reality altogether is elicited in an earlier passage:

Despite the Party's best efforts, "traditionalism" seemed to have the upper hand. The peasants here displayed little or no understanding of TANU policies, being ignorant "of the concepts contained in the Arusha Declaration and the paper on Socialism and Rural Development." Their enthusiasm was restricted to those government projects they considered immediately relevant to their needs.(Naipaul 227)

Naipaul's tone is cutting and he encapsulates a similar point when he writes:

He articulated the peasant wisdom of the ages with profound feeling. That wisdom lay deeper than, and transcended "socialism". As he spoke, militant, goose-stepping Tanzania faded out of focus, giving way to the images produced by an older, simpler society driven by older, simpler compulsions and obsessions.(Naipaul 277)

Naipaul is severely critical of Tanzania under Julius Nyerere. Throughout North Of South, he insinuates that there is an insidious totalitarianism underlying the superficial expression of African socialism in Tanzania. In place of the official reason – ostensibly to maintain order – that Tanzania's government views centralization as an indispensable national priority, Naipaul proffers the considerable discord between the rhetoric of African socialism and its practice in Tanzania. Naipaul parodies the situation in the text:

On the grounds of a school, a detachment of the People's militia was being drilled, legs kicking high

as they goose-stepped around the compound. Why, I wondered, the goose step? Did it represent a vestigial memory of the German occupation? I did not associate the formalized goose step with Socialist Liberation of the Tanzanian variety. So, within minutes of crossing the border, I had had a taste of the confused rhetoric that fuels and sustains the Tanzanian Revolution.(Naipaul 209)

The goose-stepping soldiers are, of course, an allusion to Nazi militancy reminiscent of the grand parades at Nuremberg. Later on in the narrative, Naipaul expounds on the analogy directly, as well as its consequences:

As I was leaving, he handed me a copy of a document entitled “Foreign Economic Trends and their Implications for the United States.” “Read that. It tells you everything you need to know. You’ll find it most instructive.” Despite its diplomatic tone, the section on Tanzania was a gloomy piece of work. “Tanzania’s socialist framework,” it said, “and concern to prevent domination by foreign business and finance act to limit and define the role for potential U.S. investment... The State controls all aspects of the modern economy. It depends upon concessionary foreign aid and domestic borrowing rather than private investment... to exploit its resources. The country’s depressed economy, infrastructural deficiencies, inefficient transport system... further inhibit potential private investment and markets.” It was all very sad.(Naipaul 269)

Naipaul elaborates extensively on issues of governance in the countries that he visits in the narrative. The text is littered with references to Mobutu Sese

Seko, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Idi Amin Dada and Kenneth Kaunda, which often crop up in the form of various artefacts of culture (metal badges, framed photographs, statues). Naipaul insinuates that these liberation heroes, contemporary leaders and political figures have cultivated a public image that seems “larger-than-life” by portraying themselves in a trope of messianic proportions thus garnering unflinching adulation and support. The dynamic between the public apotheosis and these political figures seems to correspond, at best, to hero worship and, at worst, a cult of personality.

Naipaul considers these political figures to be irresponsible in misleading the public who view their liberators as virtual deities. Naipaul insists that they (the liberators) have become “benevolent” dictators since the public is prepared to overlook their limitations and their iniquities in light of the relatively utopic experience of liberty from the oppression of imperial authorities, perceived strengths and minor successes and also an assumed assurance that the liberators will take charge of minding their best interests. Naipaul suggests that this raises the liberators above the rule of law and provides leeway for unchecked corruption. Frantz Fanon sees the relationship between the people of the colonies and these liberators thus:

The people who for years on end have seen this leader and heard him speak, who from a distance in a kind of dream have followed his contests with the colonial power, spontaneously put their trust in this patriot. Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity.(Fanon, The Wretch Of The Earth 133)

Naipaul questions the scope of the governing power in each country. It seems that Naipaul is convinced that the populations are mobilized to various degrees in support of the official state ideologies and barred from acting against the objectives of the states, in some instances necessitating overt and

covert repression. Of subversive elements in Tanzania, for example, Naipaul exposes the way in which they are traced as state espionage:

Ndugu Shaila... waxes lyrical about the role of the cell leaders, whom he calls "multipurpose lieutenants: *E serikali yeze kuyesula* [the government knows how to unearth or excavate] is a remark often uttered by cell leaders to warn a member who is regarded as a shirker or parasite.(Naipaul 278)

Naipaul does not propose that the latent totalitarianism is necessarily dictatorial even though there is, in effect, a marked polarization between the populations and the political figures that govern them, because the political figures are still subject to consent from the people, in many respects, as in Kenya or Zambia. However, he does imply that the power structure of totalitarianism in the countries that he visits takes on a particularly pluralist inflection through the synergy of industrialists, the (predominantly bourgeois) intelligentsia, the military and the political leaders who compete for power and influence, in the political process.

The only exception, possibly, is Tanzania:

But the agent of democratic socialism (the cell leader in Tanzanian villages) is also the agent of the totalitarian One Party State.(Naipaul 277)

This speaks of a clear hierarchy that tapers upwards from the very personal lives of the people to its zenith, the head of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) political party, the supposedly "enlightened despot", Julius Nyerere. The role of such a leader – and the bourgeois intelligentsia that comprise the civil service – in the post-colony is explained by Frantz Fanon:

The national bourgeoisie turns its back more and



more on the interior and on the real facts of its undeveloped country, and tends to look towards the former mother country and the foreign capitalists who count on its obliging compliance. As it does not share its profits with the people, and in no way allows them to enjoy any of the dues that are paid to it by the big foreign companies, it will discover the need for a popular leader to whom will fall the dual role of stabilizing the regime and of perpetuating the domination of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois dictatorship of under-developed countries draws its strength from the existence of a leader... In the under-developed countries... the leader stands for moral power, in whose shelter the thin and poverty-stricken bourgeoisie of the young nation decides to get rich.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 133)

Julius Nyerere's practice of rule, according to Naipaul, is fundamentally at odds with the expression of his social, political and economic speculations in the Arusha Declaration, from which Naipaul comprehensively quotes. Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere delivered the Arusha Declaration on 5 February 1967, in which he outlined his vision of socialism for Tanzania. His objective was to plan Tanzania's economy through a process that he termed *Ujamaa*, which was essentially a form of collectivization centered on the forced removal of the majority of Tanzanians from dispersed smallholdings to a local administration of villages. The policy was ultimately catastrophic. Naipaul continuously questions the validity of the Arusha Declaration from which he quotes significantly, comparing it to the *Communist Manifesto*, the American Declaration of Independence and Christian dogmatic proselytism. Naipaul implies that the Arusha Declaration is a derivative document.

Of the Arusha Declaration, the theoretical foundation of Tanzanian socialism, Naipaul writes:

It is a small document – about the size of the *Communist Manifesto* – but lacking the latter’s stark, apocalyptic appeal. The prevailing tone is inspirational, not chiliastic. It reads in some parts like the American Declaration of Independence, in others like a Sunday-school homily, in others like a stern missionary tract. Sometimes it is sweetly reasonable; sometimes a naked authoritarianism breaks the surface.(Naipaul 199)

Naipaul’s tone is sarcastic. The comparison of the size of the Arusha Declaration with the *Communist Manifesto* implies Nyerere’s emulation of Marx and Engels which, effectively, intimates that it is derivative and brings its authenticity into question. Naipaul continues to paint a picture of the particularly eclectic nature of the document which further fortifies this sense of inappropriateness. In what seems like a self-fulfilling prophecy, Julius Nyerere writes in Freedom and Development (1973), published by the Government Printer in Dar-es-Salaam:

Unless the purpose and socialist ideology of an Ujamaa village is understood by the members from the beginning – at least to some extent it will not survive the early difficulties. For no-one can guarantee that there will not be a crop failure in the first or second year – there might be drought or floods. And the greater self-discipline which is necessary when working in a community will only be forthcoming if the people understand what they are doing and why.(Nyerere 29)

*Ujamaa*, *harambee*, *ubuntu*, all these terms that Naipaul encounters on his journey through East Africa have much in common and are almost interchangeable in the context of the narrative. The post-colonial situation saw

nationalists attempting to supplant the discourse of the settlers by evolving these supposedly African concepts. In Tanzania, the implementation of the Ujamaa policy followed the mission statement of the new socialist political agenda, the Arusha Declaration. Naipaul illuminates critical aspects of the development of the socialist identity in Tanzania. He demonstrates how representations, images and concepts of ethnic and national identity are constructed and manipulated for political ends, as a political tool to mobilize the population in support of the state ideology. In the inflamed rhetoric so typical of post-independence speeches, Nyerere lays the foundations for Tanzania's policy of Ujamaa. Naipaul paraphrases, and clarifies:

Nowhere in the Arusha Declaration is Ujamaa explicitly mentioned – a surprising omission considering what a fundamental concept it is in Nyerere's philosophical and political speculations. We have to look elsewhere among the Mwalimu's speeches and writings to discover what he means by it. Ujamaa he defines as "familyhood". It was, he tells us, the basis of traditional African society – a society he describes in glowing terms. "In traditional African society everybody was a worker... Not only was the capitalist, or the landed exploiter, unknown... but we did not have that other form of parasite – the loiterer or idler... Capitalistic exploitation was impossible. Loitering was an unthinkable disgrace." In this utopia, land ("God's gift to man") was a community and not an individual asset: landlordism was utterly foreign to the tribal mentality. The social system offered security from the cradle to the grave. Colonialism destroyed this idyll, planting the seeds of individuality.(Naipaul 202)

Thus the syntactical reconstruction of the concept of traditional African society

through Nyerere's idea of Ujamaa becomes a political tool to mobilize the population in support of the state ideology. Whether intentionally or inadvertently, however, his appropriation of the concept in support of his aims can also be read allegorically. Socialism is represented as a reactionary extreme to overlordship, one in which collective values will ostensibly supercede individual ones. The nationalists hoped to check the individualist values of the capitalist free market system that the imperial nations supported by denouncing them as "non-African" and attempted to replace them with collective values that were seen as inherently African. This strategy also sought to substitute the top-down hierarchical hegemony of the colonial state with a lateral co-operation of equal political participation. Naipaul criticises this nationalist strategy as a reactionary extreme to the overlordship of the colonial-settlers. The Ujamaa policy and the matrix of African socialism in which it exists were a form of recycled imperialism since its core tenet of "villagization", interpreted by Naipaul in the context of the narrative, appears to be a coercive policy. He paints a picture of a political class radically out of touch with the needs of the population that it has been elected to govern, and one that is antagonistic towards the will of the population which is reluctant to collectivize, one that resorts to an abuse of state power to bring about its ends. Naipaul relates this reality to that of the colonial so that the ostensibly socialist policy of *Ujamaa* is shown up to be a form of recycled imperialism.

Naipaul further emphasizes the reactionary nature of the policy when he writes in a denunciatory tone about a coastal hotel in Tanzania and its infrequent patrons:

Occasionally, there was no one at all. In fact, the hotel ran at a substantial loss. If tomorrow a buyer came along he would sell it. But where was a buyer to be found? In Tanzania buyers were as rare as gold dust. No one wanted to be branded an exploiting capitalist.(Naipaul 254)

Nyerere's convenient scapegoat of capitalism has more profound implications since capitalism was the dominant ideology of the colonial powers. Since capitalism was the prevailing ideology of the colonial régimes in Africa, Naipaul condemns Julius Nyerere's scapegoating of capitalism for the woes of the Tanzanian people. Naipaul demonstrates how capitalism is deplored on an individual level because of an institutional bias. Based on his experience, Naipaul implies that the Tanzanian government construes proponents of capitalism (e.g. property buyers) as pariahs and traitors. Obviously, the demonization or ostracization or marginalization of anyone who expounds their affiliation with capitalism in this context is bound to cause a strong partisan reaction. There is no doubt that Naipaul sees this manipulation of *Ujamaa* and its conflation with socialism as either illegitimate or immoral. Daphna Golan explains this perspective in the paradigm of her own research and work:

What I have shown are the processes through which history... is continuously constructed and reconstructed. Some, like the Orwellian minister of history, invent the past intentionally in order to manipulate it, using the power of the state and official literature or school textbooks to promote their interests. Others adapt the past to their artistic notions, stereotypes, or theoretical hypotheses in a less controlled manner. Right-wing revisionist historians claim that the Holocaust never happened, and avant-garde philosophers claim that the Gulf War never took place. I have tried to distance myself from the claim (which I believe is immoral) that, since the past is constructed and invented by everyone who writes or tells it, any invention of the past, or denial of it, is legitimate. (Golan 137)

By portraying capitalism as the cause of loitering, Nyerere further justifies the values of socialism since, in his words:

A truly socialist state is one in which all people are workers and in which neither capitalism nor feudalism exist.(Naipaul 200)

Indian post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha is a keen proponent of the idea that all aspects of nationhood are narrativized, which is why he views political language as a critical factor in the formulation of national identity. He describes the discourse of a nation as ambivalent in that it investigates its own space in the process of articulation. This doubling, he explains, is important because it allows the image of cultural authority to be ambivalent as it is in the process of composing itself. On one hand, Naipaul appears to be acutely aware of this phenomenon as he traces the source of the political language that has brought about the deep-seated deformities and contradictions of African socialism. Bhabha explains, in light of the object of his project:

It is the project of Nation and Narration to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation. This turns the familiar two-faced god into a figure of prodigious doubling that investigates the nation-space in the process of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are *in media res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image.(Bhabha, Nation And Narration 3)

In a society where one ideology is viewed as a subversive extreme to the dominant ideology, Naipaul contends that suspicion reigns and freedom is conditional, which is evident in the existence of certain institutions of state which he chooses to portray:

The long arm of the government can now touch almost everyone in Iramba... the cell system has exposed every inch for political action. The cell leader has become a tool for excavation as well as for political education... Consensus and cooperation have reached encouraging proportions.(Naipaul 278)

Naipaul's tone is sardonic. For excavation, read espionage, for education, read indoctrination. The policy of *Ujamaa* – “villagization” – the transformation of the pattern of rural settlement from dispersed family small-holdings to nucleated villages to be efficient units for the delivery of services, in effect, is the process of collectivization as described by Marx.

Naipaul views socialism in Africa as the intended – but failed – implementation of an ideal of a particular European socialist. This type of European socialist had become disillusioned by the pervasive anomie of industrial capitalism and so resolved to draw the state closer to the sphere of individual activity – but also as a guise for privileged individuals to enrich themselves on the sly:

Formerly European-owned, the ridge had been vacated at the time of Independence and taken over by a group of local people. The original intention to turn it into a cooperative had come to nothing. “I believe the treasurer ran away with the money,” Mr. Palmer said. “In this country,

treasurers are very fleet of foot.” The farm had been divided up into individual subsistence plots. Land and people had, in a manner of speaking, reverted to type at the first opportunity.(Naipaul 80)

Naipaul’s tone is accusatory. Excepting the evasive treasurer, the latter is a utopic vision of pre-colonial Africa. Naipaul ultimately, and emphatically, stresses the lack of concord between the theory of socialism in Africa and its application, as a preposterous pretension:

The pat words, the pat phrases, unleavened by thought, came pouring out of Abdallah’s mouth. In this society he would qualify as an “intellectual”. Did Abdallah – could Abdallah – really believe the nonsense he spouted with such ease? But no – it was not even a matter of belief. Did Abdallah really understand the nonsense he spouted? Did Abdallah actually know what he was saying? It was not his “ideology” that disturbed me: socialism provides, after all, one of the more sophisticated ways of interpreting, of looking at the world around us. Nor was it his naïveté – the equation of tall buildings with “progress”. No. It was something else. “Good night, sir. Save all sinners.’ ‘Good heavens! Where did you learn that?’ ‘Good morning, sir. God save the King!’” “A mission boy!’ cried Hereward.” “Yes, bwana. I can read a book, I can write a letter...”(Naipaul 272)

Post-independence Kenya did not adopt a socialist ideology whereas Tanzania did. The point is that both capitalism (in Kenya) and socialism (in Tanzania) are foreign impositions/ideologies. However, Nyerere attempted to articulate an African socialism based on communalism, which ultimately failed



and the question arises as to how he went wrong. The *Ujamaa* policy required the relocation of many families from small, dispersed village sites to larger villages with the purpose of increasing agricultural production and enabling more efficient governmental provision of health and educational services. Nyerere's planned economy went awry largely because of the unpopularity of the *Ujamaa* policy – the *Ujamaa* villages tended to be far away from farmers' land in their former villages and the government appropriated many privately-owned businesses. In the mid-1970's, police and military forces of the Tanzanian government coerced over five million people to relocate to the *Ujamaa* villages. In 1978, Tanzania repelled a military invasion by Ugandan troops and continued to aid Ugandan rebels in overthrowing dictator Idi Amin Dada. However, the successful military effort contributed to the crippling of the Tanzanian economy, which was already struggling to cope with the excessive costs of imported oil. Ultimately, substantial debt and trade deficits caused a collapse of the economy and forced the Tanzanian government to change its socialist system.

Between similar discussions on the cursory implementation of foreign political ideologies in Africa, Naipaul turns his attention towards the socio-economic and political ideology of neo-colonialism. Whereas Naipaul portrays the adoption of foreign political ideologies by the post-colonial leaders as an act of their own volition, the presence of neo-colonialism seems to be more insidious, manipulative and overbearing. Neo-colonialism is an attempt to describe the indirect means, in lieu of direct political and / or militaristic rule, by which former colonial powers extend control over their former colonies, especially since the Second World War. By establishing various financial, trade and economic policies, the former colonial powers, in one sense, seek to advance a *de facto* domination over their former colonies. This often happens via political channels indirectly. Naipaul alludes to the presence of neo-colonialism in Tanzania when he writes:

On my way back, I entered, on impulse, the United States Information Service. The man I was instructed to see treated me cautiously. "We try

and keep a fairly low profile,” he said. “Over here, China makes all the running... The trouble is... that I am a capitalist. I just can’t bring myself to believe in socialism... It’s like trying to teach an old dog new tricks. Just can’t be done no matter how hard you try.”(Naipaul 268)

Naipaul’s attitude is revelatory. Although China was not a colonial power in Africa, it has certainly become a neo-colonial power. With the overthrow of colonialism, China stepped in to assume leadership in the political and economic ideology of many newly independent African states. China long supported black African nationalists in their struggle against the colonial powers, along with Russia. The compromise essentially is economic, privileging China to trade and developmental agreements, even though structural adjustments of the various trade and developmental agreements affect local industries negatively. China has also provided loans to many African countries which, to reiterate, are merely subsidies by means of which international financial consortia are able to operate and conduct business in Africa at the expense of Africans, creating often unpayable debt.

Naipaul also suggests that neo-colonialism is evident in African countries by the ubiquity of foreign commodities and businesses – Africa continues to be exploited as a market for foreign surplus goods often manufactured by raw materials originally from Africa. The sense of neo-colonialism that Naipaul evokes is quite pervasive, even sprouting up in a territory as insular as Lamu Island:

The blank façades of the houses, adorned with elaborately carved doors – these doors are the glory of Lamu culture – tell nothing; the ill-lit shops that look so promising from the outside turn out, on closer inspection, to sell Palmolive soap, Colgate toothpaste, Surf washing powder and Cadbury’s chocolate. The people of Lamu no longer make

anything; they simply endure among the relics of a dead past.(Naipaul 178)

The insularity of the island appears to have enabled the inhabitants to maintain a conservative culture, but Naipaul portrays it as a stagnant one (a particularly Conradian view of Africa in general), merely enduring among the relics of a long-forgotten past. The shops on the island are composed of ornate cultural and historical architecture but their products all originate from European financial consortiums and their foreign factories.

His evaluation of neo-colonialism is also negative in that he expresses a wistful nostalgia for a pre-colonial past that it has supplanted and that he - ostensibly - can imagine. Various critics of neo-colonialism have underscored the detrimental effects that the granting of loans to African countries tends to create, particularly loans provided for otherwise unpayable Third World debt. International organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund require the countries to which they grant loans to implement certain structural adjustments. These adjustments usually aggravate poverty in the recipient countries. This dire situation of dependence is often cited as a form of conclusive control.

There are interesting counterpoints that follow from this particular criticism. There seems to be collusion between the states that provide international loans to African countries and large financial consortiums. In many cases, the capital loaned to the African countries through international mechanisms is returned to the financial consortiums that are granted certain monopolies and concessions in the African countries in exchange for either infrastructural development, consolidation of power or, often, graft. In effect, these loans are merely subsidies to the financial consortiums, which ultimately serve as an extension of the property of the loaning state. Frantz Fanon writes:

The economic channels of the young state sink back inevitably into neo-colonialist lines. The national economy, formerly protected, is today

literally controlled. The budget is balanced through loans and gifts, while every three or four months the chief ministers themselves or else their governmental delegations come to the erstwhile mother countries or elsewhere, fishing for capital. The former colonial power increases its demands, accumulates concessions and guarantees and takes fewer and fewer pains to mask the hold it has over the national government. The people stagnate deplorably in unbearable poverty; slowly they awaken to the unutterable treason of their leaders.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 134)

This is a double-edged sword, according to Naipaul, as infrastructural development in Africa is a necessity for economic progress but it is usually dependent on foreign aid. In Zambia, Naipaul finds a peculiar testament to this theory, which he reveals in descriptive tones:

The Chinese railroad is a strange sight. With its neat stone and iron bridges, its tidily graveled embankments, it looks as dainty and functionless as a child's toy. At intervals, there are "stations", brand-new pink-washed blockhouses with their names painted in large letters. These stations, opening onto untenanted bush, are no more than their names; seeds of unspecified hope scattered in the Zambian wastes... Lusaka is, in a sense, merely an upscaled version of those toy stations planted in the bush by the Chinese.(Naipaul 315)

Another manifestation crosses his path in Tanzania:

We are climbing, the truck agonizingly inching its

way up a ledge sliced out of a forest hillside. The road (*built by Americans*), winding and looping, is an impressive sight.(Naipaul 304)

Naipaul labours the point that neo-colonialism is manifestly a question of degree in that it not only infects the former colonies on a superstructural level (i.e. at the level of the monolithic neo-colonial state) but it also operates on a micro-level (i.e. it conscripts ordinary citizens - at the level of the state as incorporated in the individual who functions indirectly as a vessel of the monolithic neo-colonial state). Naipaul encounters two questionable American characters that function as a vehicle for his critique on neo-colonialism on the ground. Both men run enterprises in Kenya without work permits and both men are engaged with the illegal exchange of foreign currency in the light of the weaker local currency, prostitution (highlighting the abject poverty of the local people) and narcotics. Naipaul thus brings to the fore the improbity of neo-colonialism, the corrupt nature of the infiltration:

“What kind of currency are you carrying?”

I told him.

He clucked his tongue. “Sterling... that’s not so good. Still, I could give you eighteen shillings to the pound.”

I said I preferred to change my money legally.

He laughed. “Hear that, Andy? The guy says he prefers to change his money legally.”

“The guy’s a sucker,” Andy said.

Stan leaned toward me. “How about a woman?”

“Not now, thanks.”

“A boy?”

“You deal in those too?”

“I deal in most things – currency, dope, women, boys. I’ll fix you up with anything you want. You could say I’m one of the pillars of the tourist trade in these parts.”

“They allow you a work permit for that?”

Stan’s laughter echoed across the terrace. “Hear that, Andy? The guy wants to know if we have work permits.”(Naipaul 37)

In one sense, the White Man’s Burden is interconnected with neo-colonialism. Many people in former colonial states view their country’s commitment to the “development” and modernisation of their former colonies as an integral aspect of their responsibility to support and uphold civilization and progress. In the former colonies themselves, Naipaul sees neo-colonialism as an extended form of colonialism, subsumed in lasting settler oppression, coded with a paternalistic stance towards “childlike natives”. Colonial powers insist that the relationship between themselves and their occupied territories is beneficial. This perspective contends that the colonial power fosters civilization, modernisation, “development” and progress in their colonies. Britain justified its stance towards its colonies along these lines. In more recent history, the USA’s contention that its occupation of Iraq is meant to bring liberty, equality and fraternity to all Iraqi people has been criticised as paternalistic neo-colonialism. Many critics classify paternalistic neo-colonialism as racist and supremacist.

Naipaul relates an anecdote about a shop in a Tanzanian town that seems to stock only foreign commodities. Naipaul uses this anecdote firstly to remind the reader about the ubiquity of foreign commodities in African countries. Secondly, Naipaul intimates that the viability of the mass production of commodities in Africa is largely hindered by the inadequacy of local industries, forcing the countries to rely on imports. Naipaul indirectly criticises the fact that a reliance on imports crushes local manufacture and industries. Neo-colonialism thus plays a more sinister role. The anecdote relates a conversation between Naipaul and the spouse of a United Nations official, Mrs. Henckel, in Tanzania, Naipaul shows us why in a dismayed tone:

“What’s driving you crazy?”

“Everything. I can’t get butter. I can’t get milk. I

can't get cheese. I can't get frankfurters. What do the people here *live* on?"

I knew what she meant: the shelves of the shops were bare. Only bottles of locally processed fruit juices, Chinese canned goods and out-of-date Eastern Bloc magazines seemed to be readily available. Arusha was a ghost town.(Naipaul 216)

Cultural imperialism, as a form of neo-colonialism, is a difficult subject. It is almost always used in a pejorative sense and can be described as a means of advancing or infusing the culture of one nation into that of another. Bhabha clarifies:

These are important points which I simply state here – and they lead us at once to ask: what is one defending *against* the encroachments of cultural, economic, military imperialism if not a culture?... One is defending a set of contours, memories, possibilities for controlling, developing, and redistributing one's own resources, some of which make up units in what becomes, for culturalism, a totalizing web, others of which do not.(Bhabha, Nation And Narration 139)

Cultural influence is a labile transmission that continues between adjacent cultures throughout the ages. Cultural imperialism is problematized when people from poor or less powerful states freely adopt the cultural practices or artefacts from wealthier or more powerful states; in other words, they do so without being coerced. More often than not, though, the coercion is insidious.

Still, there are other critics, like French philosopher and writer Jean-Pierre Faye, and American sociologists Seymour Lipset and Daniel Bell, for example, who regard cultural imperialism as an intellectually invalid concept. They argue that certain leftist movements are extreme, e.g. the anti-imperialist

movement, and are merely reincarnations of classic fascism. These critics proffer circular political theory (also known as the horseshoe theory or the circular political spectrum, which has been a staple of the leftist discourse since the earliest use of the term usually attributed to Faye in Le Siècle Des Ideologies) to buttress their arguments. This theory suggests that the political spectrum is not necessarily biaxial but can be conceived of as a horseshoe shape such that the farther one shifts to the extreme left, the closer one shifts to the extreme right, and vice versa. In this light, then, efforts to prevent the non-coercive incursion of a foreign culture into one's own may be seen as a far more precarious imposition. Naipaul seems to make this connection between the overtly socialist agenda of the Tanzanian government and its covertly totalitarian actuality, for example.

Naipaul unpacks a conflict that he perceives between the political sphere of the post-colonial countries that he visits and the intellectual sphere. Naipaul intimates that the possession or construction of objects that signal progress or development by European standards are the outward symbols of intellectual attainment (e.g. the more extensive and entrenched the infrastructure of a country appears, the more developed it is considered to be). A misconception of this truth, according to Naipaul, obfuscates the reality of the black African subject who desires to possess or institute these objects as an outward symbol of intellectual attainment without actually solidifying the underlying intellectual identity, leading to unbridled corruption. "Development" of these objects (infrastructure, etc) is thus sanctioned as credibility and evidence of "progress" by the political sphere. Differently stated, in newly liberated African countries, Naipaul suggests that the intellectual identity that lies behind the objects of "progress" (e.g. tall buildings, technological commodities like radios and cars) is lost in a misconstrued desire to possess these objects. This desire to possess, in Naipaul's view, has led to unbridled degrees of corruption. Naipaul draws an interesting analogy between the pre-colonial and post-colonial leaders that exhibit this desire to possess:



At the height of the slave trade, African rulers seemed literally to have gone mad. To get hold of the guns and tobacco and brandy they craved, some chiefs betrayed and enslaved their own people. The desire to possess had spiraled out of control. Their successors behave no differently. Slavery, of course, is now illegal. But are there any moral distinctions to be drawn between a chief who, in order to satisfy his lust for brandy, sells his own people into slavery and the contemporary politician who, coveting a Mercedes-Benz, embezzles the funds of a charity set up to help orphan children? It is no accident that Uhuru is thought of as a “fruit” – something to be eaten, something to grow fat on. Africans are content with the political kingdom. Karfa’s dim vision of the intellectual kingdom that lay beyond “the objects of his great admiration” has been lost. “Progress” has been confused with possession.(Naipaul 58)

Naipaul’s tone is caustic. The confusion of progress with possession is aggravated by the colonial experience. Fanon saw it as a misunderstanding – and cursory application of – external socio-economic tenets:

A bourgeoisie similar to that which developed in Europe is able to elaborate an ideology and at the same time strengthen its own power. Such a bourgeoisie, dynamic, educated and secular, has fully succeeded in its undertaking of the accumulation of capital and has given to the nation a minimum of prosperity. In under-developed countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster,

only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas and inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 103)

Progress is all too often defined in superficial economic terms. The more extensive the infrastructure of a country appears; supposedly the more developed it is. This perspective ultimately describes a contour feature; it lacks profundity. Naipaul incorporates this perspective in the paragraph:

We shook hands. He wandered off, swinging his briefcase, dreaming, perhaps, of the rich German lady who might stop him on the street any day to ask the way; of the “scholarship” she might offer him; of the Mercedes-Benz that might one day be his and the beautiful women it would bring. What a ragbag of fantasies must whirl in that head!(Fanon 66)

Naipaul’s attitude is presumptive and his tone, critical. The subject of the paragraph (Andrew, the Office Furniture Salesman) fails to grasp that abilities, concrete or substantial knowledge and academic achievement are the basic criteria for the provision of a scholarship, that high economic status – the acquisition of a Mercedes-Benz – is not necessarily the reflection of successful progress. His seductive visions of the abnormal are a construct of capitalist ideology whose scope circumscribes his existence in that he lacks the means and capacity to see beyond it. Naipaul concludes:

The abnormal becomes the stamping ground of his visions of “progress” and “development” because it

is only the abnormal he sees.(Fanon 67)

In the absence of an understanding of the more abstract facets to progress, the post-colonial state perpetuates the abnormal. This condition becomes all the more unsustainable because it is grounded on shaky artificiality. Its momentum seems unstoppable. Frantz Fanon clarifies:

It is true that such a dictatorship does not go very far. It cannot halt the processes of its own contradictions. Since the bourgeoisie has not the economic means to ensure its domination and to throw a few crumbs to the rest of the country; since, moreover, it is preoccupied with filling its pockets as rapidly as possible but also as prosaically as possible, the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation. And in order to hide this stagnation and to mask this regression, to reassure itself and to give itself something to boast about, the bourgeoisie can find nothing better to do than to erect grandiose buildings in the capital and to lay out money on what are called prestige expenses.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 132)

Of course, such a process ascribes to particularly economic dimensions but it assumes a political character. Fanon explains:

This native bourgeoisie, which has adopted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the ways of thinking characteristic of the mother country, which has become wonderfully detached from its own thought and has based its consciousness upon foundations which are typically foreign, will realize, with its mouth watering, that it lacks something

essential to a bourgeoisie: money. The bourgeoisie of an under-developed country is a bourgeoisie in spirit only. It is not its economic strength, nor the dynamism of its leaders, nor the breadth of its ideas that ensures its particular quality of bourgeoisie. Consequently it remains at the beginning and for a long time afterwards a bourgeoisie of the civil service.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 143)

Here, Fanon argues that the bourgeoisie of post-colonial countries is a bourgeoisie in spirit only, because it lacks capital, dynamism in its leadership, secularity and education. He believes that these reasons render it a bourgeoisie of the civil service. The bourgeoisie is *in media res*, and in the process of becoming, in post-colonial countries. In most post-colonial countries, the development of a bourgeoisie involves a metamorphosis of an egalitarian liberation agenda to a class struggle masked by liberation rhetoric. The substitution of the white colonial-settler authority with the authority of the black bourgeoisie is only a superficial shift in the balance of power. Naipaul explains that the bourgeoisie has inherited the political kingdom from the colonial powers, but not the economic kingdom. He describes this bourgeoisie as an avaricious little caste with little or no concern for redistributing wealth to the poor masses of the country. The greed for personal enrichment and foreign economic enslavement inspires a “feeding frenzy”. By basing its consciousness on foreign foundations, the bourgeoisie’s lack of capital and dependence on foreign dividends ultimately leads to regression and instability. In this way, Naipaul sees the bourgeoisie, which is at the core of the intellectual/political/economic dilemma, as a caricature of the European bourgeois.

Decolonization has brought about a warped karmic principle that often manifests unselfconsciously. Having been fashioned in the mode of their colonial forebears, the post-colonial bourgeois leaders recycle imperialism in countless ways. This recycled imperialism is a product of identity crises. “Rule

Britannia, Britannia rules the waves”, and, some would say, “waives the rules”, is a familiar change of tune in some former colonies who often experience the bitter taste of the disregard for the rule of law by the new ruling classes. Naipaul illustrates the injustice quite succinctly when he writes:

“You must have heard of Kenyatta’s Nakuru speech.” I said I had not. “He made it around the time of Independence. The Nakuru settlers were a tough bunch. Really hard nuts. Kenyatta went up there, to beard the lion in his den, as it were. He told them they have nothing to fear from a black government, that the time had come to forgive and forget and so on. In my opinion, it was the best speech he’s ever made. He got a standing ovation.” “All the same,” Mrs. Palmer said, “if some bigwig from Nairobi was driving past here one day and suddenly decided our farm was just the thing for him...” “True enough,” Mr. Palmer conceded. “What a Nairobi bigwig wants a Nairobi bigwig generally gets. The Old Man has a weakness for farms. If he offers to buy your property, that’s virtually a compulsory order to sell.”(Naipaul 78)

Naipaul inevitably deals with the highly controversial and emotive topics of land expropriation and re-distribution in Africa. The land question is profoundly coded with contentions of white-black power relations. Instead of portraying land expropriation and re-distribution as the post-colonial country’s means of redressing historical imbalances, or as a political tool to canvass support for some post-colonial party political cause, or as a way to settle old scores, Naipaul attributes the reasons for land expropriation and re-distribution to avarice. Naipaul qualifies land expropriation and re-distribution as a form of recycled imperialism. Naipaul views it as the product of an inferiority complex structured around a projection of the black subject to assume the white subject’s perceived position of superiority and the product of an identity crisis

involving the black subject's attempt to assume the white subject's identity.

Land expropriation and re-distribution seem to be a common continuation of the cycle of racism and imperialism in many former colonies. In the context of this passage, it is clear that the pretext for the purchase of farms is actually coercive. The ironies of mistrust, both on the part of the settler and the native, seem to shroud the post-Independence amnesty. There is a discreet air of dissimulation permeating this passage. It is reinforced by the interpolation of the Old Man for Jomo Kenyatta / government, and Nairobi bigwig for influential parliamentary politician / nationalist bourgeoisie.

The myopic vision of a post-colonial world free from the shackles of the former colonial powers is naïve. In many cases, the transfer of power was so swiftly carried out that the natives struggled to come to terms with their identity, easily assimilating those of the settler.

As Frantz Fanon qualifies:

The people of Africa have only recently come to know themselves. They have decided, in the name of the whole continent, to weigh in strongly against the colonial régime. Now the nationalist bourgeoisies, who in region after region hasten to make their own fortunes and to set up a national system of exploitation, do their utmost to put obstacles in the path of this 'Utopia'.(Fanon, The Wretched Of The Earth 132)

The resources of this 'Utopia' sprawl out across the territorial expanses of the nation-state often escaping the direct access of the centralized government. Access can be complicated by the parameters of the former colonies. Following the Berlin Conference, the partition of the African continent into economic units often transpired without regard for the geopolitical reality of long established patterns of settlement of various ethnic groups. Naipaul

consistently evokes a sense of the illusory nature of national boundaries in the African countries that he visits and simultaneously condemns the limitations that the boundaries place on the peoples' access to resources, freedom of movement and historical ethnic ties. Naipaul criticises the topographical legacy of colonialism as a contemporary (inter)national system of exploitation indicative of neo-colonialism in Africa because the illusion of the colonial nation-state prevents any attempt at regional or continental stability or unity.

In most post-colonial African countries, the transition governments at the turn of independence chose not to pursue a path like the one taken at post-Nazi Nuremberg with regards to the colonial-settlers; instead, a path of amnesty was generally followed. However, the tensions and hostilities of centuries of abuse on all sides did not dissipate. Naipaul considers that the ironies of mistrust between the native and the settler shroud the amnesty and scupper efforts to reconcile opposing groups. Naipaul also emphasizes that schismatic loyalties and divided ideologies obstruct any hope of fostering solid national identities in the African post-colonies. As Naipaul explains in a captious tone:

Up-country and coast – they have so little in common. Everything – climate, vegetation, religion, language – is different. And yet the Kenyan flag flies over both. For hundreds of years, the coastal people have looked to the East – to Arabia and the Persian Gulf.... Now they must pay obeisance to the Kikuyu state centred on Nairobi. It is all of a piece, however, with the irrationality of the various statehoods imposed on Africa by the colonial past and clung so tenaciously by its black inheritors – an irrationality that, for example, makes “Kenyans” out of one half of the Masai and “Tanzanians” out of the other. The coast brings home the nonsensical nature of African nationality.(Naipaul 170)

Naipaul continues his criticism of the re-structuring of geographical patterns of settlement and its connection with access to resources by highlighting an ironic twist of the Kenyan government's attitude towards Lamu Island at the time of his visit. The culture of Lamu Island bears a strong historical Arab Islamic influence. People of Kikuyu heritage largely dominate the government of Kenya. At the time of Naipaul's visit, Kenya had established the Lake Kenyatta Harambee Settlement Scheme near the coast that runs parallel to Lamu Island. The policy essentially re-settled thousands of up-country Kikuyu in the midst of an Arab Muslim sphere of influence. Naipaul implies that this policy was a means to ensure Kikuyu hegemony by establishing a buffer watchdog and a seminal neo-colonial culture. Effectively it sought to extend a form of recycled imperialism, as Naipaul points out:

The new imperialism comes complete with settlers. Lamu looks nervously across to the mainland, to that advance outpost of Kikuyu-style progress, the Lake Kenyatta Harambee Settlement Scheme, which has infiltrated thousands of up-country people into their midst.(Naipaul 190)

The invasion of a group of people into the midst of another is an aggressive imperialist strategy. The acquisition of *lebensraum*, living space, is not too unfamiliar a fascist philosophy in the annals of recent history. Naipaul underscores the negative continuum:

Lamu is paying the price of the post-Uhuru land grab:dispossession breeds dispossession.(Naipaul 191)

The Asian expulsions in Tanzania in the 1970s, of which Naipaul has much to say, are a rather telling piece of historical evidence in terms of exposing the atrocity of the social stratification ascribed to imperialism. The largely merchant class of Asians was easy to scapegoat as capitalistic (simultaneously being conflated with the colonizer whose economic policies



were predominantly capitalistic) and thus constructed by Nyerere as the antithesis to the *Ujamaa* socialist that he envisioned as the national identity of Tanzania.

Earlier on in the narrative, Naipaul destabilizes the construction of a homogenized Asian identity. On the surface, Naipaul's critique of the dispossession of the Asian in Tanzania can be read as another metronomic allusion to recycled imperialism, as in a conversation that he conducts with a sloven elderly Asian man in a bar:

“Once I used to be a man of property, sir. I was rich. I was respected. Now I am nothing but dust.”

“What happened to your property?”

“It was taken away from me, sir. They said I was an exploiter and a parasite. Now I exploit nobody and I am dust.”(Naipaul 310)

For “They”, read: the Tanzanian government, for “exploiter” and “parasite”, read: capitalist. In another light, Naipaul implies that the dispossession of the Asian in Tanzania is more complicated than merely the rationale of economic favorableness. On the one hand, he blames the Asian for obstinate conservatism. He interprets the Asian's unwillingness to creolize as the root cause of the African rejection of their status as countrymen. Naipaul, as a Trinidadian of Indian extraction, expresses a strong feeling of alienation towards this particular form of isolation:

So it is with most East African “Asians”: they have remained spiritually intact. That has been their great strength; and their fatal weakness. The old merchant's sense of caste, of community, of religion had remained unimpaired. He, though born in East Africa, had been educated in India, and it was to India he had gone to find a bride of the required purity. His sons and daughters had

followed in his footsteps. I spent an evening in his household. Throughout, everyone spoke in Gujarati – except when the conversation was directed at me. From time to time I caught the merchant gazing at me with a mixture of bewilderment and disapproval. I was beyond the pale; I felt an utter stranger.(Naipaul 106)

Naipaul refuses, though, to put the Asian expulsions down to their resistance to acculturation, preferring to make a scapegoat of the African, in the simile of a rather vicious Alsatian:

The dog's negrophobia betrays his settler's provenance. His antipathy had been bred into him; it was part of his servile inheritance. He carried on his soul his creator's imprint: he had been programmed to dislike black men. The African antipathy toward the Asian possesses similar characteristics. It is part of his servile inheritance. His dislike bears the imprint of the settler – as does everything he is and wants to be.(Naipaul 116)

The use of the image of a dog is significant in that the dog is an animal that was once wild and has, over time, become domesticated. Naipaul thus repeats the allegory of the primitive having been rescued from the wilderness by the European for the purposes of civilization. Odhiambo explains, though, that the allegory is destabilized by Naipaul's emphasis on the inverse effect of colonization:

On the whole, Shiva adopts a mocking, ironic and dismissive tone and language in narrating his encounters with both the Europeans and Africans in Kenya... His theory of the mutual corruption

caused by the colonial encounter between blacks and whites is used to prop up what appears to be reverse racism... The discourse on social relations between the different races in East Africa that is introduced by Shiva in his narration seeks to project the Africans, Asians and Europeans as alienated and lacking an identity... The result is mutual corruption with the Europeans eventually becoming 'primitivised' and the Africans degenerating into worse caricatures of the civilized man.(Odhiambo 61,62)

In one sense, Naipaul portrays the relationship between the native and the settler as Oedipal. He seems to agree with the line of thought that liberation wasn't simply an end in itself but that the goal of the native was to set himself up in the very place of the settler. In so doing, the native is apotheosized:

It (the settler's town) expresses his (the native's) dream of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible... there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place.(Naipaul 66)

Thus, Naipaul fixes his argument in the psychopathological realm of master/slave identities. Naipaul proposes that the liberation of the former colonies wasn't merely an end in itself but that the objective of the native was to re-position himself as the settler so that he would be apotheosized. In this sense, then, Naipaul views the relationship between the native and the settler as Oedipal. Naipaul classifies this relationship as psychopathological, thus rooting his argument in the realm of identity. Naipaul insinuates that the native as the former slave and the colonial-settler as the former master are plagued by the imbalance of their psychopathological identities. The bond between master and slave is potent, and the slave desires not only to be like the

master, to be accepted and acknowledged by the master, but also to become the master. Naipaul describes the intense hatred of a slave for his master as an inverted form of perverted adoration. This, Naipaul believes, is why there are no genuine rebels in Africa, because the slave, according to him, is a born conservative:

The European starts with an immense advantage: the African's longing to be absorbed, to lose himself in the white man's world. Out of this has been forged the black-white alliance in post-Uhuru Kenya; the forgiving and forgetting. The African, lacking a vision of his own autonomous manhood, is vulnerable to every flattery. Between oppressor and oppressed, master and slave, there exist profound psychological bonds. (Never come between a man and his slave: the slave will surely kill *you* first!) Beyond all else, the slave yearns to be like the master; he craves his acceptance and recognition. His hatred, so full of cruelty, is often no more than a perverted adoration turned inside out. It is because of this yearning for the oppressor that slaves are never genuine rebels: the political evolution of Jomo Kenyatta furnishes ample evidence of that, as do the European M.P.s predicted by Sir Michael. The slave is a born conservative.(Naipaul 116)

Naipaul believes that the oppression of imperialism is so deeply internalized in the black subject that it eventually externalizes itself in diverse manifestations. Through an interview with an editor and his associates at a Tanzanian publishing house, Naipaul illustrates the manner in which the Tanzanian authorities propagandize their supposedly African socialist ideology through various literary media (like books, magazines, newspapers, etc.). Naipaul believes that the Tanzanian state mobilizes people in support of its ideology

through indoctrination by ensuring that the media espouses the views of the political leaders:

In Tanzania... we publish only progressive literature. Unlike the bourgeois countries, we do not dish out decadent sex literature for mass consumption. Our books are a weapon in our cultural and ideological struggle. We use culture as a tool of liberation. The imperialists, on the other hand, use culture to oppress and exploit.(Naipaul 282)

The contradictions are implicit. Jean-Paul Sartre suggests a psychoanalytical reason for the manner in which imperialism perpetuates itself when he writes:

The status of 'native' is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people *with their consent*. (in the introduction to Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth 17)

Naipaul also articulates the same view that the oppression of imperialism is so internalized in the native that it eventually externalizes itself in diverse manifestations through the metaphor of the shoeshine huckster in Kenyatta Avenue who refers to himself as a "boy" even though he is an adult man in the line:

"I am first class shoeshine boy. I will make them be like new for you. They will shine just like mirror. I am best shoeshine boy in the whole of Nairobi. Many years' experience."(Naipaul 48)

Naipaul's assessment of the body politic of the bourgeois intelligentsia that governs the countries that he visits seems to be overwhelmingly negative. His

pessimistic view can be attributed to his belief that the state ideologies are foreign impositions that are out of touch with the reality of the post-colony; the abstraction has no basis in the concrete, the rhetoric flounders in practice. Naipaul's main critique of the binary neo-colonial/liberated is qualified by the term 'liberation' being unconditional – how can post-colonies in Africa be truly liberated if the ideology, which shapes the very nature of the post-colony, is a foreign imposition? Surely, this foreign imposition places conditions on the idea of liberation, rendering the term in this context null and void of meaning? Naipaul demonstrates how the limitations that re-interpreted ideologies place on culture provide a foothold for neo-colonial influences. At the level of identity, Naipaul argues that the transitional state of the post-colony, riddled as it is by illusion, obfuscates the self in a way that arrests the development of the individual at the stage of caricature. This, he believes, is mirrored by the inconsistencies, contradictions, falsities and general instability in the body politic and the existence of neo-colonialism.

## CONCLUSION

In the preface to North Of South: An African Journey (1978), Naipaul sets the stage for his journey in East Africa by posing a series of questions for which he hopes he will find answers based on his observations and interactions at grass-roots level in the countries that he visits. Throughout the course of the travel narrative, Naipaul alludes to antecedent texts on the subject of Africa and Africans. He uses quotations most liberally from the works of Joseph Conrad, Karen Blixen and Elspeth Huxley. His approach ultimately leads him to a cynical and considerably pessimistic conclusion. This project concentrated on Naipaul's sense of the instabilities of various identities in the countries that he visits and why this sense led him to such a negative assessment of the post-colonial situation. I believe that the key to understanding his perspectives is rooted in contemporary ideas of ontological alterity as explored by various modern and post-modern philosophers like Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Lacan and de Saussure. Their ideas have enabled academics in other fields, like James Clifford and Stuart Hall in the fields of sociology and anthropology, to develop novel approaches to understanding cultures, particularly post-colonial cultures. Clifford's theory of articulation, in particular, has provided a useful interpretive framework for this project as it problematises Naipaul's assessment of the cultures that he encounters in Africa.

The basic idea of articulation theory is that cultural contact is not necessarily polar i.e. involving the engagement of one group with another. Rather, the theory suggests that culture is a continuous entity that constantly interprets and re-interprets ("articulates") itself in diverse forms. Since this theory elicits a universal accessibility, it is post-modern at its core.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I demonstrated the ambiguity in Naipaul's contextualization of the identities that he chooses to represent through the binaries of primitive/traditional and civilized/modern. On the one hand, he

seems to pursue modernist thinking by interpreting the relationship between modernisation and traditionalism as a binary opposition in which modernisation is privileged and conflated with Westernization. On the other hand, he portrays modernisation and traditionalism as complex cultural articulations of ideology. Naipaul struggles to find a consummate definition of the post-colonial subject within these ambiguous contexts and betrays his adherence to an essentialised notion of identity that characterised the colonial enterprise to begin with. His essentialisation amounts to racism which, in some ways, he seems to represent advertently in the text as the attitudes of various individuals that he encounters in post-colonial Africa. At other points in the narrative, he appears to perpetuate these assumptions inadvertently. His views seem to be shaped by an old Western trope of the African subject known as the White Man's Burden.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I examine Naipaul's representation of the black and white subjects of the post-colonial countries that he visits through the binaries of civic/tribal and settler/native. Naipaul fluctuates between two stereotypical constructions of the primitive Other. The first views the primitive as savage and the second as innocent; both views are used to justify imperialism. Naipaul sees the native in an atavistic light in that it represents to him a remnant of the primitive but he also conflates the settler and the native in that the settler is also an example of atavism, being a remnant of a feudal society projected in Africa. He locates these identities in the unstable realm of the psychopathological.

Naipaul believes that the African nationalists at the vanguard of liberation, having assumed de facto control in the wake of the colonial withdrawal, are engaged in a class struggle in which they, as a bourgeoisie, oppress their proletariat compatriots. Naipaul sees this class struggle as evidence of the bourgeoisie's emulation of their colonial forebears, which points to a kind of master/slave dialectic. Naipaul also views their dependence on foreign aid and foreign dominance of African markets as suspect.

Thus in the third chapter, I turn to Naipaul's critique of the body politic in each



country that he visits as well as neo-colonialism and I examine his critique through the binary of the neo-colonial/liberated. The post-independent world that Naipaul creates is not marked by an overwhelming post-liberation exhilaration. Rather, it is characterized by a pervasive doom and dejection and a reality that Naipaul struggles to circumscribe. Naipaul is particularly confused by the inconsistencies, contradictions, falsities and general instability in the body politic as well as the relationship between former colonisers and colonised. Naipaul incisively perceives that one of the most important elements of this relationship is that resistance to one form of cultural imperialism can easily transform into a slavish assumption of another form of cultural imperialism, evident, in particular, in the peculiar ambiguities of African socialist. Naipaul repeatedly underscores the stark divide between political rhetoric and the implementation of its exhortations. He believes that the transitional nature of the post-colony arrests the development of the individual, which in turn, arrests the development of the state as witnessed by Naipaul in his experiences with neo-colonialism, cosmopolitanism and creolisation in the post-colonial countries in which he journeys.

Naipaul approaches the post-colonies with a cynical and pessimistic perspective, intent on shaking the diffidence, cowardice and conformity (or political correctness) of Western liberalism. He thus sets himself up for disappointment because his experience is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Naipaul's inability to evince absolutes through the identities that he represents could be due to the transitional states of the post-colonies existing *in media res*, undergoing a process of becoming, being a cultural continuity as opposed to a fixed, formed and autonomous entity, using Clifford's lexicon, an articulation as opposed to an invention.

Naipaul concludes North Of South by qualifying the post-colonial situation as an abortion of Western civilization in the trope of Conrad's Kurtz. Naipaul implies, to appropriate from Baudrillard, that any identity in Africa is a simulacrum (a phantom-double or a copy of something that was not there to begin with). He is explicit that his conclusions are based on his personal

experiences during his journey in East Africa. However, it is impossible to ignore that his narrative is predicated by his own projection of Africa and Africans as constructed in his preface to North Of South, as well as his own invocation of antecedent literary accounts of Africa and Africans by authors like Conrad, for example, throughout the narrative. Naipaul's objectivity is severely compromised by his own implication in the narrative.

He attempts to articulate the diverse cultures that he encounters as though he were apart from them without recognizing that he is essentially and inextricably a part of the various cultural articulations themselves. It is easy to criticise Naipaul, therefore, as a non-starter. With the advantages of hindsight, however, it is possible for the contemporary reader to recognize these instabilities as evidence of the post-modern phenomenon in which reality is not an absolute. As a modernist writer, Naipaul's efforts to understand these instabilities of identity as an articulation of culture are circumvented by a Sisyphean struggle wherein he attempts to establish a sense of ontological alterity in the narrative yet implicates himself and his invocation of archival literature and hence his ultimate position of disillusionment, hopelessness and doom.

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