

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I The Ambivalent Ganesh: <i>The Mystic Masseur</i>	10
CHAPTER II Double Visions: <i>A House for Mr. Biswas</i>	32
CHAPTER III Singh's Dual Vision: <i>The Mimic Men</i>	68
CHAPTER IV Ambivalent Visions: <i>A Bend in the River</i>	100
CONCLUSION	134
BIBLIOGRAPHY	156

INTRODUCTION

This study is about Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul who was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad, in 1932 and won a prestigious island scholarship in 1948, which made it possible for him to study for a degree in English literature at Oxford University in 1950. Naipaul started his career as a literary writer in 1955 with *Miguel Street*, a collection of short stories, though his first published work is the novel *The Mystic Masseur*.

Since then, V.S. Naipaul has turned out to be a remarkably prolific writer who has by now produced 26 works of fiction and non-fiction and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in the year 2001, after having been nominated for it throughout many years and receiving many prestigious awards such as the Booker Prize, the W. H. Smith Prize, the Hawthornden Prize, the Bennett Prize, the T. S. Eliot award, and a knighthood from the Queen. His works have been translated into many languages and he has been praised by many critics. His British publisher, André Deutsch has issued a uniform edition of his works, which is a privilege given to few writers in their lifetime. *Newsweek* has called him “The Master of the Novel,” Patrick Swinden described him as “one of the finest living novelists in English,” (quoted by Cudjoe, 1988: p.3), Rob Nixon wrote that Naipaul commands an unimpeachable style (Nixon, 1992: p.3), and Derek Walcott, a West-Indian poet, hails him as “our finest writer of the English sentence.”

However, what makes V.S. Naipaul particularly interesting for this study is that he is an extremely controversial writer. Having been born in Trinidad in 1932 as the son of a Hindu family, which one generation earlier had come from India to Trinidad as indentured labourers, Naipaul would have been expected to write about the sufferings of the colonised and the cruelty and wrongness of the coloniser. This is, however, not the case. In his early fiction which comprises *Miguel Street*, a collection of short stories, and the novels *The Mystic Masseur*, *The Suffrage of*

Elvira, and *A House for Mr Biswas*, Naipaul satirizes life in Trinidadian society in general and the East-Indian Hindu community in particular. These early works of Naipaul are in fact the least criticized ones but as, in Gordon Rohlehr's words, "the position of the ironist in colonial society is indeed a delicate one," (Rohlehr, 1968: p.122), controversy inevitably arises right at the start of Naipaul's career.

What made Naipaul, in fact, controversial was the way in which he dealt with the third world in his non-fictional work, which started with his *The Middle Passage* in 1962, a travelogue about Naipaul's first trip to the West-Indies after he went to England ten years before. Naipaul's non-fictional works, however, are beyond the scope of this study and will therefore not be included in this analysis. In spite of the fact that Naipaul is most notorious, especially among third world intellectuals, for his views put forward in his travel-writing, his fictional works, too, have been the target, though to a lesser extent, of similar criticism. Hence, the West-Indian writer and critic George Lamming criticized Naipaul's early fiction bitterly, even before the appearance of *The Middle Passage*:

His books can't move beyond a castrated satire. (...) When such a writer is a colonial, ashamed of his cultural background and striving like mad to prove himself through promotion to the peaks of a 'superior' culture whose values are gravely in doubt, then satire, like the charge of philistinism, is for me nothing more than a refuge. And it is too small a refuge for a writer who wishes to be taken seriously. (Lamming, 1960: p.225.)

Landeg White points to a direction of solution to this debate when he exerts, "novels which set out to expose the inadequacies of a society whose history is one of slavery and exploitation are acceptable if the prevailing tone shows sympathy and understanding." (White, 1975: p.12.) White's remark is of significant importance for this study because this work aims to show that Naipaul's stance as a critic of the postcolonial world is not as straightforward as it might appear. A closer study of his fictional works, with the help of some concepts of postcolonial theory, will reveal that V. S. Naipaul is a man caught up between two worlds: the post-colonial world which he criticises, and the former coloniser, the metropolis, to which he seems to aspire. Even if it seems that Naipaul is, in Selwyn Cudjoe's words, "a writer who has

aligned himself with the values and preoccupations of the dominant Western culture,” (Cudjoe, 1988: p.5) the application of some selective methods of postcolonial criticism will show that Naipaul’s texts do contain points of resistance to the coloniser’s culture, which in turn indicates that he has not been able to disconnect himself entirely from his culture of origin.

This study considers V. S. Naipaul as a postcolonial writer and will therefore employ methods of postcolonial theory in its attempt to show that the criticism by Naipaul’s characters and narrators of the colonial world in fact inheres at the same time criticism of the coloniser.

To answer the question why Naipaul should be considered a postcolonial writer, some definitions of postcolonial criticism will be referred to. For instance John McLeod in his *Beginning Postcolonialism* contends that postcolonial criticism involves one or more of such activities as,

reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism (...), reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families, which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its many consequences. (McLeod, 2000: 33)

This definition leaves no doubt that Naipaul is covered by the range of postcolonial literary analysis; he meets almost all criteria at once: first, Trinidad being a former British colony, he is a writer from “a country with a history of colonialism”; second, he migrated from Trinidad to England for his education and to start and continue his career as a writer; and third, he is the descendant of a migrant family, as his ancestors came to Trinidad from India as indentured labourers, both countries being former colonies of the British Empire. Similarly, Robert Young in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* points out that:

Postcolonial theory is always concerned with the positive and negative effects of the mixing of peoples and cultures, whether it be through colonial domination and the transmutation of indigenous cultures, or the hybridization

of domestic metropolitan cultures as a result of immigration. (Young, 2001: 69)

“The positive and negative effects of the mixing of peoples and cultures” as a result of colonial domination is an obvious theme that can be found in all the works of fiction by Naipaul that will be studied in this work, hence the relevance of this definition is established. Finally, Bart Moore-Gilbert’s statement in *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* that postcolonial criticism is a set of reading practices that analyses “cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination (...) between nations, races or cultures, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism (...)” (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 12) equally proves to some extent, with such terms as “domination and subordination” and “roots in the history of modern European colonialism”, that Naipaul, as a writer coming from **two** countries with roots in the history of modern European colonialism (Trinidad and India) which have been “dominated” and “subordinated” by the British Empire, can be studied within the scope of postcolonial literary theory.

Bill Ashcroft and his co-authors in their famous *The Empire Writes Back* maintain that “the idea of ‘post-colonial literary theory’ emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing.” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 11) It is for this same reason that this study chooses the methods of postcolonial literary theory in studying V.S. Naipaul’s novels.

The abovementioned study provides useful terms and concepts for a study of post-colonial literary works, some of which can be identified in the following passage about the common characteristics of post-colonial literatures:

What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonisation and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their

differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial. (ibid, p. 2)

The terms in this passage that will be of possible use for this study are *experience of colonization*, *imperial power*, and *imperial centre*. In another passage, Ashcroft et al again provide a crucial argument and valuable terms for this study:

It can be argued that the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with the other, both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the unconscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antitheses and as the object of a reforming zeal. (ibid, p. 3)

The argument made here is highly significant for this study because it says that values such as "civilization" and "humanity" are "constructed values" that are used as propaganda to justify the colonisation of a country in order to "reform" the "savage," "native" and "primitive" inhabitants of that country. The "reforming zeal" is also called the "colonial civilising mission," as used by the post-colonial critic Leela Gandhi (Gandhi, 1998: p. 19)

Another notion elaborated by Ashcroft et al, which will be of use in this study, is the concept of "place and displacement." According to them, "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement." (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p. 8) Ashcroft et al further explain that,

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by *dislocation*, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by *cultural denigration*, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English. (ibid, p. 9)

The notion of “place and displacement” is a major concern in all of the novels that are going to be analysed in this study; therefore, such terms as “displacement”, “dislocation”, and “cultural denigration” will be used in this work.

Of primary importance in an implementation of the postcolonial mode of literary analysis are such terms as *cultural stereotypes*, *ambivalence*, *mimicry*, and *hybridity*, all being concepts developed by such critics as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. The concept of the *cultural stereotype* was first introduced by Edward Said to explain how the Western imperialist powers used these “stereotypes” to justify the conquest and colonization of foreign lands which predominantly happened to be located in the Orient. Said cites two typical imperialist leaders such as Balfour and Cromer, who employ “stereotypes” in the following manner: “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal.” (Said, 1978: 40) The use of these “stereotypes” rationalizes and justifies the idea that ‘these backward’ Orientals cannot govern themselves, so they ‘have’ to be ruled by the ‘rational’ and ‘mature’ Europeans.

Homi Bhabha took up the term “stereotype” and widened the concept to make it embody an “ambivalence” which shakes the authority of the coloniser. For Bhabha maintains that:

It is recognisably true that the chain of stereotypical signification is curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse, an articulation of multiple belief. The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, manipulator of social forces. (Bhabha, 1994: 82)

This dualism in Bhabha’s interpretation is of vital importance for this study as it will help to uncover the “ambivalence” and “dual-worldliness” in Naipaul’s perception, which is mirrored in the characters of his fiction. However, before venturing to apply this notion on Naipaul’s novels, Bhabha’s concepts need to be studied at some greater length.

A second term which is employed by Bhabha, interrelatedly with *ambivalence*, is the term *mimicry*, which itself is of central significance in this study of Naipaul's novels. The importance that Bhabha attaches to this concept can apparently be observed in his statement: "The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing." (Bhabha, 1994: 86) He explains colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*" (ibid, 86) Just as the 'colonial stereotype' had been "ambivalent", so is "mimicry". He thus iterates:

... the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. (ibid, 86)

This statement is important because "mimicry" is an attribute exhibited by many of Naipaul's characters. To concretise his theory Bhabha cites two examples of "colonial imitation" which are both going to be very useful instances of comparison during this study.

The first of Bhabha's instances tells about the missionary Charles Grant who wrote in 1792 that he had a dream of reforming the native Indians' manners to provide the colonial with 'a sense of identity as we know it'. But the "paradox" and "ambivalence" in Grant's approach lies in that he suggests that a partial diffusion of Christianity and a partial influence of moral improvements will construct a particularly appropriate form of "colonial subjectivity", because he is caught up between his desire for religious reform and the fear that the Indians might become "turbulent for liberty". This partial reform, according to Grant, will produce an empty form of imitation of English manners, which will induce the "colonial subjects" to remain under their "protection." Bhabha argues that, by doing this, Grant mocks his moral project and violates a central missionary tenet, which forbade any tolerance of heathen faiths.

The second example of colonial mimicry cited by Bhabha is what he calls “the absurd extravagance of Macaulay’s ‘Minute’ (1835)”. (ibid, 87) Macaulay, at the intersection of European learning and colonial power, conceives of a project to produce “a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.” (Macaulay, 1995: 430) Bhabha argues that the result is a “mimic man”, raised through the English school, “whose line of descent can be traced through the works of Kipling, Forster, Orwell, Naipaul (...)” This person is “the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English”. (Bhabha, 1994: 87)

From this area between “mimicry” and “mockery” the “reforming”, “civilising mission” is threatened by the “displacing gaze” of its “disciplinary double”. According to Bhabha, “the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same *but not quite*)” ruptures the discourse. (ibid, 87) For that reason “mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.” Bhabha explains that “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.” (ibid, 88) This “double vision” is a result of the “partial representation / recognition” of the colonial object. Grant’s colonial as partial imitator and Macaulay’s class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, etc. are examples where this “double vision” can be observed.

Bhabha’s theory of the “ambivalence” in the “mimicry” of the “colonial as partial imitator”, the “mimic man”, is highly significant for this study of four novels by V. S. Naipaul, because in all of these texts there are characters who are more or less in conformity with the model of the “partial imitator”. One objective of this study will be to pick out and examine the mimic men/women in these texts to contrast them with Naipaul’s critical approach to the colonial society. “Dualism” will be the key-notion underlying this work, for this is the route Bhabha has pointed to with terms such as *ambivalence*, *double vision*, *disciplinary double*, and *the split meaning of the stereotype*. The study of the “double nature” of the “partially

imitating colonials” will then help to establish the “dualism” in Naipaul’s own approach to his material, which is the society of the “periphery” as opposed to the “metropolitan centre”. Just as Bhabha’s diagnosis for “colonial discourse” is based on a “bipolar indeterminacy”, so this study finally assumes that the various attitudes of narrators and characters in Naipaul’s four novels are split into two: while they apparently criticise the colonised people and country, they, at the same time, criticise the coloniser.

In the following chapters, four novels of Naipaul, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), *The Mimic Men* (1967), and *A Bend in the River* (1979) will be studied to illustrate how Naipaul’s narrators apply an ambivalent approach in their criticism of colonial society and individuals, and how this ambivalent approach diverts their criticism to the coloniser.

The setting of *The Mystic Masseur* is rural Trinidad. The protagonist of the story is Ganesh Ramsameir, a Hindu Indian who is a member of the Hindu Indian community in Trinidad, which has been brought there by the British rulers, to work as indentured labourers on sugar estates, when slavery was abolished. Most of the characters depicted in this novel belong to this community. Similarly, *A House for Mr. Biswas* is set in Trinidad, too. Half of the story passes in rural Trinidad and half of it in Port of Spain, a major city of the country. Mohun Biswas, the protagonist of the story, is again a Hindu Indian, and most of the characters depicted belong to the same community as in the previous novel. *The Mimic Men* is partly set in London, and partly on the tropical island of Isabella, which is almost identical with Trinidad. The protagonist is Ralph Singh, again a Hindu Indian, but the characters that are depicted in the novel are of various nationalities and ethnicities. *A Bend in the River* is mostly set in central Africa. Only small sections of the novel depict coastal Africa and London. The protagonist is Salim, a Muslim Indian, who is the member of a community, the ancestors of which have migrated to coastal Africa from north-western India. The characters that are depicted in this novel are again of various ethnic and national background.

CHAPTER I

THE AMBIVALENT GANESH IN *THE MYSTIC MASSEUR*

The first of the four novels by V. S. Naipaul that are going to be studied in this study is Naipaul's first ever published novel *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), which is the story of Ganesh Ramsameir's career from school teacher to masseur, then mystic masseur and finally politician as colonial "yes-man".

This text will be studied by a "dualistic" method, which is in accordance with Bhabha's theory proposed in the introduction, because Bhabha essentially emphasizes the "dualism" in the coloniser's discourse, which he calls "ambivalence". This study argues that there is a major "dualism" in Naipaul's criticism of the protagonist of this novel, who is part of a chaotic Trinidad society which is genially presented as one of superstition, knavery, quackery, trickery and chicanery. The continuing idea of this argument is that this "ambivalence" in Naipaul's approach to Ganesh disrupts the authority of his satire of the protagonist and creates an "indeterminacy" in Naipaul's world-view. This "indeterminacy" or "ambivalence" in Naipaul's approach to the colonial protagonist will establish this study's argument that Naipaul is a man torn between two worlds of perception. Several critics have pointed to this "double nature" in Naipaul's approach. Selwyn Cudjoe, for instance, mentions the "duality of the East Indian's experience in Trinidad" which he explains as "the conflicting pull of the Eastern (Hindu) and Western (Christian) worlds". (Cudjoe, 1988: pp. 38, 29) Likewise, Bruce King argues that Naipaul's novels

tend to have a double structure in which events are both seen from a Western perspective – causality, individual will – and allude to a Hindu explanation in which the world of desire and things is an illusion consisting of cycles of creation and destruction. The European perspective dominates, but the Indian world view contests it and has its attractions. (Bruce King, 1993: p. 10)

This “double structure” or “duality of perception” mentioned by Bruce King and Selwyn Cudjoe respectively, will be examined in all four novels that are subject to this study to reveal the “double attraction” that is affecting Naipaul.

The Mystic Masseur is a comic novel where comedy is achieved by the abundant use of irony to satirize Trinidad society's and its individuals' attributes such as ignorance and superstition, trickery, quackery, knavery, opportunism, fatalism, tradition and modernity, and treatment of women. Peggy Nightingale maintains that “Naipaul portrays Trinidadians as a pragmatic people lacking in ideals, to whom bribery is a way of life and to whom the successful fake or trickster is a hero.” (Nightingale, 1987: pp. 32-33) In this section, Ganesh Ramsumair, as the central figure in this text, who is described as “a hero of the people” (Naipaul, 1957: p.11) by the naïve narrating voice of the novel, but who apparently climbs the stairs of success by the use of trickery, quackery, and all sorts of opportunism, will be studied as the major object of Naipaul's satire to reveal the “double-structure” in Naipaul's approach to Ganesh, which will essentially establish the “ambivalence” in Naipaul's world-view.

John Thieme calls Ganesh a “picaroon hero” who “emerges as a champion con-man in a world of small-time tricksters” and argues that “Naipaul finally leaves the reader in little doubt that he is a charlatan, the double-edged ironic approach compels one to see him as both hero and villain.” (Thieme, 1987; p.34) Thieme is right in his claim that Naipaul's treatment of Ganesh indeed makes him appear as both hero and villain, and in what way this happens will be studied henceforth. This is related to the aim of this study because this “double-edge” in Ganesh once more points to the “dual tendency” in Naipaul, which, borrowing from Bhabha's theory, can be called the “ambivalence” of Naipaul's dealing with the “colonial subject”.

In the opening of the novel, the narrator tells about his first encounter with Ganesh as a masseur, when he was still a child and was brought to the masseur by his mother because of a foot injury. This incident, right at the start of the text,

establishes Ganesh as a quack-healer who commits a grave mistake. When the boy-narrator is brought to Ganesh the masseur, his 'diagnosis' is, "Nothing wrong with the boy at all, (...) he have a little bad blood. That is all. It have nothing I could do." (Naipaul, 1957; p.16) The boy gets a mixture from the masseur to be taken three times a day before the meals, "never after" (ibid, p.16), but, as can be expected, the foot does not heal, after which the boy finally decides to do the right thing, namely to go to the doctor. But it is too late, the foot has to be cut off, and the boy is charged ten dollars.

This is indeed a bad start that the narrator gives Ganesh, "the hero of the people." Yet, the narrator reports: "I held no ill will towards him. On the contrary, I often thought with a good deal of puzzled interest about the little man locked away with all those fifteen hundred books in the hot and dull village of Fuente Grove." (ibid, p. 17) This comment by the narrator is one of the reasons why he is called a "naïve narrator" by Dolly Z. Hasan (Hassan, 1989: p. 117), and it is also an instance for what Thieme has called the "double-edged ironic approach of Naipaul." Ganesh frequently receives this sort of tolerant treatment either by the narrator, or the characters.

It is usually the circumstances that manipulate Ganesh to act in a certain way. After Ganesh finishes the Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain he starts to work as a schoolteacher, but he quits his job after some months because he is treated unfairly by another teacher. Shortly afterwards, he receives a telegram which calls him urgently back to Fourways, where he learns that his father has died. Here it is Ramlogan, his future father-in-law, who persuades him that he should "take up massaging" (ibid, p. 35), because his father had been a successful masseur, notwithstanding the young girl whom he massaged but who got killed because of appendicitis. But there appears that tolerance of the uneducated people again, in the voice of Ramlogan: "He was still the best massager we ever had, and I too proud that I know his one and only son." (ibid, p. 35) This tolerance, repeatedly shown not only towards Ganesh, but also to many other characters, is another instance of the narrator's criticism of Trinidad society.

Ramlogan is one of the tricksters in this novel and it is through him that Ganesh first “outwits another trickster”, as John Thieme puts it, and although Thieme argues that “his superiority to them is in no sense moral” (Thieme, 1987; p.46) it can be said that in the following case Ganesh seems to be more or less justified in his action. When Ramlogan and Ganesh have agreed on the marriage between Ramlogan’s daughter Leela and Ganesh, the trickster Ramlogan cries to Ganesh about the kedgerree ceremony, which is a ceremony where the bridegroom sits in front of a plate of rice and the father-in-law has to persuade him to eat from the kedgerree by offering goods for a dowry until the bride-groom starts to eat. Ganesh assures his future father-in-law that “when it come to eating the kedgerree, I go eat quick, not to shame you.” (Naipaul, 1957; p.51) However, Ganesh soon changes his mind about Ramlogan, when, during the preparations for the wedding, dozens of women and their children stay in his house and he asks his aunt, “The Great Belcher”, “what those people outside eating? Who paying for it?” her answer is “you”. Ganesh’s comment indicates that he has deciphered Ramlogan: “Oh God! I ain’t even married the man daughter yet, and he already start!” (ibid, p. 54) Indeed, in the following kedgerree ceremony Ganesh refuses to eat until he gets “a cow and a heifer, fifteen hundred dollars in cash, and a house in Fuente Grove” (ibid, p. 57) and Ramlogan also cancels the bill for the food he has sent to Ganesh’s house. Ganesh’s aunt seems to agree with John Thieme’s argument that Ganesh’s superiority is not moral when she says: “Wasn’t a nice thing to do, but it serve Ramlogan right.” (ibid, 57) However, the second part of her statement can be said to be an expression for the “double-edged ironic approach” of the narrator; Ganesh always seems to be right in his not-so moral actions. What is also important in this incident of a battle of trickery is that it was not Ganesh who started it; his was, in a way, an act of self-defence, even if it was not totally moral.

The “double-structured” approach that the narrator applies on Ganesh can also be discerned in the following comparative analysis. At the time when Ganesh has returned to the country after quitting his teaching job, he is described as loafing for more than two months without knowing what to do, wandering around on his

bicycle. The uneducated people of the village, who have an “awful reverence” for a college education, are quoted to say, “He doing a lot of thinking, that boy Ganesh. He full with worries, but still he thinking thinking all the time.” The quite non-heroic truth about Ganesh is revealed by the narrator in the next sentence: “Ganesh would have liked his thoughts to be deep and it disturbed him that they were simple things, concerned with passing trifles.” (ibid, 32)

After being described in such a negative way, the next instances, where Ganesh performs so brilliantly, surprise the reader, though it has to be born in mind that Ganesh, in each case, uses his own tricks to solve a problem. His wit in the kedgere ceremony has already been described. However, after the kedgere event Ganesh gets in trouble with Ramlogan who, out of his senses from anger, vows to beat his son-in-law as soon as he catches him. Ganesh cleverly asks Leela for a photograph of her father and the situation rather quickly turns in favour of the trickster Ganesh, because Leela and Ramlogan, both being scarcely educated, promptly believe that Ganesh is going to work magic on Leela’s father. Thus Ramlogan entreats Ganesh: “Oh, sahib, I is a poor man. You *must* feel sorry for me.” (ibid, 65) It turns out, however, that Ganesh has solved the matter in a much smoother way; the next morning the Trinidad Sentinel announces:

BENEFACTOR ENDOWS CULTURAL INSTITUTE

Shri Ramlogan, merchant, of Fourways, near Debe, has donated a considerable sum of money with the view of founding a cultural Institute at Fuente Grove. The aim of the proposed Institute, which has yet to be named, will be the furthering of Hindu Cultural and Science of Thought in Trinidad.

The President of the Institute, it is learnt, will be Ganesh Ramsumair, B.A. (ibid, 65-66)

Ramlogan is largely pacified: “Was really this you wanted the money for? (...) And you really going to write books at Fuente Grove and everything? (...) Yes, man. Been reading it here, sahib. Is a great thing and you is a great man, sahib.” (ibid, 66) Not only is the Institute fake, but Ganesh has also opportunistically made use of the Hindu cause for his personal interest, which confirms Thieme’s argument that, “Hinduism, to Ganesh, is no more than a mask to be worn as long as it pays

dividends (...).” (Thieme, 1987; p.50) Yet, important to notice, again, is that Ganesh, in a way, was forced by Ramlogan to protect himself by taking some sort of action. The fact that this action is not really moral, confirms only this study’s argument that the narrator applies a “double-structure” in his attitude towards Ganesh.

Before the second incident, where Ganesh again applies one of his tricks very successfully, he goes through a period of failure in the profession of ‘massaging’, which is a sort of quack-healer’s activity. However, his fortune takes a turn to the much better when his aunt ‘The Great Belcher’ persuades him to become a ‘mystic masseur’ and hands over to him her late husband’s books containing holy scripts of the Hindu religion. The Great Belcher tells Ganesh, “(...) You have the power all right. (...) To cure people. Cure the mind, cure the soul – chut!” (Naipaul, 1957; p. 116) With the help of these scriptures and his personal reading in Hindu philosophy and practical psychology, Ganesh cures a black boy who believes that he is followed by a black cloud. The masseur prepares his darkened bedroom for a session with the boy Hector and his parents. There is camphor and incense aroma, a picture of Lakshmi on her Lotus, a picture of Christ, and two or three crosses, which might be again interpreted as an indicator of “ambivalence”, or “indeterminacy”, in the narrator’s approach; thus Selwyn Cudjoe’s describes this scene with the words, “(...), the tenets of Hinduism and Christianity, (...), merge.” (Cudjoe, 1988; p. 41)

Ganesh apparently has used some technical trick to create a visual illusion, because afterwards he remarks to Leela, “Girl, whatever Suruj Mooma say about education, it have it uses sometimes.” (Naipaul, 1957; p. 136) Leela’s answer is equally telling: “Oh, man, don’t tell me you use a trick on them.” (ibid, 136) The reader is almost sure when the narrator writes: “Ganesh didn’t say.” (ibid, 136) But even if Ganesh used a trick, and even if he implies that he will accept payment, by saying to the boy’s father: “Do just what you want. If you want to reward me, I don’t mind, because I have to make a living. But I don’t want you to strain yourself,” (ibid, 135) it is difficult to decide whether Ganesh is a hero or a villain, in this instance as well as in other instances. This is so because Ganesh has spent genuine labour to solve this case, and he does not ask for too much either.

“He had no fixed fee and accepted whatever was given him,” (ibid, 139) says the narrator to describe Ganesh’s charitableness, after the last incident of the boy and the cloud has brought Ganesh a lot of fame and customers, whom he cured as well; “(...) people who came to him sick went away well. Sometimes he didn’t even know why.” (ibid, 138) There are still more “double-structured” incidents of Ganesh’s trickery to be studied. One day, Beharry informs Ganesh that the rogue Ramlogan has established a monopoly taxi service to Fuente Grove, which receives plenty customers daily, overcharging the passengers with a fixed fee of five shillings. In the place where there should be the tariff, the taxi-drivers have put a picture of the goddess Lakshmi, who is supposedly blessed by Ganesh, and competitors are eliminated with threats of being ‘bewitched’ by the ‘holy pundit masseur Ganesh.’ Ganesh being very angry, instantly goes to Ramlogan saying, “Ramlogan, ain’t you does ever get a little tired of being smart all the time, even in your old age?” (ibid, 150) and proposes to buy the taxis from him. Ramlogan, who considers Ganesh to be the same as himself, accuses him as follows, “But you too greedy. You want to rob the people yourself.” (ibid, 150) Yet thinking about Ganesh’s argument, according to which, in Ganesh’s own words, it “Is a favour I want to do you, Ramlogan. I giving you money for the taxis. If I buy my own, you think you could find people to drive your taxis from Princes Town and San Fernando to Fuente Grove? Tell me,” Ramlogan has to agree (ibid, 150). Ganesh is indeed right and his point would win him admiration as a hero if there was not the fact that Ganesh makes this taxi-business continue. As the narrator points out, “he might have run the taxis as part of his service to the public, and not charge for it; but Leela made difficulties and he had to give in.” (ibid, 151) It is worth reading the ironic excuse that the narrator makes for Ganesh:

He charged four shillings for the trip from Princes Town and San Fernando to Fuente Grove; and if it was a little more than it ought to have been, it was because the roads were bad. At any rate the fare was cheaper than Ramlogan’s and the clients were grateful. (ibid, 151)

Again there is the “double-perception” of the narrator about the protagonist; Ganesh is obviously benevolent but, by the additional influence of the society, he cannot refrain from committing his trickery.

The “double-perception” of Ganesh continues when, after the Masseur’s success with the black boy, the people who come to Fuente Grove to the Mystic Masseur start to be materially exploited by Ganesh, for which Narayan, the editor of the magazine *The Hindu*, calls him “the business Man of God.” (ibid, p.152) The narrator remarks that “he didn’t have the business in mind,” when he once more excuses Ganesh by announcing that the next acts of corruption were not his ideas. The irony in the narrator’s voice, however, cannot be ignored:

The taxi-service was Leela’s idea. So was the restaurant, and that could hardly be called a business idea. Clients had to wait so long now when they came to see Ganesh that it seemed only considerate to give them food. So Leela had built a great bamboo tent at the side of the house where she fed people; and since Fuente Grove was so far from anywhere else, she had to charge a little extra. (ibid, p.152)

The irony in the narrator’s voice clearly indicates that there is indeed corruption going on, but this does not change the fact that it is not initiated by Ganesh.

In the second case of corruption, it is again someone other than Ganesh who organises it. The narrator maintains that Ganesh has, in fact, little use for the sort of “silly ritual” of burning camphor and ghee, sugar and rice, and killing cocks and goats, which “fake spirit charmers” normally ask of their clients. But because particularly women love it, Ganesh, too, orders them to perform those rituals. The outside influence of circumstances that excuses Ganesh this time is Beharry and his wife Suruj Mooma who are “worried” about the poor people who do not “know whether the stuff they getting is good or not, whether it is clean or not.” (ibid, p.153) They also are “anxious” about “shopkeepers who wouldn’t mind giving them the wrong sort of stuff,” so they try to induce Ganesh to send his clients to Beharry’s shop to buy the ingredients. (ibid, 153) The narrator implies that Ganesh in fact knows about the corruption in this plan when Ganesh asserts: “Suruj Mooma doing a lot of worrying these days,” where the implication is that Suruj Mooma is actually

“worrying” about how to get their own fair share in this huge pie of corruption. When, in accordance with the plan, clients buy the ingredients for offerings only from Beharry’s shop, Ganesh tells them, “Things not cheap there, but the only place in Trinidad where you sure of what you getting.” (ibid, 154) It is not difficult to notice, once more, the “ambivalence” of the writer’s presentation of Ganesh here: on the one hand, he seems to be aware of the corruption around him, and on the other, he seems naïve enough to believe that this is an honest measure to provide the best service for the clients.

The narrator remarks that as a result of the Mystic Masseur’s ‘business’ Fuente Grove, as well as Beharry and Ganesh prosper. Ironically, the Public Works Department recognises the existence of the village only when someone like Ganesh establishes a quack-healing centre, and repairs its road to some degree, and Fuente Grove gets its first stand-pipe. If this is a point that puts Ganesh in a favourable light as a hero-candidate, then the following casts a shadow on him, which again forms a “double-perspective” of the protagonist. Beharry sends his son Suruj as a boarder to a College in the town, his wife starts a fourth baby, and their shop is rebuilt, all as a result of the dubious partnership with Ganesh’s ‘business’. Ganesh grows most of all; he pulls down his house and puts up a mansion with two stories and walls of concrete blocks, something Fuente Grove has never seen before, according to the narrator (ibid, 154). An Indian architect comes over from British Guiana and builds a temple for Ganesh in proper Hindu style. The narrator again excuses Ganesh mockingly by asserting that “to make up for the cost of all this building Ganesh was forced to charge an entrance fee for the temple.” (ibid, 155) A professional sign-writer is called from San Fernando to rewrite the “GANESH, *Mystic*” sign, which also bears witness to the “double-structure” in the narrator’s approach, because at the top of it he writes, in Hindi language, “Peace to you all,” and below, in English:

Spiritual solace and comfort may be had here at any time on every day except Saturday and Sunday. It is regretted, however, that requests for monetary assistance cannot be entertained. (ibid, 155)

The “double-structure” of Hindi – English, and spiritual – material is obvious in this script, and it points to the ambivalence in Ganesh as hero, as well as, villain.

In the next instance of trickery, where Ganesh outwits another trickster, the narrator’s “dualistic” approach to the protagonist continues. Narayan, the rival of Ganesh, continually attacks Ganesh in his magazine-column *The Little Bird* where he accuses him of being “anti-Hindu”, “racialist”, and a “dangerous atheist.” (ibid, 157) Leela, ironically and hypocritically, comments that “the man is a disgrace to Hindus in this place,” and that what Narayan wants is “a proper horse-whipping.” (ibid, 158) It is highly meaningful that Ganesh makes here a reference to a national hero in suggesting a solution to the ‘Narayan problem,’ by posing the question: “What would Mahatma Ghandi do in a situation like this?” (ibid, 158) It is meaningful because the reference is made by a man who is a combination of a villain and a “hero of the people.” Ganesh’s answer to this question is: “write. That’s what he would do. Write.” (ibid, 158) Beharry expects Ganesh to write a refutation of his rival Narayan, and the reader would, on hearing the reference to Gandhi, expect him to write something of philosophical depth. However, both Beharry and the reader are surprised to learn that Ganesh, months later, produces a book called *The Guide to Trinidad*, in which it is told, among other things, that readers “would be shocked to find, in a village called Fuente Grove, a genuine Hindu temple which looked as if it had been bodily transported from India,” and which “was considered well worth a visit, for spiritual and artistic reasons.” (ibid, 159) The “double-perspective” in this account appears in the fact that at first the protagonist is somewhat humiliated by a juxtaposition of his writing and Gandhi’s, the one being a tourist-guide, and the other of a completely different and superior nature. However, it soon becomes clear, that Ganesh, outside the context of Gandhi, has acted in a very clever and strategic way. Ganesh sends free copies of the *Guide* to all the American Army camps in Trinidad, “to welcome our brothers-in-arms,” (ibid, 159) to export agencies and advertising agencies in America and Canada, which deal with Trinidad. The narrator seems to emphasise the far-sightedness of the protagonist when he reports that Ganesh orders Leela to get table-cloths, lots of knives, forks, and spoons, and to look after the restaurant properly. To Beharry, he advises to lay in large stocks of rum and lager.

And the Mystic Masseur is proved to be right when American soldiers begin to pour into Fuente Grove to see Ganesh's temple and to take his "spiritual advice;" "Leela counted more than five thousand Americans," remarks the narrator (ibid, 160). The consequence of the Masseur's 'literary' action is that Narayan's *The Hindu* loses advertisements for internationally known products and has to reduce its number of pages, the reason for which is probably Ganesh's statement in the *Guide*, that he warns foreign advertisers "to be wary of the mushroom monthlies" which claim to be "organs of certain sections of the community." (ibid, 159)

If the above described episode of trickery portrays Ganesh as a sort of hero who responds to his rival so cleverly that he, at once, strikes him a blow, and at the same time increases not only his own profit, but also the village's, (even the kids get their profit; they have their "first chew of gum" [ibid, 160]) then the next instance is a case of extreme ridicule of Ganesh, which again establishes the "double-structured" approach, which this study argues the narrator maintains towards the protagonist. The narrator tells, again in his ironic voice, that during the period of Narayan's continuing attacks, Ganesh writes two books that help to "establish his reputation, not only in the country, but also in Port of Spain" and "made his name a household word in Trinidad." (ibid, 164) The first of these 'works' begins with the 'very meaningful' sentences, "On Thursday, May 2, at nine o'clock in the morning, just after I had had breakfast, I saw God. He looked at me and said..." (ibid, 164) The narrator's satirical voice announces that "*What God Told Me* must surely rank as a classic in Trinidad literature." (164) The presentation by the narrator of the second book, which Ganesh publishes two months after the first, constitutes the crown of ridicule and mockery: He calls it a "stupendous success of scandal," (165) the inspiration of which is the musical toilet-roll rack, which Ganesh is so fond of. The narrator continues his mocking satire of Ganesh by announcing that, fortunately for the book, it was published during wartime and thus the title *Profitable Evacuation* was misunderstood. The authorities might not have allowed it to be published had they known that it is "concerned more or less with constipation." (165) The mockery comically continues:

The gist of the book was that evacuation could be made not only pleasurable but profitable, a means of strengthening the abdominal muscles. The system he recommended is roughly that which contortionists and weightlifters call evacuation. (165)

“This,” the narrator remarks, “printed on thick paper, with a cover of brightest yellow decorated with lotus, established Ganesh finally, without question.” (165) The question that this study desires to ask here, is, as what is Ganesh finally established? Considering both examples, the *Guide to Trinidad*, and the latter ‘masterpieces,’ *What God Told* and *Profitable Evacuation*, Ganesh is established, as far as this study is concerned, as a clever trickster-hero on one side, and as a fake-writer, a charlatan, and a mock-hero on the other. Thus the argument that the narrator maintains a “double-perception” of Ganesh is once again established.

The events that lead Ganesh to rise to the colonial politician and to his final transformation to a mimic man, which make up the final episode of the novel, initially portray a Ganesh who has the characteristics of a trickster-hero. In the beginning, Ganesh is unwilling to act against his Rival Narayan, who is preparing for the 1946 elections. Ganesh is the honest “hero of the people” who refuses to enter politics arguing, “I ain’t burning to be one of those crooks who does go up for elections.” (ibid, 166) As always, there is another person who induces Ganesh to act in a certain way. Thus Beharry reports to Ganesh that Narayan has formed a party, the Hindu Association. The narrator again shows a Ganesh who seems scrupulous: “Beharry, you and me know what sort of thing Indian associations is in this place (...).” (166) The narrator confirms Ganesh’s judgement because in the first general meeting of the Hindu Association, where the following posts are elected, corruption is already evident: one president (Narayan), “four Assistant-Presidents, two Vice-Presidents, four Assistant Vice-Presidents; many Treasurers; one Secretary-in-Chief, six Secretaries, twelve Assistant-Secretaries.” (166)

The incident that makes Ganesh to decide to take action against Narayan also supports the view of Ganesh as “the hero of the people.” But even in doing this, it is

“split” by some ridicule. The narrator accounts for Ganesh’s decision to take action against Narayan by two events that have taken place. The first one as always “splits” the heroic action of the Masseur. It is the London *Messenger*’s correspondent’s description of Narayan, in which he “lingers” on such “romantic details” as “chain-smoking, balding C. S. Narayan, veteran journalist.” (171) The ridiculous fact expressed by the narrator is that Ganesh

could take any amount of abuse from Narayan himself. England could, if it wished, think of Narayan as the leader of Trinidad Indians. But that England would read and remember that C. S. Narayan was chain-smoking, balding, and a veteran journalist was more than he could bear. (171)

The second of the two events that the narrator mentions as instigators for Ganesh to take action against Narayan, is the one that rather suits the “hero of the people” more. The Great Belcher comes to Ganesh with the news that Narayan abuses his “The Home for Destitutes Fund,” which he founded through his magazine *The Hindu*. She tells Ganesh that she met Gowry at “Doolarie wedding” where “she start this big bawling and crying about money.” (172) The Great Belcher advises Gowry to “go to Narayan and ask him? He having this fund for destitute.” When The Great Belcher meets Gowry again at “Daulatram funeral” and inquires about whether she has asked Narayan for money, she reports that he told her “everybody think that because he open one little fund he is a rich man.” The apparent charlatan has said further: “Gowry, I poorer than you. How can you look at me and think I is rich? Just last week I had to buy a whole estate for fourteen thousand dollars. Where I go find all that money?” (172) This is followed by, in The Great Belcher’s words, “one long crying and Gowrie say in the end she feel that *he* was going to ask she for money.” (172) This satire of one Trinidad trickster is followed by the satire of the people of Trinidad, when Ganesh asks his aunt, “But how people ain’t making a row about this fund, man?” to which she responds,

Ah, boy, don’t tell me you ain’t know Trinidad. When people give money, you think they care who get it? Once they open they mouth and skin they teeth for a photo in the papers, they happy, you hear. And too besides, you believe they want this thing to come out for people to start laughing at them?” (172)

The “hero of the people” replies, “It ain’t right. I ain’t saying this because I is a mystic and all that, but I think that to any outsider it can’t look right.” (pp. 172-173) Thus Ganesh has been persuaded by his aunt to take action against Narayan, which, considering the above-mentioned motives, looks like a heroic as well as ridiculous act, which once more reflects the narrator’s “double-structured” approach.

As the first step in his action against his rival Narayan, Ganesh starts a newspaper, *The Dharma*, in which Narayan’s Destitutes Fund affair is uncovered so that, in the narrator’s words, “after *The Dharma* came out Narayan didn’t have any chance.” The narrator’s comic and satirical voice explains, “In Trinidad it isn’t polite to look down on a man because you know he handles public funds unwisely. As soon as he is exposed the poor man becomes ridiculous enough, a subject of calypso.” (ibid, 184) The second step of Ganesh against Narayan seems again like a sign for the Masseur’s heroic part of his nature. The *Sentinel* correspondent reports initially that “Pundit Ganesh Ramsumair” is planning the formation of a representative assembly of Trinidad Hindus to be known as the Hindu *League*. This casts shadows of suspicion on Ganesh because it has recently been announced in the *Trinidad Sentinel* that a Hindu industrialist in India has offered thirty thousand dollars for the “cultural uplift” of Trinidad Hindus and that the sum is being kept in trust by the Trinidad Government until it can be handed over to a competent Hindu body.

Pundit Ganesh makes his great surprise in the Inaugural Meeting of the Hindu League at his residence where he announces that, “To get the money, we mustn’t only remove Narayan, we must form one united Hindu body.” (186) The present crowd is astonished and when one of them asks, “But I thought we was going to form the Hindu *League* today.” Ganesh, Ghandi-wise, raises his hand and replies: “I am doing this only for the sake of Hindu unity in Trinidad.” (186) This is an important statement by Ganesh and it should be kept in mind to compare it with the Ganesh who becomes later transformed into the “anglicised”, “mimic” G. Ramsey Muir. The sake of the thirty thousand dollars also raises suspicion about the purity of Ganesh’s intention, but, for the moment, his purpose seems a noble one. In the meeting it is decided that Ganesh’s group is going to take Narayan by surprise by

taking part in the second General Meeting of the Hindu Association, and the Pundit's closing speech seems like that of a "hero of the people": "Remember, is only Narayan we fighting. Remember, is Hindu unity we fighting for." (188)

In the General Meeting of the Hindu Association, the reader encounters a completely different Narayan from what The Great Belcher was told by Gowry. Narayan looks weak and sick and Ganesh says to his followers, "Leave him alone. He finish, the poor man." (ibid, 190) The narrator asserts that Narayan would have fought back if he were not taken so completely by surprise, and that he knew the weakness of his position well. May be this is the reason for his noble withdrawal from his post. Narayan's stance seems noble and strategic at once: "Dissention and dissatisfaction prevail among the rank and file of Hindus in Trinidad today. My friends, I have caused some of that dissension and dissatisfaction. I confess it." Weeping, he adds, "My friends, will you forgive an old man?" (196) Narayan, who is sure of his defeat, in this way secures for himself a dignified retreat. Thus his request from his colleagues is: "My friends, I only want back my self-respect and I want your respect. My friends, I withdraw from public life. ..." (196) While some people weep, and some shout, "Long live Narayan!" one of Ganesh's young companions, who is called "the boy," perhaps, like the child who says that the King is naked, asserts, "A diplomatic son of a bitch, pundit." (ibid, 196) Ganesh, however, as it is put by the narrator, "was wiping away a tear." (196) It is again typical of the narrator that just at the point when the reader is about to announce Narayan a hypocritical scoundrel, it is the tear of Ganesh that maintains the "double-structured" approach of the narrator to this "colonial character".

Ganesh gets elected as the president of the Hindu Association and the content of the cable he sends to All-India Congress, in which he mentions his concern for India's struggle of independence from the British rule, is meaningful in respect to his later state as "colonial yes-man":

KEEP MAHATMAJI IDEALS ALIVE STOP HINDU ASSOCIATION
TRINIDAD WITH YOU INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE STOP BEST
WISHES

GANESH PRESIDENT HINDU ASSOCIATION
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (ibid, 197)

Narayan keeps his word and retires from public life, but Ganesh has to be persuaded by Beharry, Leela, and The Great Belcher to stand up for the elections. Beharry argues, “Narayan did have a little point there, pundit, about religious visionaries. And Sururj Mooma too, she say curing soul go do but it wouldn’t put food in people mouth.” (ibid, 198) The Great Belcher induces, “Oh Ganeshwa, is the word I was waiting for from your mouth. Is your duty to go up and help the poor people.” (199) It should be noted that both characters appeal to the concept of “the hero of the people” in their discourse of persuading Ganesh. This is also a point that will remain a contrast to Ganesh as the “colonial pro-imperial politician”.

The narrator remarks that Ganesh, “fought the cleanest election campaign in Trinidad history. He had no platform. And his posters were the simplest things: GANESH WILL DO WHAT HE CAN, A VOTE FOR GANESH IS A VOTE FOR GOD.” The qualification of “clean” is questionable, because Ganesh uses the Hindu religion for his political ambitions. In another instance for this, Ganesh arranges prayer meetings, instead of election meetings, where he presents his pompous *Road to Happiness* lectures, the books for which have to be carried in three or even four taxis. Ganesh’s method of exploiting these prayer meetings for his personal purpose is put by the narrator as follows:

Quite casually, in the middle of a lecture, he would say in Hindi, ‘It may interest one or two of you in this gathering tonight to hear that I am a candidate for the elections next month. I promise nothing. In everything I shall consult God and my conscience, even at the risk of displeasing you. But that is the way. We were talking you remember, about the transmigration of the soul. Now, this theory was also put forward by a philosopher of Ancient Greece, but I have brought along some books tonight to show you that it is more than likely that the Greek got this idea from India...’ (ibid, 199)

If this is once again an example for Ganesh’s trickery, then another incident that follows soon, provides an image of a forgiving, benevolent Ganesh,

which constitutes a further example for the narrator's "dualistic approach" to the protagonist. When Ganesh comes back home late from a prayer-meeting, he sees his father-in-law, with whom he has not spoken for a long time and who has been working against him together with Narayan in *The Hindu*. While filling in letters for a campaign poster, Ramlogan greets Ganesh casually, "Hello sahib." (202) It is again to Ganesh's credit here, that he receives Ramlogan forgivingly, who opportunistically, in his typically roguish way, has left Narayan after his defeat and intends to join Ganesh, who looks promising of success: "Hello Ramlogan. It have a long time I ain't see you," (202) and asks Leela if she has fed her father yet. This and the following scene of affection between husband and wife seems like an instance where the narrator genuinely shows sympathy towards the protagonist, establishing, when contrasted with his former satire of Ganesh, his double-structured approach to Ganesh. Tears in her eyes, Leela leans on Ganesh, who, the narrator asserts, does not push her away, and Leela says: "Man, is the second time in my life you make me feel proud of you. The first time was the boy and the cloud. Now is with Pa." (ibid, pp. 202-203)

It is in this period after Ganesh is elected M.L.C (Member of the Legislative Council) that the most confusing "transformation" takes place in Ganesh, which is however not such a great surprise if the narrator's "double-structured" approach to the protagonist, as it has been studied in the preceding pages, is considered. At the start, Ganesh is the completely traditional Hindu when he is invited, together with the other members of the new Legislative Council, to a dinner at Government House. He wears dhoti, *koortah*, and turban, which are the traditional Hindu clothes he has been used to wear as a mystic masseur. At home, before coming to the Governor's house, he first refuses to mimic English eating-habits by saying to Leela, "I have to go. But none of the nonsense about knife and fork for me, you hear. Going to eat with my fingers, as always, and I don't care what the Governor or anybody else say." (ibid, 206) However, it is the first sign of "transformation" in Ganesh that, the morning before the dinner, he consults Swami about English eating-manners, who tells him, "This eating with a knife and a fork and a spoon is like a drill man," (ibid, 206) and outlines the technique. The meal

becomes a torture for Ganesh, where he feels, “alien and uncomfortable,” grows “sulkier and sulkier,” refuses all the courses, and even feels as if he was a boy again, “going to the Queen’s Royal College for the first time.” (ibid, 209) The scene he makes when he arrives at home that evening also serves as a very useful element in contrasting this and the soon to follow stage of “transformation” in Ganesh. In stark contrast to the “pro-imperial colonial politician” that he will soon become, Ganesh, at home, in a temper, exclaims, “Just wanted to make a fool of me, ... a fool of me.” (ibid, 209) And it is a sign of “colonial” protest against the “culture of the coloniser”, when he even refuses to accept the ‘act of dining’ as an equivalent for ‘the act of eating,’ by ordering Leela to prepare food for him; and the dichotomy of ‘dining’ and ‘eating’ is emphasized when he answers Leela’s question: “But man, I thought you was *dining* with the Governor,” with, “Don’t make joke girl. Done dine. Want to eat now. Going to show them.” (209) The contrast becomes even more evident when Ganesh is narrated to repeat, “Going to show them,” (209) as “his fingers plough through the rice, *dal*, and curry.”

The final stage of Ganesh’s transformation, aptly named in the title of the final chapter as: *M.L.C. to M.B.E.*, is also shaped by a “double-structure”. On one pole of this structure, Ganesh plays the role of, in the Colonial Office’s report’s wording, “an irresponsible agitator,” or from the perspective of the public it may be described as the role of “the hero of the people,” and on the other side the role of the “colonial pro-empirical politician”. In other words, this is again the “dichotomy” of ‘the hero’ versus ‘the villain.’

Before starting to describe the first part of this “double-structure”, it has to be noted that even in this part there are minor “ambivalent structures”. Shortly after Ganesh is elected an M.L.C. he decides to move to Port of Spain. This means that his profession of the Mystic Masseur has come to an end. Beharry puts the following reason for this: “Is go Ganesh have to go. He do his duty here and God call him somewhere else.” (ibid, 210) It is not difficult, remembering how Ganesh has developed materially by the use of his trickery, to interpret “his duty” here, and “his duty” somewhere else in an ironical way. Ganesh might have this in mind when he

replies: "I wish the whole thing did never happen. I wish I did never become a mystic!" (210) "Double-vision" represented by Beharry, however, defends Ganesh: "Is only talk you talking, Ganesh. Is hard, I know, to leave a place after eleven years, but look at Fuente Grove now. New road. My new shop. Stand-pipe. We getting electricity next year. All through you." (pp. 210-211) When Ganesh and Leela leave Fuente Grove, their house is described as follows: "The verandah was naked; the doors and windows open; on the balustrade the two stone elephants stared in opposite directions." (211) The two elephants that stare in opposite directions can be interpreted as highly significant symbols of Ganesh's "dual nature" of hero and villain, especially when it is considered that in Hindu religious culture the elephant statue stands for the elephant God Ganesha, the god of success.

Significant also, is that Ganesh stops wearing dhoti and turban shortly before moving to Port of Spain, as he is more and more absorbed in politics, which only confirms the argument that Ganesh is an opportunist who only uses Hinduism as a mask to serve for his ambitions. So, after moving to Port of Spain, Ganesh drops Indology, religion, and psychology and buys large books on political theory. However, Ganesh's actions in politics in the first part of the "double-structure" which has been mentioned above, win him again credit as a "hero of the people." He is constantly photographed by the papers leading aggrieved taxi-drivers or scavengers or fish-vendors to the Red House. He never goes to a cock-tail party, or a dinner at Government House and he is always ready to present a petition to the Governor. He exposes scandal after scandal, and he is always ready to do a favour for any member of the public, rich or poor. The narrator's ironic voice adds that "For such favours his fees were never high." Like Ganesh the Mystic Masseur, he says to the people, "you must only give what you can afford." (ibid, 213) The narrator further remarks that other colonial politicians like Primrose or the Christian convert have high fixed rates, go to every cock-tail party at Government House, and wear dinner-jackets. Although neither of the two really represents their constituency, the Christian owns most of his, and Primrose has become so wealthy that he "has to be knighted." (214) The implication of what has been described here is that Ganesh, compared to his social environment, deserves credit as a sort of "hero of the people,"

because he is not like the other trickster characters such as Primrose and the Christian. The minor “duality” in this instance, however, is that he still stands there with his opportunism and his little trickeries.

The final step towards Ganesh’s complete “transformation” to the “colonial pro-imperial mimic politician” also looks like an act of opportunism, although the text explains it by the failure Ganesh experiences when he mediates in a strike of sugar estates workers. Contrary to Ganesh’s earlier methods of resolving crises - the kedgere ceremony, Ranlogan’s taxi-service, and the Narayan affair might be remembered - Ganesh completely ruins this case. When the strike-leader calls Ganesh to talk, announcing, “Brothers and sisters, I now ask the man of good and God,” Ganesh, the narrator reports, “Stupidly, completely missed his cue. He forgot that he was talking to a crowd of impatient strikers as a man of good and God.” (ibid, 216) Instead, he talks as though he was addressing the easy-going crowd in the Legislative Council. The incident turns into a disaster, where the strike committee is badly beaten up, but Ganesh escapes. To excuse Ganesh somewhat, it has to be said, however, that the strike-committee was bribed and that the strike was nothing else than a lock-out during the slack season. This fact, again puts Ganesh into a “double-light”, as has been observed so many times before in this chapter.

Nevertheless, this incident, in the second part of the above-mentioned “double-structure” in the final stage of Ganesh’s career, marks Ganesh’s opportunistic u-turn to the “pro-imperial politician”, which Dolly Z. Hassan interprets as the result of the idea that “success in this world can be achieved only by assuming Western norms and by using subterfuge.” (Hassan, 1989: p. 122) After the strike-disaster, Ganesh calls a Press conference and announces that Providence has “opened his eyes to the errors of his ways.” He further adds that “From now on I pledge my life for to the fight against communism in Trinidad and the rest of the free world.” (ibid, 218) From then on, Ganesh never performs his acts of protest in the council again. He goes to cocktail parties at Government House, drinks lemonade, and wears a dinner-jacket to official dinners. Interesting to note is, that once Ganesh has started to conform to the coloniser’s way of life, the Colonial Office reports in

1949 that Ganesh is an important political leader, while before he has been described as an irresponsible agitator with no following. The reader finds it difficult to believe, when the narrator tells that Ganesh presents a memorable defence of British colonial rule at Lake Success, where he is sent by the British Government in 1950. The narrator further announces that, "The Government of Trinidad, realizing that after that Ganesh stood little chance of being elected at the 1950 General Elections, nominated him to the Legislative Council and arranged for him to be a member of the Executive Council," which indicates the probability that Ganesh chose to act in this manner for his opportunistic aims, that is, to secure his career and future, as he must have realized that he has no more chance to be re-elected in the next elections, which would mean his ruin, since he has no proper profession.

After the reader is informed by the narrator, in the final sentence of the novel, that the British Government has rewarded Ganesh's 'loyalty' to the British colonial rule by making him an M.B.E. in 1953, an epilogue presents the reader with the completely "anglicised colonial mimic politician". The narrator reports his experience, when he is a student at an English university. One morning the Colonial Office asks him, if he would be willing to entertain G. R. Muir, Esq., M.B.E., a statesman from his own territory. The narrator, who agrees - he has to be imagined with one leg at the train-station - gives a shout of joy: "Pundit Ganesh! Pundit Ganesh Ramsumair!" Ganesh replies coldly, "G. Ramsay Muir."

Throughout this Chapter, it has been argued that the narrator applies a "double-structured" approach to the protagonist Ganesh, which has been concretised by the main-character's apparent "dual" attributes of heroism and villainism. This study maintains that this is in accordance with that part of Bhabha's theory which argues that the "coloniser's discourse" on the "colonial's inferiority" is not as self-confident as it may seem, but that it is "split" and "ambivalent", as Bhabha has exemplified by the "stereotypes" in the "coloniser's discourse". In the Introduction chapter, Bhabha's following example for this has been cited: when the "stereotypes" used by the "coloniser" are more closely examined, it becomes clear that their ambivalent use shakes the "coloniser's authority."

The claim of this study is that Naipaul's narrator has applied a similar ambivalent discourse on his main-character Ganesh, which has been studied throughout this Chapter. It may be objected that Naipaul is not a "coloniser"; on the contrary, he is a "colonial". However, this study argues that, because Naipaul's narrator satirises the "colonial subject" and society, and not the "coloniser" and his society, Naipaul's discourse of satire can be used to act in the same way as the "discourse of the coloniser". Thus Ganesh appears in the novel as both, hero and villain, honest politician and opportunist, clever trickster and forgiving son-in-law. Just as the "ambivalent", "split", and "polymorphous" use of the "stereotype" by the "coloniser" "disrupts" his authority, so the "dual vision", or the "ambivalent approach" of Naipaul's narrator to the colonial society and individuals "shakes" his authority and diverts his criticism to the "coloniser".

CHAPTER II

DOUBLE VISIONS IN *A HOUSE FOR MR BISWAS*

A House for Mr. Biswas was published three years after *The Mystic Masseur* and is widely considered to be Naipaul's masterpiece. An indicator for the influence of this work can be discerned in Dolly Z. Hassan's statement that *Mr Biswas** is "now studied in Guyanese, Trinidadian, and Jamaican schools." (Hassan, 1989: p.108) Hassan, who studied the West Indian response to Naipaul's work in her *V.S. Naipaul and the West Indies*, further maintains that "*A House for Mr Biswas* (1961) firmly established him as the author of what many critics consider one of the greatest twentieth century novels in English," adding that "even in the Caribbean, where he was beginning to be regarded as an unfaithful son, readers have generally made an exception of this novel in their condemnation of his brand of satire." (ibid, p.147) John Thieme confirms Hassan's view when he argues that, "Nothing in Naipaul's early fiction quite prepares one for *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), a novel which many critics regard as his masterpiece." (Thieme, 1987: p. 52) Bruce King praises *A House for Mr. Biswas* as "Naipaul's first major novel" which "belongs with such classics of the new English literatures as Patrick White's *Voss* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*..." (King, 1993: p. 36)

This novel of Naipaul, which is set again in Trinidad, will be studied, similarly to the first Chapter, to reveal the "dual vision", or in other words, the "ambivalence" in Naipaul's critical approach to the protagonist, as well as other characters and the society as a whole, depicted in *Mr. Biswas*. Other critics have also noted this "dual vision" in *Mr. Biswas*. Thus John Thieme argues that "*Mr. Biswas* is both an elegiac lament for the now irrevocably lost 'pastoral' Hindu world of the opening and a satirical critique of the older Hindu way of life." (Thieme, 1987: p. 91) Thieme further emphasizes the "dichotomy" inherent in *Mr. Biswas* when he states that "... it is possible to read the novel as being primarily concerned with his love-

hate relationship with the Hindu world into which he has been born.” (ibid, p. 61) Fawzia Mustafa points to a similar dichotomy when she maintains that in *Mr. Biswas* “The resilience and resistance of East Indian familial custom emerges as the social web that both protects and inhibits the social mobility of its adherents.” (Mustafa, 1995: p. 60) Peggy Nightingale too is aware of a double-nature in this work, which she puts as a “dichotomy” between tragedy and optimism:

Like the earlier fiction, this novel chronicles and exposes flaws in Trinidad society, but this time, in spite of humorous treatment of separate incidents and characters, the effect of the society as a whole on an individual’s life is seen as deeply tragic. And yet, Mohun Biswas’s struggle for self-respect and freedom provides one of the most optimistic notes in Naipaul’s writing. (Nightingale, 1987: p. 44)

Nightingale has rightly put here that *Mr. Biswas* “chronicles and exposes flaws in Trinidad society.” It has been shown in the first Chapter that in *The Mystic Masseur* too, Trinidad society was satirised. The difference, however, between the two works is that in the latter, Ganesh, the protagonist of the text, was the centre of satire and irony. In the former, however, as will be illustrated in this Chapter, Mohun Biswas, the protagonist of this text, is not a centre of satire and irony. The focus of satire and irony here, has shifted rather to the immediate society that surrounds Mr. Biswas. Notwithstanding this difference between the two novels, the study of this novel will show that even if the focus of satire has shifted in *Mr. Biswas*, the “ambivalent” approach of Naipaul towards the society and individuals he criticises is still present.

Even the structure of the novel seems to point to a “double-vision”, because, as Hassan observes, the text is “Symmetrically structured with a Prologue, two major parts with six and seven chapters respectively, and an Epilogue (...).” (Hassan, 1989: p. 147) Both Prologue and Epilogue, mention the death of Mr. Biswas, but both contain elements of hope, implying the coupling of tragedy and optimism which Nightingale has been cited to recognise. Fawzia Mustafa also has

* *A House For Mr Biswas* will from now on be referred to as *Mr Biswas*.

noticed this point when she argues that “Despite the novel’s opening statement of Mohun Biswas’ death, the first few paragraphs record the narrative’s only sustained moments of satisfaction.” (Mustafa, 1995: p. 59) It is indeed significant that the first sentence of the first of the “prologue-epilogue couple” starts with the mention of Mr. Biswas’ death: “Ten weeks before he died, Mr Mohun Biswas, a journalist of Sikkim Street, St James, Port of Spain, was sacked.” (Naipaul, 1961: p. 7) It is significant because it presents, right at the start, a sad note to the reader. The note of pessimism continues when the narrator relates that the forty-six-year-old Mr. Biswas,

had no money. His wife Shama had no money. On the house in Sikkim Street Mr Biswas owed, and had been owing for four years, three thousand dollars. The interest on this, at eight per cent, came to twenty dollars a month; the ground rent was ten dollars. Two children were at school. The two older children, on whom Mr Biswas might have depended, were both abroad on scholarships. (Naipaul, 1961: p. 7)

The narrator’s “dual-vision” shows itself in the next paragraph where the pessimism of the previous passage promptly turns into optimism:

It gave Mr Biswas some satisfaction that in the circumstances Shama did not run straight off to her mother to beg for help. Ten years before that would have been her first thought. Now she tried to comfort Mr Biswas, and devised plans of her own. (ibid: p. 7)

Another point that gives reason for more optimism is that, shortly before Biswas’s death, after the purchase of the house, he and his wife Shama have made huge progress in their relationship:

He had grown to accept her judgement and to respect her optimism. He trusted her. Since they had moved to the house Shama had learned a new loyalty to him and to their children; away from her mother and sisters, she was able to express this without shame, and to Mr Biswas this was a triumph almost as big as the acquiring of his own house. (ibid: p. 8)

So, Mr. Biswas, in his final weeks, has attained two triumphs: a house of his own, and the loyalty (in the sense described above) of his wife. But the “double-vision” of Naipaul is evident in the way Biswas’s triumph of owning his own house is presented in the prologue, as well as the epilogue. Thus, in the prologue, the narrator conveys the enormous importance that Biswas attaches to owning this house by remarking that:

He thought of the house as his own, though for years it had been irretrievably mortgaged. And during these months of illness and despair he was struck again and again by the wonder of being in his own house, the audacity of it: to walk in through his own front gate, to bar entry to whoever he wished, (...). And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his own half-lot of land, his own portion of the earth. That he should have been responsible for this seemed to him, in the last months, stupendous. (ibid, p. 8)

This achievement of Mr. Biswas, however, is not only marred by the fact that the house is irretrievably mortgaged, but that it has numerous flaws: On the ground floor of the two-storey house, between the kitchen and the dining room there is a doorway, but no door. To link both floors, a rough wooden staircase, heavy planks on an uneven frame with one warped unpainted banister, the whole covered with a sloping roof of corrugated iron, hangs precariously at the back of the house, in striking contrast with the white-pointed brickwork of the front, the white woodwork and the frosted glass of doors and windows. The house faces west and has no protection from the sun, so in the afternoon only two “rooms” are comfortably habitable: the kitchen downstairs and the wet bathroom and lavatory upstairs. In addition to this dangerous staircase, the upper floor sags; there is no back door; most of the windows do not close; one door cannot open; and bats can enter the attic through gaps under the eaves.

However, in spite of all these negative facts, the narrator soon inserts his optimistic vision: He notes that the Biswas family soon accommodates itself to every peculiarity and awkwardness of the house. Once this happens their eyes cease to be

critical and the house becomes simply their house. The prologue ends with the narrator's statement of this positive part of the narrator's "double-vision":

How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it: to have died among the Tulsis, amid the squalor of that large, disintegrating and indifferent family; to have left Shama and the children among them, in one room; worse, to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one's portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated. (ibid, pp. 13-14)

This paragraph again stresses the importance for Mr. Biswas of having been able to possess this house, however much it is flawed. A realistic evaluation of the circumstances of the house's purchase shows that Mr. Biswas, at the end of a life-long struggle for his own "portion of the earth," has been cheated by the solicitor's clerk, who sold him the house. For the amount of five-thousand and five-hundred dollars he could have bought a much better house. But, as has been stated by the narrator above, the achievement of Biswas lies in the fact that he at least attempted to lay claim to his own portion of the earth. And this sequence of opposing views about Biswas's condition of owning his own house again points to the "narrator's double-vision".

This "double-structured" approach of the narrator is also present in the Prologue's "double", the Epilogue. The Epilogue is not only the Prologue's symmetrical, and thus structural "double", but it also carries thematic parallels to it. However, as the Prologue naturally gives information, in advance, about the novel, and the Epilogue completes lacking information about the final stage in Mr. Biswas's life, the latter will be studied at the end of this Chapter.

It has previously been indicated that a "double-structure" is evident even in the structural form of the novel, consisting of two main parts, each being made up of six and seven chapters respectively. This fact is important for this study because it focuses on "double-structures", being based on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of "ambivalence", which, by its very nature, contains "double-meanings", "double-

structures”, “double-visions”, etc. Apart from having formally a “double-structure”, the two major parts of the novel also contain a thematic “double-vision”. The first major part of the novel passes in the rural part of Trinidad, while the second passes in Port of Spain, one of the major cities in Trinidad. John Thieme’s statement that Biswas’s move to Port of Spain in the second part “is reflective of the Trinidad Indian’s journey from country innocence to city experience” (Thieme, 1987: p. 67) also supports the idea of a “double-theme” in the two parts of the novel.

The first major part of the text can also be divided into two phases: as the title of the Second Chapter, “Before the Tulsis,” also indicates, this part contains two phases of Mr. Biswas’s life: before, and after the Tulsis. The first part of this “double-structure” starts with a theme that indicates that Gordon Rohlehr’s description of the themes of Naipaul’s two earlier novels *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Suffrage of Elvira* as “A situation of superstition, ignorance, knavery and self-interest,” which “is presented as the reality in Trinidad social and political life,” (Rohlehr, 1968: p. 123) is also true for *Mr Biswas*.

The beginning of the novel shows that especially superstition and ignorance is part of social life in the rural East-Indian community of Trinidad. Thus when Mr. Biswas is born six-fingered, in the wrong way, and at midnight, the midwife shrieks, together with the new-born baby, because these are considered signs of bad luck and she claims that “this boy will eat up his own mother and father.”(Naipaul, 1961: p.16) The pundit, who is called later and who strongly reminds of pundit Ganesh, in his uncertain manner, first informs the family that the boy will be a lecher, a spendthrift, and possibly a liar, because he will have rather wide teeth with gaps between them. The sixth finger the pundit interprets as “a shocking sign, of course.” (ibid: p.16) But as, according to the pundit, “there are always ways and means of getting over these unhappy things,” (ibid, p. 16) he advises that the child has to stay away from natural sources of water such as rivers, ponds, and the sea. Inconvenient superstition does not end here. The pundit reads in his astrological almanac that baby Mr. Biswas will have an unlucky sneeze. The restrictive consequence of this will be

that whenever the baby sneezes in the mornings before his father Raghu has left the house to work on the sugar estates, Raghu stays at home that day.

This is obviously the narrator's criticism against Hindu Indian customs in Trinidad and it constitutes the darker side of his "double-vision" in this part of the novel. The narrator's criticism culminates in this episode when he combines a pond and Biswas's "unlucky" sneeze in an accident where Raghu dies drowning in the pond. The narrator makes sure, however, that the reader learns that Raghu's death is a pure accident and that Mr. Biswas's sixth finger has got a natural explanation like malnutrition, making his criticism even more stinging.

Before this study continues with the next episode of the narrator's criticism it has to be said that this stage in Mr. Biswas's life is important, because it marks the time when Mr. Biswas, for the first time in his life, misses a great chance, and it will later be seen that he always misses chances. Much unlike Ganesh Ramsameir, Biswas cannot take his share from the wealth coming from oil on his family's ground. After his father's death in the pond, his mother Bipti sells their ground with the family's hut on it and it is later discovered that there is oil on that ground. After this loss of house and fortune, it will take Mr. Biswas a lifetime to own his own mortgaged, flawed house.

In the next instance of criticism against Hindu Indians, the narrator's critical eye catches Lal, the teacher at the Canadian Mission School. The character Lal is of interest for this study because he clearly resembles missionary Grant's "partly reformed" Indian, or Macaulay's "class of interpreters, Indian in colour and blood, but English in manner and tastes", that have been mentioned in the Introduction as part of the analysis of Bhabha's theory of "mimicry" and "ambivalence". Lal has converted from Hinduism to Presbyterianism, but that is not the thing about him that the narrator seems to be criticising. He has created a particularly unattractive character here; Lal has converted from a low Hindu caste and feels contempt for all unconverted Hindus. As a result of this contempt, he speaks to them in broken English. Thus he asks Mr. Biswas: "How old you is, boy?"

(...) How you people want to get on, eh? (...) Tomorrow I want you to bring your birth certificate, you hear?" (ibid, pp. 41-42) The significance of the character Lal is that it provides an instance that once again uncovers the "double-vision" of the narrator. From one point of view, he criticises here a fellow Indian who, having converted from a low Hindu caste, looks down on his fellow countrymen. From another viewpoint, however, it is a criticism of Grant's and Macaulay's "reformed Indians", a criticism not of the "Indian in blood and colour", but of the Indian who is "English in manners and tastes", and thus, may be regarded as a criticism of "English colonialism".

Another example for the narrator's "ambivalent attitude" can be perceived when Biswas's mother Bipti and aunt Tara go to the Muslim solicitor F. Z. Ghany to have him issue a birth certificate for Mr. Biswas. On the surface, this scene is about the breaking of a social rule of politeness which is expressed in Ghany's thoughts, as conveyed by the narrator: "He disliked the way Indian women had of using Hindi as a secret language in public places, (...)." (ibid, p. 43) The two women's speaking in Hindi is skilfully shown by Naipaul without any loss of meaning for the reader of English, in the following way: After Ghany's inquiry about the date of "birth," the narrator describes: "Bipti told Tara in Hindi, 'I can't really say. But pundit Sitaram should know. He cast Mohun's horoscope the day after he was born.'" (ibid, p. 43) As Peggy Nightingale also notes, "Naipaul presents conversation in dialect if it is conducted in English and in formal English if the speakers use Hindi." (Nightingale, 1987: p. 50) Thus the Hindi conversation here is conveyed in Standard English, and what might be interpreted as a criticism of the bad manners of Hindu Indians, can also be seen as a sort of "resistance" to the "colonial practice" of "displacing people" like East-Indians and placing them into the completely alien environment of the Caribbean island of Trinidad.

The narrator's criticism of Hindu Indians continues in the following episodes when Mohun Biswas is "victimised" by Pundit Jairam and Bhandat, respectively, before he becomes the "victim" of Mrs. Tulsi and her brother-in-law Seth. That Mr. Biswas is a "victim" has also been expressed by John Thieme who

argues that “He is a ‘little man’ who is doubly disadvantaged, victim of both his lowly social status *and* his colonial situation.” (Thieme, 1987: p. 70) It is his aunt Tara who decides that Mr. Biswas should leave school after six years of attendance and start an apprenticeship at Pundit Jairam’s. The passage by the narrator who tells about this event can be seen as another instance of the narrator’s “double-vision”, because it criticises both the “colonial educational system” and Tara’s attitude, thus the “coloniser” and the “colonised”. On the one hand the narrator’s comment suggests that, as Thieme puts it, “the curriculum is equally irrelevant to both pupil and master,” (ibid, p. 79) and on the other hand it implicitly criticises Mr. Biswas’s aunt Tara for ending his education too soon:

And just when Mr Biswas was beginning to do stocks and shares, transactions as unreal to Lal as they were to him, and was learning ‘Bingen on the Rhine’ from *Bell’s Standard Elocutionist* for the visit of the school inspector, he was taken out of school by Tara and told that he was going to be made a pundit. (Naipaul, 1961: p. 50)

Tara’s action seems even more wrong when the episode with Pundit Jairam is considered. Pundit Jairam’s portrait by the narrator is that of a selfish, bad-humored old man. His conduct, for instance during the ceremony of being fed by the devout, does not really fit to that of a holy man: “... and when Jairam had eaten and belched and asked for more and eaten again it was Mr Biswas who mixed the bicarbonate of soda for him.” (ibid, p. 51) Another irreverent description of the Pundit occurs when Mr. Biswas collects the coins offered at the shrine by the devout and brings them to Jairam who “would have Mr Biswas away without looking at him,” (p.51) because there are other people around. However, as soon as they get home, the “holy” Pundit asks Mohun for the money, counts it, and even feels Biswas all over “to make sure he hadn’t kept anything back.” (p. 52) In another instance, Jairam is portrayed in a particularly negative way, when Mr. Biswas eats two bananas from a large bunch of the fruits which have been offered as a gift to the “holy” man. As a punishment Jairam makes Mr. Biswas eat seven bananas in a row, as a result of which Mr. Biswas gets sick in his stomach. Mr. Biswas also becomes constipated because of the bananas and this leads to the event that gives an end to his stay at Jairam’s. Because of his constipation Mr. Biswas has irregular calls of Nature

and at one of these calls, in the middle of the night, he is afraid to go to the latrine and he also does not want to disturb Jairam, who is extremely fussy about his sleep. The 'solution' Mr. Biswas finds is to relieve himself into one of his handkerchiefs and throw the bundle out of the window. The next morning Jairam is in a rage because Mr. Biswas's handkerchief has fallen on Jairam's cherished oleander tree, the flowers of which can never be used at the religious *puja* ceremony.

The narrator's satire of Hindu superstition becomes very biting at this point when Jairam shouts to Mr. Biswas:

You will never make a pundit. I was talking the other day to Sitaram, who read your horoscope. You killed your father. I am not going to let you destroy me. Sitaram particularly warned me to keep you away from trees. Go on, pack your bundle. (p. 56)

The dramatic irony is that the reader knows that Mr. Biswas sixth finger was a consequence of his malnutrition, the death of his father in the pond an accident, and the handkerchief on the tree another accident, that has resulted indirectly from Jairam's lack of tolerance. For his criticism of the Hindu society the narrator uses this dramatic irony as well as the daring image of the combination of Mr. Biswas's excrements and the holy oleander tree. This latter instance of the narrator's boldness in his satire shows perhaps why Naipaul can sometimes face harsh criticism in the third world.

Another example where Mr. Biswas is "victimised" by a roguish Hindu Trinidadian can be found in the episode where Mr. Biswas starts to work in Ajodha's rum shop, which is run by Ajodha's brother Bhandat. Bhandat truly deserves to be called a rogue because he drinks, beats his wife, and keeps a mistress. While working in the shop, Mr. Biswas also notices that Bhandat serves customers short measures of rum when they are drunk and puts the money of one drink into his pocket when he thinks that he has saved the price of one. One day, when Bhandat is drunk and thinks that Mr. Biswas has stolen one Dollar from his pocket (one has to consider that Mr. Biswas earns two Dollars a month) he beats Mr. Biswas mercilessly with his belt, until he howls: "O God! O God! My eye! My eye!" (p. 65) Later Tara tells that

Bhandat is sorry, because the missing Dollar was at the bottom of his trouser pocket, which he has not noticed.

This episode of Mr. Biswas's "victimisation" is important because it provides another example for the argument that Naipaul criticises the "colonised", instead of the "coloniser". Here, the "victimiser" is not the "coloniser", but the "colonised" himself. Naipaul seems to say that it is the "colonised" who "victimise" themselves, not the "coloniser". On the other hand, there seems to lurk the narrator's "double vision" in Mr. Biswas's crying: "You see Ma. I have no father to look after me and people can treat me how they want." (p. 67) The implication in this statement by the "victimised" Mr. Biswas may be that it is the "displacement" of these people by the "colonisers" onto this strange island, far away from their relatives, that can cause an orphan like Mr. Biswas to be unprotected and "victimised".

It is under these circumstances that Mr. Biswas determines to find a job and get his own house too. Ironically, this determination marks the beginning of Mr. Biswas's next "victimisation". As Mr. Biswas's life before the Tulsis comes to an end, he, unknowingly, prepares himself to become the "victim" of the Tulsis. Thus Biswas's "victimhood" serves the narrator to carry on his satire on the Hindu Indians in Trinidad.

Mr. Biswas's entry into Hanuman House, the house of the Tulsis which is named after the "benevolent monkey-god Hanuman," happens as a sign-painter. The "victimisation" of Mr. Biswas and satire of a Hindu individual starts right at the beginning, when Biswas is interviewed by Mrs. Tulsi's brother-in-law Seth for the job of painting signs for the Tulsi Store. Seth's attitude, as he bargains for the payment of the job, presents a striking example for the narrator's ironical satire:

Seth had beaten down Mr Biswas's price and said that Mr Biswas was getting the job only because he was an Indian; he had beaten it down a little further and said that Mr Biswas could count himself lucky to be a Hindu; he had beaten it down yet further and said that signs were not really needed but were commissioned from Mr Biswas only because he was a Brahmin. (pp. 81-82)

The irony here obviously is, that what should have been a triple advantage for Biswas, being an Indian, Hindu, and Brahmin at once, is turned into a triple disadvantage by Seth, a fellow countryman and fellow sufferer of the “coloniser’s displacing” of people.

Mr. Biswas will continue to be “victimised” at Hanuman House, but the narrator’s “double-vision” seems to be active when it is made clear, through Mr. Biswas’s actions, that he makes his own contributions to his on-coming disaster. At Hanuman House Biswas meets his future wife Shama, and back in Pagotes he tells Bhandat’s son Alec proudly: “I got a girl in Arwacas.” (p. 83) The fact that, in the narrator’s words, “The news of the girl at Arwacas spread and Mr Biswas enjoyed some glory at Pagotes...” and the intervention of Bhandat’s younger son who says: “I feel you lying like hell.” (p. 83) are elements initiated by Mr. Biswas himself, which push him towards his resented union with the Tulsi family. Thus, these circumstances induce him the next day to carry a note in his pocket with the intention to give it to Shama, a note which symbolises the start of his miserable existence as a Tulsi in-law.

The episode of Mr. Biswas’s being pushed into his marriage with Shama after Mrs. Tulsi catches his note saying “I love you and I want to talk to you,” (p. 85) also contains clear signs of “ambivalence”. During the unpleasant moment when Seth tells Biswas that Mrs. Tulsi wants to see him before he leaves, the Tulsi store is described as “dark and warm and protected.” (p. 86) Besides being “dark, warm, and protected,” however, the Tulsi properties are described quite negatively. For instance the hall of Hanuman House has got a pale green paint that has grown dim and dingy. The timbers reveal the damage of woodlice, which, again in an “ambivalent” way, “left wood looking so new where it was rotten.” (p. 87) The description of the kitchen is especially negative: the doorway gapes black; soot stains the walls and the ceiling; blackness seems to “fill the kitchen like a solid blackness.” (p. 87)

After the interview with Mrs. Tulsi and Seth, where they manipulate Mr. Biswas to agree to marry Shama despite their statement that, “We don’t want to force you to do anything. Are we forcing you?” (p. 90) it is indicated that “how often in the years to come, (...) how often did Mr Biswas regret his weakness, his inarticulateness, that evening.” (p. 91) This feeling of regret in Biswas, however, has been “split” right at the beginning of the event: the narrator states that Mr. Biswas, when cycling back to Pagotes that evening, “actually felt elated!” (p. 92) And this is so although he is stated to have been “overpowered and frightened by Seth and Mrs. Tulsi and all the Tulsi women and children; they were strange and had appeared too strong; he wanted nothing so much then as to be free of that house.” (p. 92) The opposite feeling to this in Mr. Biswas is that “But now the elation he felt was not that of relief. He felt he had been involved in large events. He felt he had achieved status.” (p. 92) The “double-vision”, and thus “ambivalence”, inherent here is the opposition between the feeling of utter regret and the one of elation and achieving status. Hanuman House and the Tulsi family are centres of both darkness, decay, and regret, and warmth, protection, elation and achieving status.

The episode that depicts Mr. Biswas’s painful process of getting formally married to Shama and moving to Hanuman House also shows the above mentioned “double-structure” of the Tulsi House, along with criticism of the Tulsis’ opportunism. The following passage is an apt example for this opportunism:

After a brief ceremony at the registrar’s, as make-believe as a child’s game, with paper flowers in dissimilar vases on a straw-coloured, official-looking desk, Mr Biswas and Shama were given part of a long room on the top floor of the wooden house. (p. 96)

During the days after the wedding at the registrar’s Mr. Biswas wonders about the Tulsis’ plans about a dowry, house or job for Mr. Biswas, but the fact turns out to be that they have none. Normally, the Hindu custom would be that women live with their husband’s families and that the son-in-law gets a dowry. However, as Mr. Biswas has no job and house and the Tulsis need a high caste husband for their daughter Shama, the Tulsis follow the rule of opportunism by reversing the Hindu custom and give the bride-groom food and shelter in return for a wedding without a

dowry and a high-caste son-in-law. As the narrator notes: “Mr Biswas had no money or position. He was expected to become a Tulsi.” (p. 97)

This is of course a humorous sort of criticism by Naipaul’s narrator and can be appreciated as being so, particularly in the culture of the country where this study is being carried out. However, the “ambivalence” involved in this criticism is again of importance for this study. Although Biswas might receive sympathy from the reader when the narrator indicates that “At once he rebelled” (p. 97) because Mr. Biswas finds out that he is expected to become a Tulsi, there is also some justification in the following statement by Shama: “Yes, take up your clothes and go’, Shama said, ‘You came to this house with nothing but a cheap pair of khaki trousers and a dirty old shirt.” (p. 98) An orphan with no wealth at all receives a wife, shelter and food in return for his caste and his Hindu pride; this is indeed an issue that attracts “ambivalent interpretation”.

“Ambivalence” remains to be an issue as Mr. Biswas starts his rebellion against the Tulsi family, shortly after he has moved to Hanuman House. As part of his first move against the Tulsis, Mr. Biswas approaches Govind, the husband of his sister-in-law, in his search to build an alliance against the family. He tells him about the names he has invented for the leading family members. The two sons of the family he calls “gods,” Seth is the “Big Boss,” and Mrs. Tulsi he calls “the old queen,” “the old hen,” and “the old cow.” (p. 104) When Govind recommends Mr. Biswas to work on the family’s estate as a driver, Mr. Biswas proudly refuses to give up his “independence”: “Give up sign-painting? And my independence? No boy. My motto is: paddle your own canoe.” (p. 107) It soon turns out, however, that Mr. Biswas’s “ally” has reported everything to the leadership of the family and it is here that again “ambivalence” surfaces, as Seth accuses Mr. Biswas:

This is gratitude. You come here, penniless, a stranger. We take you in, we give you one of our daughters, we feed you, we give you a place to sleep in. You refuse to help in the store, you refuse to help on the estate. All right. But then to turn around and insult us! (p. 109)

Interestingly, the “ambivalence” of the situation makes the reader partly agree with Seth’s point, just as Mr. Biswas views “his blasphemies,” for a short period of time, as “acts of the blackest ingratitude.” (p. 111) But the opposing point of view comes into action when Mr. Biswas abruptly loses his temper: “The whole pack of you could go to hell!” he shouted. ‘I not going to apologize to one of the damn lot of you.’” (p.111) This leaves the reader in his “ambivalent” stance towards this situation: it is rather impossible to support any of the two parties. Both can be regarded as only fellow sufferers and “victims” of the “colonial system”.

As Mr. Biswas continues his campaign against the Tulsis, the “double-vision” or, what has been called “ambivalence” above, remains an outstanding feature of interpretation for the reader, who faces again the difficulty to decide who of the two parties is more justified. In his next step against the Tulsi family, Mr. Biswas brings opposing religious ideas to Hanuman House. These ideas Biswas takes from the Aryan sect of Hinduism, a movement that preaches that caste is unimportant, that Hinduism should accept converts, that idols should be abolished, that women should be educated, all being “doctrines the orthodox Tulsis held dear.” (p. 115) However, these reformist ideas, which, by their own attractiveness, seem to suggest that the author is a supporter of them, are dealt with in such a way that it is not at all clear which party Naipaul’s narrator actually supports.

For instance, the Aryan movement, however attractive it appears, is presented to have flaws. One of the leaders of the movement, Pankaj Rai, described by Misir as “not one of those illiterate Trinidad pundits, ... a BA and a LLB into the bargain,” (pp. 115-116) is involved in a scandal and nobody ever hears from him again. Under Misir’s guidance, during one of their Aryan meetings, they pass resolutions, that education is important, that child marriage should be abolished, and that young people should choose their own spouses. For Misir, “the present system is nothing more than cat-in-bag.” (p. 121) But when Misir hears from Mr. Biswas that he has not married “cat-in-bag,” but has seen the girl first, he is outraged: “You mean they let you see the child first?” (p. 121)

Also an escalation of tension, caused by Mr. Biswas as part of his campaign against the Tulsis, leaves the reader in doubt about who to sympathise with. Mr. Biswas raises tension in the house when he criticises the Tulsis for sending their son to a Catholic college and makes the “elder god” cry, causing Mrs. Tulsi, also called Mai, to have one of her attacks of fainting. It is usually one of the sons-in-law who cause Mai to faint and in such a situation he is expected to behave in a certain way, humorously described by the narrator:

He was hounded by silence and hostility. If he attempted to make friendly talk many glances instantly reproved him for his frivolity. If he moped in a corner or went up to his room he was condemned for his callousness and ingratitude. He was expected to stay in the hall and show all the signs of contrition and unease. (...) He accosted a busy, offended sister and, ignoring snubs, made whispered inquiries about Mrs. Tulsi's condition. Next morning he came down, shy and sheepish. Mrs. Tulsi would be better. She would ignore him. But that evening forgiveness would be in the air. The offender would be spoken to as if nothing had happened, and he would respond with eagerness. (p. 127)

This passage is important because it helps to make visible the contrast in the behaviour of Mr. Biswas that will follow. First, Mr. Biswas does not go to the hall and stays in his room. The next morning, he goes down to the hall and calls briskly, “Morning, morning. Morning everybody.” When Mai comes into the hall he asks cheerfully: “You feeling better, Mai?” And, to his astonishment, she replies: “Yes, son. I am feeling much better.” (p. 128) A strong feeling of ambivalence is present here. There is sympathy for the “victimised” Mr. Biswas, along with appreciation for the tolerance shown by Mrs. Tulsi. But Mr. Biswas is determined to try her tolerance further. Soon the “younger god” comes to the hall offering burning camphor to everybody, starting with his mother, Mrs. Tulsi. After Mai performs the proper ceremony she says: “Take it to your brother Mohun.” Mr. Biswas is reported to be astonished at this attitude of Mai but his response, described by the narrator, can only be considered as rude: “Mr. Biswas rescued more sodden biscuit from the enamel cup. He put his mouth under the spoon, caught the biscuit that broke off, chewed noisily and said, ‘You could take that away. You know I don’t hold with this idol worship.’” (p. 130) That depression falls upon Mr. Biswas as soon as he leaves Hanuman House and lasts all day, only reinforces the feeling of “ambivalence” that

is present in the text. Mr. Biswas's joy at his triumph turns into disgust at his condition. Suddenly, the campaign against the Tulsis, which he has been conducting with such pleasure, seems "pointless and degrading." These are all signs of "indecision" and "indeterminacy" in the text, which can be considered as a connection to Bhabha's theory of "ambivalence".

Mr. Biswas's campaign against the Tulsi's culminates until he is brutally beaten by Govind, in his own room, and the narrator notes here that, "Yet what he considered his disgrace was in fact his triumph," (p. 140) because the Tulsi family decides to send Mr. Biswas to run their shop in the village called "The Chase."

The move to The Chase emphasises once again the "ambivalence" in any judgement about the Tulsi family and the "victimisation" of Mr. Biswas. Many signs seem to suggest that the Tulsis and Hanuman House are not exactly the "monster" that Mr. Biswas so detests. Mr. Biswas has few belongings to move: his clothes, some books and magazines, and his painting equipment. But Shama has many clothes and, as they move, she is given bolts of cloth by Mrs. Tulsi, "straight from the shelves of the Tulsi store." (p. 143) The Tulsi Store makes another contribution by selling pots and pans and cups and plates at cost price to Shama. The remark by the narrator that, "Mr. Biswas was disturbed to see that his savings, sign-writing money accumulated during his stay at Hanuman House, had begun to melt even before he moved," implies that his stay at Hanuman House has in fact been a blessing for Mr. Biswas, having made it able for him to save even the little money he has got from sign-painting, food and shelter being provided by the Tulsis. How much Hanuman House means for Mr. Biswas and the "ambivalence" this implicates can clearly be seen in the following passage:

He wanted to comfort her. But he needed comfort himself. How lonely the shop was! And how frightening! He had never thought it would be like this when he found himself in an establishment of his own. It was late afternoon; Hanuman House would be warm and noisy with activity. Here, he was afraid to disturb the silence, afraid to open the door of the shop, to step into the light. (p. 145)

The feeling that the adjectives “warm and noisy” connote indeed form a contrast to Mr. Biswas’s previous behaviour towards Hanuman House.

“Ambivalence” can also be observed in the behaviour of Shama. The narrator observes that, in the end, it is Shama who gives Mr. Biswas comfort. She stops crying, “gave a long and decisive blow to her nose” (p. 145) and begins sweeping, setting up and putting away. Moreover, Mr. Biswas is astonished at the change in Shama. The narrator expresses this change with the following words:

Till the last she had protested at leaving Hanuman House, but now she behaved as though she moved into a derelict house every day. Her actions were assertive, wasteful and unnecessarily noisy. They filled shop and house; they banished silence and loneliness. (p. 146)

However, there are things that Mr. Biswas appreciates about their new home, which also supports the “notion of ambivalence” studied in this work. For the first time a meal is prepared for Mr. Biswas in his own house. And contrary to Hanuman House, feeding him at the table in the bedroom, “she didn’t sigh or stare or look weary and impatient as she had done in the lotus-decorated long room at Hanuman House,” (p. 146).

Yet, Shama’s “ambivalent attitude” gives reason for another event of “ambivalent implications” when she decides to persuade Mr. Biswas to organise a “house-blessing ceremony” at the shop-house. The “double-nature” in Shama manifests itself in the following statement by the narrator made during the house-blessing ceremony: “For the last three days, since the arrival of her sisters, Shama had become a Tulsi and a stranger again. Now she was unapproachable.” (p. 152) The “ambivalent aspect” about this ceremony is that, while it is understandable that Shama wants to live up to this tradition of her culture, it is also apparent that this event will ruin the newly established capital of Mr. Biswas. Three labourers work for three days to put up a large tent in the yard, with bamboo uprights and a roof of coconut branches. Mr. Biswas has to buy enormous quantities of food, and the sisters arrive three days before the ceremony to make the preparations. Finally all the large and numerous members of the Tulsis, except for Seth, Miss Blackie, and the two

“gods,” are there, and Mr. Biswas finds himself “a stranger in his own yard.” (p. 151) One bed-room is reserved for Hari, the family pundit, the other one for Mrs. Tulsi, and the shop is full of babies and looting children. When Mr. Biswas catches the looting children, a mother of one of the kids performs a ceremonial punishment, which is very useful to cite in respect of the “ambivalent feeling” it provokes about the locality of right and wrong:

The mother broke two twitches on the boy, speaking as she beat. ‘*This* will teach you not to meddle with things that don’t belong to you. *This* will teach you not to provoke people who don’t make any allowances for children.’ She caught sight of the marks left on the boy’s collar by Mr Biswas’s fingers, sticky from the tin-lid. ‘And *this* will teach you not to let big people make your clothes dirty. *This* will teach you that they don’t have to wash them. *You* are a big man. You know *right*. You know *wrong*. *That* is why *I* am beating *you* as though you are a *big* man and can take a *big* man’s blows. (p. 154)

Here, there is again the “double-perspective” of Naipaul’s narrator, which is a sign of his “ambivalent attitude”. It is almost impossible to say who is right and who is wrong, who the “victim”, and who the “victimised”.

Another proof of the “ambivalence” in the text is provided by the fact that there are some traditions of Hanuman House that are shown to be utterly beneficial to Mr. Biswas. It has been pointed out that the blessing ceremony ruined Mohun’s business. But when Shama is about to give birth to her first baby, the family-ties prove to be very useful. With the help of her sisters, Shama prepares baby clothes, and of flour-sacks they produce diapers. And when the time nears birth, Shama does not go to the hospital but to Hanuman House. Part of the culture that Hanuman House represents is also that Shama has made moving preparations for Mr. Biswas too. She has washed and darned his clothes; then, she has pencilled recipes for the simplest meals on little squares of shop paper. After the incident of the blessing-ceremony, these traditions seem to show the other side of the “Hanuman House coin,” thus being another indicator for the narrator’s “double-vision”.

During the six years Mr. Biswas stays at The Chase, Shama gives birth to two children, Savi and Anand. That Hanuman House continues to antagonise Mr. Biswas

can be understood from the fact that Shama frequently goes there to stay for a period of time. Soon, Savi starts to live there permanently, because she likes Hanuman House for “its activity and its multitude of children.” At The Chase she is restless and behaves badly. While Mr. Biswas is distrustful of the Tulsis and asks Savi each time he visits her: “Who beat you?” and “Who shouted at you?” (pp. 184-185), information about Mrs. Tulsi such as her treating Savi’s bow-legs by making her wear boots with iron bands down the sides of the legs and straps over the knees, and her making Savi eat fish by taking out all the bones and feeding her herself, shows that Mrs. Tulsi is not as bad as Mr. Biswas imagines her to be.

It constitutes another instance of “ambivalent behaviour” in Mr. Biswas that, at this point of the narrative, he changes his opinion about Hanuman House, as is very clearly indicated by the narrator:

The house was a world, more real than The Case, and less exposed; everything beyond its gates was foreign and unimportant and could be ignored. He needed such a sanctuary. And in time the house became to him what Tara’s had been when he was a boy. He could go to Hanuman House whenever he wished and become lost in the crowd, since he was treated with indifference rather than hostility. And he went there more often, held his tongue and tried to win favour. (p. 188)

Vocabulary like “gates”, “less exposed”, “sanctuary”, and “become lost in the crowd” carry the implication that Hanuman House serves Mr. Biswas at this stage as a place to escape from the hostile and foreign outside world in “colonial Trinidad”. Mr. Biswas’s approaching Hanuman House seems to be an act of opportunism. But this judgement itself carries some degree of ambivalence because Mr. Biswas’s reconciliation to Hanuman House has come after a period of experience in the outside-world, while he could have been opportunistic right from the beginning of his entrance into Hanuman House. That he was not, makes it difficult to judge whether Mr. Biswas’s reconciliation is a genuine act of opportunism or a sincere outflow of feelings. This, once again establishes the narrator’s “dualistic vision” of his created world and characters.

Another reason that makes Mr. Biswas's changing attitude towards Hanuman House look "ambivalent" is that Mr. Biswas behaves hypocritically. As the narrator relates: "And while he made greater efforts to please at Hanuman House, with Shama, at The Chase, he became increasingly irritable. After every visit he abused the Tulsis to her..." (pp. 190-191) This shows that Mr. Biswas is not sure about his feelings about Shama and her family and that he is quite confused about this issue. Mr. Biswas's "ambivalent" situation is that he is torn between himself and Shama's family, which is perhaps expressed in the following statement of the narrator: "The Chase was a place where Shama only spent time; she had always called Hanuman House home. And it was her home, and Savi's, and Anand's, as it could never be his." (p. 191)

The theme of "torn-between-people", also emerges when the narrator tells about the old Indian people who sit in the evenings in the arcade of Hanuman House:

They could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they had come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. They continually talked of going back to India, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the temporariness. And every evening they came to the solid, friendly house, smoked, told stories, and continued to talk about India. (p. 194)

Like these elder Indians who have become stuck between India and Trinidad, Mr. Biswas seems to be stuck between Hanuman House and his individuality. The Chase has been given to him as a result of his revolt against the Tulsis. It has been observed, however, that as soon as he arrived at The Chase, he was yearning for the warmth and activity of Hanuman House. At the end of this episode, he has even almost reconciled himself to the family. But, soon it has been seen that Mr. Biswas's behaviour was inconsistent: at Hanuman House, he was close to the family and Shama; at The Chase, he abused Shama's family and they had constant quarrels. In the next episode, it will be observed that the pendulum of Mr. Biswas's friendship to the Tulsi family will again swing away from it. This section will study the "double-vision" present in Mr. Biswas's darkest and most isolated existence.

Mr. Biswas's local shop at The Chase having failed, the Tulsi family decides to employ him in Green Vale, the sugar estate of the Tulsi family. He is not at all happy about this job, blaming Shama for it: "Is you who get me in this. You and your family." (p. 209) However, the situation is again "ambivalent". In the barracks that shelter twelve families, providing each one room, Mr. Biswas is given an end room because he is a driver. As a driver and sub-overseer, Mr. Biswas becomes twice the salary of the labourers, twenty-five dollars a month. Mr. Biswas knows nothing about estate work, but every Saturday Seth gives him instructions when he comes to pay the labourers. While all this shows that Mr. Biswas is privileged to some degree by the Tulsis, it is difficult to say that he should be satisfied with his situation. The labourers have no respect for Mr. Biswas and a single rebuke by Seth on Saturdays is more feared than a week's shy remonstrance of Mr. Biswas. When he mentions to Seth that he has got to "stop living next door to these people," Seth responds: "We are going to build a house for you." (p. 208) But the house is never mentioned again and Mr. Biswas remains in the Barracks. He has to take his shower outside the barracks from a water barrel with larvae in it and one day, his towel drops off in front of his door, with all the twelve rooms in full view. Shama most of the time lives at Hanuman House and sends Mr. Biswas "stone-cold" food from Hanuman House. Mr. Biswas's dreadful existence is plainly expressed in the thoughts of Savi, watching the shop-signs painted by her father years ago as a single, young man:

Savi knew and was proud that the signs had been done by her father. But their gaiety puzzled her; she couldn't associate them with the morose man she went to see in the dingy barrack-room and who sometimes came to see her. (p. 212)

Another "ambivalent" situation arises when, during Christmas, Mr. Biswas decides to buy a present for Savi. Mr. Biswas buys a doll's house paying more than a month's wages. The news of the doll's house arrives at Hanuman House before the object itself and creates a genuine crisis, announced by Mrs. Tulsi with her question: "What have you brought for the others?" This is again a situation where the reader has difficulty in deciding about who is to blame for this crisis. Mai seems to be right when she explains: "When I give, I give to all. (...) I am poor, but I give to all. (...)"

(p. 217) And Mr. Biswas seems right to be outraged when he finds out, at his next visit, that Shama has broken the doll-house to pieces (again, in turn, understandably, to establish equality among the children of Hanuman House). Mr. Biswas might have realised the “ambivalence” of the situation when the narrator reports: “And suddenly his rage had gone. His shouts rang in his head, leaving him startled, ashamed, and tired. He could think of nothing to say.” (p. 220)

The bad housing conditions at Green Vale spurring Mr. Biswas to build his own house, he goes to his aunt Tara, with the intention to borrow some money. A comparison passage by the narrator about Tara’s family and the Tulsi family evokes again “notions of ambivalence”:

The Tulsis, who did *puja* every day and celebrated every Hindu festival, regarded Ajodha as a man who pursued wealth and comfort and modernity and had alienated himself from the faith. Ajodha and Tara simply thought the Tulsis squalid, and had always made it clear that they considered Mr Biswas’s marriage into that house a calamity. It was doubly embarrassing to Mr Biswas to discuss the Tulsis with Tara, since despite his concern for his children he found it hard not to agree with her view, particularly when he was in her clean, uncrowded, comfortable house, waiting for a meal he knew would be good. (p. 244)

The antagonism between the Tulsi House and Tara’s house here is obvious: Tara’s family is “modern”, while the Tulsis represent “tradition”. This passage, however, seems to favour Tara and Ajodha, since Tara’s house is clean, uncrowded, and comfortable, while Hanuman House is dingy, crowded, and uncomfortable. Tara’s food is always good, while Tulsi food is invariably bad. Yet, the reader soon finds out that Ajodha’s “modern materialism” is not as shining as it looks above. Ajodha’s nephew Jagdat tells Mr. Biswas how bad Ajodha’s “modern materialism” can be:

He employ one gardener one time. Old man, wearing rags, thin, sick, practically starving. Indian like you and me. Thirty cents a day. *Thirty cents!* Still, poor man can’t do better, in all the hot sun the old man working. Doing his little weeding and hoeing. About three o’clock, sun hot like blazes, sweating, back aching as if it want to break, he ask for a cup of tea. Well, they give him a cup of tea. But at the end of the day they dock six pence off his pay. (p. 252)

Jagdat also points out that this “is the way they treat poor people” and adds that his “consolation is that they can’t bribe God.” (p. 252) This is of course a contrast to what has been said before about Tara’s family, and thus establishes “ambivalence”, which intensifies in degree, when it is considered that the Tulsis have a much better account in similar issues. For instance, during one of Mr. Biswas’s unexpected visits at Hanuman house it is stated that, “The food might be bad at Hanuman House, but there was always some for unexpected visitors.” And the house might be dark and dingy but, “as long as there was floor space, there was bed space.” (p. 196) This “ambivalence” indicates once again that it seems impossible to know which view Naipaul’s narrator favours, thus establishing once again his “double-vision”.

“Ambivalence” is also produced by the repeated assertion of the usefulness and shelter that Hanuman House provides. For instance, as Mr. Biswas moves to the half-finished wooden house he has built near the barracks, his room in the barracks, which is in fact an extension of Hanuman House, still looks more attractive:

The room was smaller than the barrack room; (...) And there were other inconveniences. There was no kitchen; they had to cook on boxes downstairs, below the room; they both got nausea. The roof had no gutters and water had to be fetched all the way from the barrack barrels. They also had to use the barrack latrine. (p. 282)

And there is more evidence for the narrator’s “positive vision” about Hanuman House. Shortly after Mr. Biswas and his son Anand move into the incomplete wooden house, Mr. Biswas has a nervous break-down during a violent tropical storm and the house’s roof is blown away. As the news reach Hanuman House, it is significant that the family has a council to decide what to do, and Seth’s use of the words “paddler” and “home” imply “compassion”: “I suppose we have to bring the paddler home.” (p. 294) Significant also is that Govind, who had beaten Mr. Biswas years before and had not spoken to him since, carries Mr. Biswas in his arms:

By carrying Mr. Biswas in his arms Govind had put himself on the side of the authority: he had assumed authority’s power to rescue and assist when there was need, authority’s impersonal power to forgive. (p. 295)

The authority that is mentioned here, is doubtlessly the one of Hanuman House and its tradition, which certainly once more points to one of the narrator's "positive views" on Hanuman House. The "benevolence" of Hanuman House does not stop here. Mr. Biswas is given a room, dry clothes, and a cup of hot milk with nutmeg, brandy, and lumps of red butter, and Mr. Biswas "welcomed the warmth and reassurance of the room." (p. 295) The compassion of Hanuman House continues when a doctor is called, and Seth is again benevolent when he rejects the thaumaturge's offer to prepare a little mixture, in addition to the doctor's Sanatogen, Ferrol, and Ovaltine, asserting justly that, "Give Mohun your mixture and you turn him into a little capsule." (p. 297) During these days, Mr. Biswas is treated and medicated, and Shama gives birth to their fourth child, which shows how effectively Hanuman House functions, almost like a "social institution".

In the light of Hanuman House's "benevolent" atmosphere, Mr. Biswas thinks that he is more fortunate than most people. "His children would never starve; they would always be sheltered and clothed. It didn't matter if he were at Green Vale or Arwacas, alive or dead." (p. 304) Even if the latter item reminds of "ambivalence", Mr. Biswas is still happy that, "There was room for him at Hanuman House if he stayed. If he left he would not be missed," (p. 304) the last item again indicating "ambivalence". If these "ambivalent notions" alone are not enough to incite Mr. Biswas to leave Hanuman House to look for a job, the news that Mrs. Tulsi and the "younger god" Owad will come for the weekend from Port of Spain and that he has to vacate the blue room, make him decide to go "out into the world, to test it for its power to frighten." (p. 305)

The focus of this study being on "ambivalence", and hence on "double-structures", "double-visions", "dichotomies", etc. these themes will be studied in this part of the novel's symmetrical second major division as well. The second main-part of the novel, also formally called "PART TWO", signals a major change in setting, as the protagonist's destiny leads him to Port of Spain, one of the major cities on the island of Trinidad.

Having no place to stay in Port of Spain, Mr. Biswas decides to visit his sister Dehuti, who is married to Ramchand, a low caste Indian, whom the Tulsi family despises for his caste. Once, during Ramchand's visit to Hanuman House when Mr. Biswas had his breakdown, Chinta, one of the sisters, has said: "However much you wash a pig, you can't turn it into a cow." (p. 301) But, there is an implicit criticism of this caste-attitude in the narrator's description of Dehuti's home in a slum area of Port of Spain:

And though from the outside the unpainted house with its rusting roof and weatherbeaten, broken boards looked about to fall down, the wood inside had kept some of its colour, and the rooms were clean and well kept. The furniture, including the hatrack with the diamond shaped glass, was brilliantly polished. The area between the kitchen shed and the back room was roofed and partly walled; so that the open yard could be forgotten, and there was room even privacy. (p. 311)

The obviously positive description of Dehuti's, and therefore low-caste Ramchand's house, contrasts to the negative descriptions of Hanuman House's dark and sooty kitchen, the dim and dingy paint of the hall, and woodlice-infected timber. This criticism provides again another instance of "ambivalence" in the narrator's view about the Tulsi family, which has been observed to be sometimes positive, and at other times negative.

Mr. Biswas's fortune suddenly turns to the good in Port of Spain. He finds a job as a reporter at the *Sentinel* and Mrs. Tulsi offers to rent him a large part of her flat for eight Dollars a month, his salary being thirty. The happy description of the new home provides one side of the coin of "ambivalence", before the other side reverses the point of view of the Tulsis. Mr. Biswas compares in his mind the flat with his previous imperfect dwellings, especially with the unfinished wooden house:

... a house that was solid and finished and painted and elegant all over, with a level, gapless floor, straight concrete walls, panelled doors with locks, a complete roof, a ceiling varnished in the drawingroom, painted elsewhere. (...) Nothing had to be added, nothing was makeshift; there were no surprises of mud walls or tree branches, no secret ways of doing anything; everything worked as it was meant to. (...) Could this luck have been more complete? (p. 333)

The other side of the coin will show that it is not exactly complete luck that has befallen Mr. Biswas, which only reinforces the argument of this study that Naipaul's vision, as reflected in the narrator, is "ambivalent" and "double-structured".

A foretaste of the other side of the coin starts to unfold as the news arrive that Owad, the younger son of Mrs. Tulsi, will study in England, to become a doctor. Mr. Biswas's attitude during this event is a show of "ambivalent behaviour". Thus when he hears the news first "concealing his sadness and envy, he made a show of enthusiasm and offered advice about shipping lines." (p. 349) The advent of Owad's departure causes a Hanuman House festival in miniature to take place in Mr. Biswas's house. Mr. Biswas's old antagonistic attitude emerges when he asks Shama, who is busy in the kitchen, "Who paying for all this? The old she-fox or you? Not me, you hear? Nobody sending me to Cambridge. Next week, when I eating dry ice, nobody sending me food by parcel post from Hanuman House, you hear?" (p. 352) It is a sign, however, of Mr. Biswas's "ambivalence" when the narrator states that "... he thought himself privileged to be host to the two sons of the family, one of whom was going abroad to become a doctor." (p. 352) Moreover, Mr. Biswas gets on very well with the two brothers, Owad and Shekhar, whom he used to call the little gods in the past. As, however, the house gets crowded with the people of Hanuman House, Mr. Biswas again sees the other face of the Tulsis: Mr. Biswas finds himself squeezed into one room. To Shama he whispers: "Eight dollars. That is the rent I pay every month. I have my rights." (p. 360) Mr. Biswas's rose-bushes and lily-pond suffer. One night when Mr. Biswas returns home late in the night, "he found four children on his bed. They were not his. Thereafter he occupied his room early in the evening, bolted the door and refused to answer knocks, calls, scratches and cries." (pp. 360-361) Yet, at the parting on the ship, when Owad shakes Mr. Biswas's hand, Mr. Biswas is in a much different, and unexpected, mood: "Mr Biswas was unaccountably moved. His legs shook; he felt unsteady. (...) Tears rushed to his eyes, he choked and could say no more." (p. 362)

Another interesting instance of “ambivalence”, that occurs after the Biswas family has moved to Port of Spain, is the sisters’ ideas about the “elder god” Shekhar’s Presbyterian convert wife Dorothy. In spite of the untraditional organisation of Hanuman House, married daughters living with their mother, the sisters are quite sensitive to certain conventions of Hindu family relationships:

Mothers-in-law, for example, were expected to be hard on daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law were to be despised. But Shekhar’s wife had from the start met Tulsi patronage with arrogant Presbyterian modernity. She flaunted her education. She called herself Dorothy, without shame or apology. She wore short frocks and didn’t care that they made her look lewd and absurd: she was a big woman who had grown fat after the birth of her first child, and her dresses hung from her high, shelf-like hips as from a hoop. (...) Added to all this, she sometimes sold the tickets at her cinema; which was disgraceful, besides being immoral. (pp. 365-366)

The “ambivalence” in this passage comes from the fact that the narrator ridicules both, Dorothy and the sisters. How Dorothy is ridiculed is obvious: she is portrayed through a ridiculous picture. The sisters are criticised, implicitly, for their “conservatism” in matters about women that could apply as well on themselves. That the narrator favours Dorothy in this respect, is shown in the following passage:

So far, however, from making any impression on Dorothy, the sisters continually found themselves defeated. They had said she wouldn’t be able to keep a house: she turned out to be maddeningly house-proud. They had said she was barren: she was bearing a child every two years. Her children were all girls, but this was scarcely a triumph for the sisters. Dorothy’s daughters were of exceptional beauty and the sisters could complain only that the Hindi names Dorothy had chosen – Mir, Leela, Lena – were meant to pass as Western ones. (p. 366)

In the former passage, the clash between the “traditional” and the “modern” was obvious. But in this passage, where the narrator ridicules the sisters, the “modern Presbyterian” Dorothy combines the “modern” and the “traditional” in herself: she is house-proud, she is fertile, and she has beautiful daughters, even if not sons. This is again a typical example for the narrator’s “ambivalent” attitude through his “double-vision”.

When the sisters, after seeing Dorothy's excellence in traditional matters, see themselves defeated and Dorothy un-defeatable, they attack unfairly: "Dorothy, like all Christians, used her right hand for unclean purposes, her sexual appetite was insatiable, her daughters already had the eyes of whores." (p. 366) The narrator notes, that Mr. Biswas usually gets on well with Dorothy, being attracted by her loudness and gaiety, and, not surprisingly, because he regards her as an ally against the sisters. But, perhaps again as a result of the narrator's "double-vision", in this instance, "Mr Biswas, feeling Shekhar's absence as a betrayal, could sympathise with the sisters." (p. 366)

The Tulsi family is of central importance in this analysis of the narrator's "ambivalent vision", because it continually acts an "ambivalent" role in Mr. Biswas's life. Thus, also during this episode, Mr. Biswas announces to Anand: "I don't depend on them for a job. You know that. We could go back any time to Hanuman House. All of us. You know that," (p. 380) because Anand has been told at school by school-mates that they have Mr. Biswas "like an office boy in the office." (p. 379) This attitude of Mr. Biswas is "ambivalent" because his antagonistic relationship to the family has previously been observed in this study. And this relationship will continue to be so.

It is noteworthy that soon after Mr. Biswas has spoken about his idea of Hanuman House as a place of "escape" and "refuge", he promptly refuses Shama's plea to move together with the Tulsi family, which has decided to move to a large estate house in a place called Short Hills, near Port of Spain. But finally, as always, with the additional help of Mrs. Tulsi's entreaties, Mr. Biswas agrees to move to Short Hills. If this looks like a situation where Mr. Biswas has been again "victimised", being pushed and forced by the Tulsis to follow them, the news that Mr. Biswas soon hears from "sulking" Shama, sheds some more "ambivalent" light on the matter: Mr. Biswas would not have been able to stay in the flat in Port of Spain anyway, because Mrs. Tulsi has decided to raise the rent, and equally importantly, Shama's accounting book shows that Mr. Biswas's salary goes to the

grocer almost as soon as it comes, and that the debts are steadily rising. This means that, by forcing him to join them at Short Hills, the Tulsis have actually helped Mr. Biswas, as he is not going to pay any rent there, and he will be able to save much of his income.

The Tulsi family, however, continues to be portrayed by the narrator through his “double-light”. Although it is of such benefit to Mr. Biswas at this stage, the family is seen in its destructive nature at Short Hills. To illustrate this, two pictures of Short Hills are shown. First the one as the Tulsis newly arrive:

In the grounds of the estate house there was a cricket field and a swimming pool; the drive was lined with orange trees and gri-gri palms with slender white trunks, red berries and dark green leaves. Land itself was a wonder. The saman trees had lianas so strong and supple that one could swing on them. All day the immortal trees dropped their red and yellow bird-shaped flowers through which one could whistle like a bird. Cocoa trees grew in the shade of the immortelles, coffee in the shade of the cocoa, and the hills were covered with tonka bean. Fruit trees, mango, orange, avocado pear, were so plentiful as to seem wild. And there were nutmeg trees, as well as cedar, *poui*, and the *bois-canon* which was light yet so springy and strong it made you a better cricket bat than the willow. (pp. 390-391)

This lengthy description of Short Hills has been cited to contrast it with what the Tulsis make out of it. First, the children strip the saman tree of its lianas. Then, Hari cuts down the Julie mango tree in the garden and builds a small boxboard hut to use it as his temple. The swimming pool is filled with earth and a tent is put up for weddings. Because of lack of maintenance, the estate from looking neglected begins to look abandoned. Govind tears down the cricket pavilion and puts up a rough cowshed in its place. The cricket field turns to “mud and manure.” (p. 405) The reader of W.C. Tuttle cuts down the gri-gri palms along the drive, and then the orange trees. The plumbing of the house remains unrepaired and a latrine is built on the hillside. The house toilet, unused, becomes a sewingroom. And the destruction and plundering goes on like this, with many more items on the estate. For Mr. Biswas, however, the devastation around him does not matter much. “He paid no rent; he spent nothing on food; he was saving most of his salary. For the first time he had money, and every fortnight it was increasing.” (p. 407) Such is, then, the narrator’s

“double-faceted vision” of the Tulsi family. On the one hand, it is a sort of social security institution, on the other, it is a destructive force.

The benefits of the Tulsi family to Mr. Biswas do not end here. Taking the site and timber from the estate, and buying the rest with the money he has saved while living at Short Hills, Mohun even succeeds in building a country house. The place of the house, however, being too cut off from civilisation, and because of lack of transport to Port of Spain, the Biswas family once again moves to the Tulsi flat in Port of Spain, to live in two rooms of it, sharing the flat with W.C. Tuttle, and the Govind-Chinta couple.

In the house in Port of Spain, Mr. Biswas once again begins to suffer from the Tulsis. However, as has been before the case, the suffering inflicted on Mr. Biswas by the Tulsis can be seen from “two lights”. Seen through the negative point of view, the problem is that, in addition to the crowding caused by the shared flat, the widow Basdai, who lives in the servant room, lodges large numbers Tulsi children, who go to school in Port of Spain. The difficulty of the situation is described by the narrator as following: “The boarders ate on the steps of the servant room, in the yard, and below the main house. The girls slept in the servant room with Basdai; the boys slept below the house, with Govind’s children.” (p. 436) In the nights, Mr. Biswas, trying to escape the crowd and the noise, takes Anand to walks in quieter districts of Port of Spain and says, “even the streets here are cleaner than that house. Let the sanitary inspector pay just one visit there, and everybody going to land up in jail.” (p. 436) The grotesqueness of the case can further be seen in the following description: “(...) and the people in the street could only make surmises about the arrangements for the feeding and lodging of the childish multitude who, in the afternoons and evenings and early mornings, buzzed like a school.” (pp. 436-437) The conditions are so unbearable for Mr. Biswas that, “the office now became the haven to which he escaped every morning; ...” (pp. 437-438)

Seen through the positive light, widow Basdai is performing a great social service because, “the widows were now almost frantic to have their children

educated. There was no longer a Hanuman House to protect them; ..." (p. 436) Even if the text indicates that there is no Hanuman House anymore, Mrs. Tulsi's house in Port of Spain functions as an extension of it. Thus the narrator notes that:

The education frenzy had spread to Mrs. Tulsi's friends and retainers at Arwacas. They all wanted their children to go to Port of Spain schools, and Mrs. Tulsi, fulfilling a duty that had been imposed in a different age, had to take them in. And Basdai boarded them. (p. 437)

So, what has to be noted here is that the narrator once again applies his "ambivalent double-vision". Its object here is the Tulsi family and Mrs. Tulsi's house, as an extension of Hanuman House. The negative and the positive visions about them have been shown above to illustrate the narrator's "double-vision", an "ambivalent view" that makes it difficult, even if not impossible, to judge in a certain way the objects that the narrator satirises.

Another object of "ambivalence" appears in the narrator's treatment of Mr. Biswas's career. Mr. Biswas's income is far from satisfactory and Shama again brings out her accounts "to show him how impossible it was for them to live on what he earned." (p. 438) This is all the more frustrating for Mr. Biswas as he sees that so many people around him are doing much better than himself. It is one of Naipaul's typical ironies, when it is stated that, as Mr. Biswas interviews Indian farmers for the *Sentinel*, he is treated "as an incredibly superior being" (p. 438) by men who, "like his brother, had started on the estates and saved and bought land of their own, were building mansions;" and who "... were sending their sons to America and Canada to become dentists and doctors." (p. 438) In spite of Mr. Biswas's misery, there is money on the island. It can be seen all around Mr. Biswas, "in the suits of Govind who drove the Americans in his taxi; in the possessions of W. C. Tuttle, who hired out his lorry to them; in the new cars; the new buildings." (p. 438) And Mr. Biswas finds himself "barred" from this money, despite his being read in Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and Samuel Smiles.

Mr. Biswas blames a lot of people and his destiny for his present misery:

What fortune might have been theirs, if only his father had not died, if only he had stuck to the land like his brothers, if he had not gone to Pagotes, not become a sign-writer, not gone to Hanuman House, not married! If only so many things had not happened!

He blamed his father; he blamed his mother; he blamed the Tulsis; he blamed Shama. (p. 438)

But the narrator's "ambivalent vision" emerges soon in the counter-argument that appears in Mr. Biswas's own mind: "Mr Biswas knew for all his talk he would never leave the *Sentinel* to go to work for the Americans as labourer, clerk or taxi-driver. He lacked the taxi-driver's personality, the labourer's muscles." (p. 440) The same argument could be applied on Mr. Biswas's criticism of sign-writing and Hanuman House, because it could similarly be argued that he just did not have the skill to do anything else.

The narrator's "ambivalent vision" can be said to continue in the way he makes Mr. Biswas live a "double-life". The *Sentinel*, with the intention to raise its circulation, starts the "Deserving Destitutes Fund," where Mr. Biswas is appointed investigator, who has to read and evaluate applications from destitutes and write about the most deserving ones in the newspaper, to induce donations to the fund. The irony in this situation is, at the same time, an indicator of the "double-vision" in Mr. Biswas's life, as is humorously expressed by himself: "'Deserving destitute number one,' he told Shama. 'M. Biswas. Occupation: investigator of Deserving Destitutes.'" (p. 441) Later, when Mr. Biswas is offered a job at the Community Welfare Department, at a salary 50 dollars higher than the one he is getting from the *Sentinel*, the situation is almost the same, the only difference being that the contrast gets stronger. When, for instance, as a first blessing of the new job, Mr. Biswas takes his family for a week's holiday at the sea-side in a summer-house, they return to "the two rooms, the city pavements, the badly concreted floor under the house, the noise, the quarrels." (p. 506) Then, they fall "asleep with the roar of wind and sea in their heads. In the morning they woke to the humming house." (p. 507) The contrast between the two lives gets even more intense, when Mr. Biswas is forced by Mrs. Tulsi to move into one of her tenement rooms, because repairs have to be made in

her house, as a preparation for Owad's return from England. The contrast is clearly conveyed in the narrator's description:

And every afternoon Mr Biswas drove to his area to spread knowledge of the finer things in life. He distributed booklets; he lectured; he formed organisations and became involved in the complicated politics of small villages; and late at night he drove back to Port of Spain, to the tenement which was far worse than any of the houses he had visited during the day. (p. 529)

It is these difficult housing circumstances, in addition to Anand's quarrel with his uncle Owad, and Mr. Biswas's quarrel with Mrs. Tulsi, that lead to Mr. Biswas's finally buying his own house. However, this final achievement is deeply "ambivalent": it is an action that is an enormous disappointment, which then, as time goes by, and circumstances change, is turned into an achievement.

The great disappointment for the reader is that, after all his misery, and after all his saving, Mr. Biswas gets into such circumstances that induce him to buy a house full of flaws, for a price far too high. Mr. Biswas, having given notice to Mrs. Tulsi to leave the room, is in a desperate situation, when he meets the solicitor's clerk, who offers to sell him his house for five-thousand five-hundred dollars. Mr. Biswas soon agrees to buy the house, and there are two aspects to this purchase that make it an almost irretrievable disappointment, for both, the Biswas family, and the reader: the condition of the house, and the amount of money Mr. Biswas pays for it. The first aspect is described by the narrator as a long series of "ifs," that make even the reader feel frustrated:

If it had not been raining he might have walked around the small yard and seen the absurd shape of the house. He would have seen where the celotex panels on the eaves had fallen away, providing unrestricted entry to the bats of the neighbourhood. He would have seen the staircase that hung at the back, open, with only a banister, and sheltered by unpainted corrugated iron. He would not have been deceived into cosiness by the thick curtain over the back doorway on the lower floor. He would have seen that the house had no back door at all. If he had not had to rush out of the rain he might have noticed the streetlamp just outside the house; he would have known that a street lamp, so near the main road, attracted idlers like moths. But he saw none of these

things. He had only a picture of a house cosy in the rain, with a polished floor, and an old lady who baked cakes in the kitchen. (pp. 555-556)

These are only a few of the house's innumerable flaws. The house is unbearably hot during the day. The staircase is dangerous with its two rotten pillars. The yard has no drainage of any kind. None of the windows downstairs closes properly. The front door flies open in a strong wind, even when locked and bolted. The drawing room door cannot open at all. Upstairs, no door resembles any other, in shape, structure, colour or hinging. The upper floor curves towards the centre.

If Mr. Biswas had bought this bad house for a price that fitted its quality, the disappointment would not have been as grave. But, for what Mr. Biswas has paid for this house, he could have bought something much better, and it is again the circumstances that covered his eyes:

A week before Mr Biswas would have dismissed any thought of buying a house for five thousand dollars. He wanted one at three thousand or three thousand five hundred; he never looked at any above four thousand. And the strange thing now was that, having raised his sights, it did not occur to him to look at other five thousand dollar houses. (p. 567)

What a huge mistake this was, Mr. Biswas learns from his neighbour, who informs him that the solicitor's clerk had been trying to sell the house for "four five," (p. 578) but "couldn't get anybody to buy it" because "he was asking too much." (p. 578) To this shocking news he adds that, a "new neat bungalow" down the road, "which Mr. Biswas with his newly acquired eye for carpentry, had recognised as of good design and workmanship," (p. 579) has been sold that year for "four five." (p. 578)

Whatever the condition of the house, one might think, Mr. Biswas has at last succeeded in obtaining his independence from the Tulsi house. However, there are lines in the text that provoke ambivalent thoughts even about such a strong argument:

The rental of the rediffusion set was two dollars a month. Landrent was ten dollars a month, six dollars more than he paid for his room. Rates, which had seemed as remote as fog or snow, now had a meaning. Landrent, rediffision

set, rates, interest, repairs, debt: he was discovering commitments almost as fast as he discovered the house. (p. 574)

The most striking fact here is that even the landrent of the new house costs six dollars more than the rent he pays for the room in the Tulsi house. “The double-vision” that emerges at this point is that, for all its inconveniences and misery, Mr. Biswas, in fact, has lead a profitable life in the Tulsi house.

The brighter, counter-vision comes at the end of the Epilogue. At the moment when Mr. Biswas seems most desperate, having lost his position at the *Sentinel* after two heart attacks, his daughter Savi returns from studying abroad and gets a “job, at a bigger salary than Mr. Biswas could ever have got,” (p. 589) which she receives as soon as Mr. Biswas ceases to be paid. The “ambivalence” in this section lies in the fact that bright vision follows dark vision. And the bright vision is again shadowed by a disturbing detail: When Mr. Biswas dies, it is reported that the sisters of Shama do not fail to come. The narrator notes: “For them it was an occasion for reunion, no longer so frequent, for they had all moved to their own houses, some in the town, some in the country.” (p. 589) This information also comes slightly as a shock, because it indicates that Mr. Biswas, in his desperate situation, has acted too hurriedly. If he had been patient for some more years, the situation in the Tulsi house would have eased to some extent anyway.

CHAPTER III

SINGH'S DUAL VISION IN *THE MIMIC MEN*

Like the novels that have been studied up to this point, the setting of *The Mimic Men* (1967) is the Caribbean, and the protagonist, Ralph Singh, is an East Indian West Indian. There are, however major differences between this novel and the previously studied ones. The difference between *The Mimic Men* and Naipaul's earlier fiction has been duly summarised by Dolly Zulekha Hassan:

Forgoing dialogue and depending heavily instead on narrative done in flashback and flashforward, *The Mimic Men* has turned out to be an expository, socio-political novel in serious diary-style writing. Everything is recalled, sorted, and analysed through the point of view of Singh, Naipaul's most detached, contemplative, and intellectual first-person narrator. (Hassan, 1989: p. 251)

In spite of the above mentioned differences such as reduced dialogue, and a “detached”, “contemplative”, first-person narrator, this novel also contains the same “ambivalent point of view” employed by the author in characters and situations, which has been studied in the previous Chapters.

An “ambivalent vision” involves binary oppositions, so it is natural that Peggy Nightingale notes:

While the *The Mimic Men* (1967) returns to the Caribbean setting and to the political protagonist of Naipaul's early novels, it continues and intensifies his investigation of the human individuality caught in conflict between reality and unreality, order and disorder. (Nightingale, 1987: p. 98)

Nightingale's argument indicates that this study is justified in its aim to look for double visions in *The Mimic Men* too.

That the above mentioned binary oppositions appear right at the beginning of the novel, can be considered as a sign that this text is heavily invested with

“ambivalent visions”. The first person narrator and protagonist Ralph Singh, who “reflects on and reevaluates his life,” (Hassan, 1989: p. 251) recalling the first time he came to London where he lived in a boarding-house, asserts: “Between attic and basement, pleasure and its penalty, we boarders lived, narrowly.” (Naipaul, 1967: p. 5) When Singh rushes up the building, one evening, to watch the snow, he enters his newly passed away landlord’s attic, and, standing in front of the window, the thought that passes through his mind, again, contains a binary opposition: “... - crooked sashes, peeling paint-work: so fragile the structure up here which lower down appeared so solid - ...” (p. 6) The buildings could well stand for the “Empire”, which look “solid” from “lower down,” but once one has come close, for London is the “heart” of it, the “Empire” does not look solid anymore; the “colonial” discovers that, in fact, it is “fragile.” The “ambivalence” that this idea implies is obvious. And the “ambivalent” string of thought continues when Singh has another insight in the attic of the late Mr. Shylock, which equally reveals a “double-vision”:

And looking out from that room to the thin lines of brown smoke rising from ugly chimneypots, the plastered wall of the house next to the bombsite tremendously braced and buttressed, looking out from that empty room with the mattress on the floor, I felt all the magic of the city go away and had an intimation of the forlornness of the city and the people who live in it. (p. 7)

Here are two visions of the city, which is, in fact, the “heart of the Empire”: the “magic city” versus the “forlorn city.” This idea can also be seen as an extension of the previous one, because “magic” can be replaced with “solid,” and “forlorn” with “fragile.” So these two opposite visions belong to the “colonial” who experiences disillusionment as he enters the “Centre of Empire”.

In a flashforward, at the beginning of the novel, Singh describes his condition as an exile colonial politician, writing his autobiography, at the age of forty, in a hotel room in a suburb of London. The “ambivalent relationship” between the “colonial” and the “imperial metropolis” emerges again in this passage:

... We lack order. Above all we lack power, and we do not understand that we lack power. (...) Our transitional or makeshift societies do not cushion us. (...) For those who lose, and nearly everyone in the end loses, there is only

one course: flight. Flight to the greater disorder, the final emptiness: London and the home counties. (p. 8)

The “colonial society” is clearly criticised in this passage: it “lacks order”; it is “transitional” and “makeshift”, and nearly every politician loses in the colonial country. However, what comes after this criticism, is astonishing and creates an “ambivalent confusion” in the mind: London, the “Centre of Empire” and power, is “the greater disorder, the final emptiness,” which certainly also entails a criticism of the “Imperial Centre”. The first person narrator and protagonist is obviously in a confused state of mind. This flashforward episode ends with an insight of the protagonist that involves binary oppositions, to explain an “ambivalent double vision”: “I no longer dream of ideal landscapes or seek to attach myself to them. All landscapes eventually turn to land, the gold of the imagination to the lead of reality.” (p. 10) Singh being a colonial who has chosen to live his exile’s life in London, the binary oppositions of “gold” and “lead,” and “imagination” and “reality” might be interpreted to stand for the “dichotomy” of the “centre” and the “margin”, the “metropolis” and the “colony”. It could be seen to stand for the in-between-ness of the “colonial” protagonist: what he has imagined to be gold has turned out to be lead. Ideal landscapes are eventually only land. London is finally only a crowded city.

The contemplative narrator’s further dwelling on this subject seems to show how important this issue is:

How right our Aryan ancestors were to create gods. We seek sex, and are left with two private bodies on a stained bed. The larger erotic dream, the god has eluded us. It is so whenever, moving out of ourselves, we look for extensions of ourselves. It is with cities as it is with sex. We seek the physical city and find only a conglomeration of private cells. In the city as nowhere else we are reminded that we are individuals, units. Yet the idea of the city remains; it is the god of the city that we pursue, in vain. (p. 18)

This is, in fact, a repetition of the previous binaries: “the god” versus “the dream,” “the physical city” versus “private individuals.” It is only a reiteration of the “colonial’s disillusionment” in his longing for the “Centre”. Once he reaches it, the glitter is gone: “So quickly had London gone sour on me. The great city, centre of the world, in which, fleeing disorder, I had hoped to find the beginning of order.” (p.

18) Again the same “dichotomy”: “order” – “disorder”. But Singh’s vision is clearly “ambivalent”, since there is no order in London either.

There is also an “ambivalent vision” in the fact that Singh admires many physical features that belong to the coloniser’s world. For instance, Singh, not being used to “the physiognomy and complexions of the North” finds that his landlord Mr. Shylock looks “distinguished, like a lawyer or businessman or politician;” the cloth of his suits looks so fine to him that he feels he “could eat it;” he finds Mr. Shylock’s habitual gesture of “stroking the lobe of his ear and inclining his head to listen” so attractive that he copies it. He offers Mr. Shylock his “fullest, silent compassion,” (p. 5) although he is trying to live on seven pounds a week, this last example being ambivalent in itself. In another instance, Singh finds natural elements of the coloniser’s world “enchanted.” When Singh sees snow for the first time, he is overwhelmed: “Snow. At last; my element. And these were flakes, the airiest crushed ice. More than crushed: shivered. But the greater enchantment was the light.” (p. 6) And even here, the double vision follows soon: “Yet what was I to do with so complete a beauty?” (p. 7) The other natural element that Singh finds enchanting in the “coloniser’s world” is light:

They talk of the light of the tropics and Southern Spain. But there is no light like that of the temperate zone. It was a light which gave solidity to everything and drew colour out from the heart of objects. To me, from the tropics, where night succeeded day abruptly, dusk was new and enchanting. (p. 18)

From this, one might conclude that Singh, with his “admiration for the coloniser”, has totally immersed himself in the world of the coloniser. But Singh’s “ambivalent vision” does not allow this to happen:

But the god of the city was elusive. The tram was filled with individuals, each man returning to his own cell. The factories and warehouses, whose exterior lights decorated the river, were empty and fraudulent. I would play with famous names as I walked empty streets and stood on bridges. But the magic of the names soon faded. Here was the river, here the bridge, there that famous building. But the god was veiled. My incantation of names remained unanswered. In the great city, so solid in its light, which gave colour even to

unrendered concrete – to me as colourless as rotting wooden fences and new corrugated-iron roofs – in this solid city life was two-dimensional. (p. 19)

The “ambivalent vision” here is established by the binary oppositions of “compassion,” “enchantment,” “beauty,” “solidity,” which pass in the earlier quotations, opposing “elusive,” “empty,” “fraudulent,” “faded magic,” “veiled god,” “colourless” and “rotting.” Life is “two-dimensional” in this city, because Singh’s “vision” is “ambivalent”, as has been illustrated by the binary oppositions above.

Singh repeatedly expresses his disillusionment of the city, by which he means London, the “centre of Empire”, or as he puts it, “the centre of the world,” (p. 18) because for a “colonial” the “Empire” is the world. Singh asserts that, “Coming to London, the great city, seeking order, seeking the flowering, the extension of myself that ought to have come in a city of such miraculous light, I had tried to hasten a process which had seemed elusive.” (p. 26) And he once again points out that his search for “order” in the “metropolis of Empire” has been in vain: “But now I no longer knew what I was; ambition became confused, then faded, and I found myself longing for the certainties of my life on the island of Isabella, certainties which I had once dismissed as shipwreck.” (p. 27) The “element of ambivalence” involved in these statements is remarkable. Singh has come to London to find order, something one would probably naturally expect from an authority such as the “centre of Empire”, but he finds himself longing for the “certainties” of his “colonial island”. Another layer of “ambivalence” is added on this, if it is considered that Singh has noted in the flash-forward passage, quoted above, that, in Isabella, they “lack order” and, above all, “power;” that their “transitional” and “makeshift” societies do not “cushion” them. Yet here, at this point, the protagonist paradoxically longs for the “certainties of his colonial island,” which, he states, he used to regard as “shipwreck” before, adding yet another element of “ambivalence”. Thus, this study once again establishes the “ambivalent vision” of Singh, and this time it appears as layer upon layer.

The “ambivalent relationship” between the “colony” and the “centre of Empire” is referred to several times, where the search for order preoccupies a central

position. When the dwellers of the boarding house are given notice, Singh, being disillusioned, feels that, “one type of order had gone for good. And when order goes it goes.” (p. 30) As a result of his disillusionment, Singh asserts, “I abolished landscapes from my mind.” (pp. 30-31) These are the landscapes he dreamed of before he left his island; landscapes that typically belong to Europe, the “coloniser”:

Provence on a sunny morning, the Wagon-Lit coffee cup steadied by a heavy tablespoon; the brown plateau of Northern Spain in a snowstorm; an awakening clank-and-jerk in the Alps and outside, inches from my window, a world of simple black and white. (p. 31)

In the following lines, Singh expresses the reason for one part of his disillusionment: “I abolished all landscapes to which I could not attach myself and longed only for those I had known. I thought of escape, and it was escape to what I had so recently sought to escape from.” (p. 31) The first sentence expresses a sort of transition from innocence to experience. His journey to the “centre of Empire” has taught him that the best land is the one a person knows. The second sentence, which confuses the mind, tells of the result of this experience: that he now wishes to escape to the very place, from where he once desired to escape. Singh’s desire to escape, however, will continue, adding one more “ambivalent aspect” to this novel.

In a short flashforward, Singh returns to his island by ship. The description of the journey again reveals binary oppositions. The English port where they take the ship, is “set in a grey-green wasteland.” It is August “but the wind was chill. Gulls bobbed like cork amid the harbour litter.” (p. 31) After some days of sailing, the wind blows, but they are surprised because “this wind was warm.” The stewards serve ice-cream instead of tea. One morning, when they arrive, “waking to stillness, (...). Each porthole framed a picture: a pale blue sky, green hills, brightly-coloured houses, coconut trees, and green sea.” (p. 31) The contrast between the negative features of the English port, and the positive description of the tropical sea and island is obvious. Yet, Singh’s mood is not in harmony with this description. His “ambivalent indeterminacy” continues: “But my rejoicing was not complete, to tell the truth. It was forced, it was tinged with fear; (...).” (p. 31) What is remarkable is that Singh states that he will have similar feelings when he returns to London, years

later as a “colonial” politician: “So too it was with London later; even from the centre, of six-guineas-a-night hotels, (...), that other London which I had just left remained like a threat.” (pp. 31-32) This indicates again, how multi-layered the “ambivalence” of this text is.

It is important for this study, that Singh sees his escape from the island in terms of “doubles”. On his return to Isabella he thinks: “So already I had made the double journey between my two landscapes of sea and snow.” (p. 31) Each of these journeys he considers a failure: “I felt I had known a double failure, and I felt I continued to live between their twin threats.” (p. 32) The reason as to why he sees them as failures might be discerned in his following remark: “To each, at the first parting, I thought I had said good-bye, since I had got to know each in my own way.” (p. 31) Singh, it seems, is drowning in doubles: “double failures”, “twin threats”, “two landscapes of sea and snow,” and to this he adds “that period in parenthesis,” (p. 32) which is the period that passes between his return to Isabella and his exile to London, in the end. The “ambivalence” that is involved here is that Singh seems to be nowhere at home; each escape is considered to be a failure. The significance of this “ambivalent vision” is that it could imply that it is the “coloniser” who is responsible for this failure, as it is him who “displaced” colonial subjects like Singh.

As the narrative makes a flashforward to the time when Singh is writing his biography in a London suburb hotel room, some clues hint that he has found order there: “We dine below portraits of our lord and lady. The originals eat with us, (...); we are grateful for what they provide and we look to them for a continuation of order.” (p. 36) Something so simple as the order provided by an English hotel routine seems to have satisfied the protagonist’s lifelong search for “order”. But, again, Singh’s “double vision” soon creates “ambivalence”, when he ponders: “For here is order of a sort. But it is not mine. It goes beyond my dream. In a city already simplified to individual cells this order is further simplification. It is rooted in nothing; it links to nothing.” (p. 36) Singh’s “indeterminateness” is remarkable. First, he notes that he has found order. Then, he declares that this is not his “order”, after all. His search for “order” is like a bouncing ball, which cannot stop at a certain

location. Thus he talks of escape from escape again: “We talk of escape to the simple life. But we do not mean what we say. It is from simplification such as this that we wish to escape, to return to a more elemental complexity.” (p. 36) Singh’s “ambivalent vision” again does not allow the reader to be sure about whether he has found “order” or not.

The contrast between the hotel where Singh is writing his biography, and the rundown cocoa estate where he once used to imagine he would write it, is confusing and a source of “ambivalence”, especially considering that it is the hotel where he claims to have found some sort of order. Singh used to imagine he would live in one of the old estate houses of the island. The description of the house and the estate is idyllic:

... Everywhere there would have been the smell of old timber and wax; everywhere the eye would have found the pleasure in fashioned wood, in the white fretwork of the arabesques above doorways, the folding screens between drawing-room and dining-room, the tall panelled doors. (...) There are freshwater springs that make miniature waterfalls over mossy rocks and then run clear and cold and shallow in their own channels of white sand. (...) You hear the murmur and gurgle of streams everywhere, mountain streams which after rain turn to currents that occasionally flood the depressions. (...) ...cocoa made from roasted beans pounded to paste, imbued with spices and dried in the sun, releasing all its flavours in simmering milk. (...) The rest of the morning would have seen me at my desk, slowly patterning the white paper with the blackest of inks; (...) (pp. 33-34)

In stark contrast to this, is the hotel where Singh actually writes his biography, but where he claims to find some sort “order”:

..., because I write in circumstances so different! I work at a rough, narrow table, acquired after a little trouble, since it is in excess of the regulation hotel furniture. The room ... has a metal window (...); the flush door ... is made of a composite material so light that it has already warped and, unless bolted, swings slowly to and fro. The skirting board has shrunk, with all the woodwork. Nothing here has been fashioned with love or even skill; there is as a result nothing on which the eye rest with pleasure. The window looks out on the hotel’s putting green, (...). ... – there is a ceaseless roar of traffic; the tainted air vibrates. (...) (pp. 34-35)

This place is where Singh is writing his autobiography, which is this novel, and these passages have been cited to show the incongruity in the fact that Singh has preferred the dull London hotel room for its simple “sense of order”, instead of the idyllic cocoa estate on the island, providing another example for his “ambivalent attitude” towards location, which is directly related to his sense of rootlessness on Isabella. He prefers the dull landscape of the London suburb to the idyllic but rootless estate on Isabella, which shows to what extent Singh has been affected by “colonialism’s enterprise” of “displacing” its subjects.

After an account of how Singh got to know Sandra and married her, the narrative arrives again at the point when Singh completes, what he has called, his “double journey.” However, this time he dwells longer on this event, for he attaches great significance to it. Again he describes “the blue, green and gold of the tropical island,” but this picture has a second vision, because Singh cannot help thinking: “And I knew it to be, horribly, man-made; to be exhausted, fraudulent, cruel and, above all, not mine.” (p. 50) This situation is “ambivalent”, because Singh has stated before that he could not attach himself to foreign landscapes, because they were not his. But here, on his own island, he feels the same, which means that Singh feels he belongs nowhere, again stressing the suffering that “colonial displacement” has caused. On looking back to this event, Singh believes that his return to Isabella was his gravest mistake: “This return so soon to a landscape which I thought I had put out of my life for good was a failure and a humiliation.” (p. 51) This sentence again implies an “ambivalent attitude” in Singh. Before, he decided to leave his country for ever, then, in London, he determines to escape to his island. Then, arriving at home, he regrets it. And at this point, he believes that he has made the biggest mistake by being dishonest about his feelings, which he ignores. He contemplates that he “should have said. ‘This tainted island is not for me. I decided years ago that this landscape was not mine. Let us move on. Let us stay on the ship and be taken somewhere else.’” (p. 51) This “ambivalent attitude” contains also the irony of the contrast between the general idea that a tropical island is a commonly desired place to escape, and Singh’s rejection of it. However, such is the “effect of colonialism”: a

heaven-like tropical island turns to an emotional hell for the “displaced colonial subject”.

Singh’s argument that the cause of his mistake to return to the island has been London, as “part of the injury inflicted on me by the too solid three-dimensional city in which I could never feel myself as anything but spectral, disintegrating, pointless, fluid,” also creates ambivalence. (p. 52) So the protagonist can be discerned, quite “ambivalently”, to be stuck between the “metropolis” and the “colonial island”. Furthermore, Singh’s contemplation about the “centre of Empire” again contains a binary opposition: London is “The city made by man but passed out of his control: breakdown the negative reaction, activity the positive: opposite but equal aspects of an accommodation to a sense of place (...).” (p. 52) It is typical again of Singh’s “double vision”, that the “metropolis of Empire” contains the negative, as well as the positive; destructive breakdown along with constructive activity, in a place that has been rejected by him. This confusion in Singh shows, once again, the degree of turmoil the “coloniser’s displacing of the colonised” has caused.

Another application of Singh’s “double vision” can be observed in the dock scene, where a family crisis takes place. Singh arrives at Isabella, leaving the ship, and his Hindu mother produces a scene of lamentation because Singh has surprised her with a non-Hindu daughter-in-law. The scene is described with humour:

Picture, then, Sandra in her carefully chosen disembarkation outfit coming face to face with a conventionally attired Hindu widow. Picture her mistaking the raised arms and the first wail for a ritual of welcome and, out of determination to meet strange and ancient customs half-way, concealing whatever surprise and bewilderment she might have felt; then, with the wail broken only to be heightened, the gestures of distress converted explicitly into gestures of rejection, (...). (p. 53)

The point of view of Singh, however, who pays no attention to his mother’s interjections that he has “killed” her, is quite different. Singh believes that his mother has prepared for the scene she is “so successfully making,” because she has received the news before, from people who steadily traffic between London and Isabella. Singh considers the situation as unimportant and even believes that he has done his

mother a favour: “It was a great scene, perhaps the grandest that had been granted her, and was recompense of a sort for the ridicule I had exposed her to, (...)” (p. 53) In the eyes of Singh, this dockside scene “was pure self-indulgence” on his mother’s part. As a result, then, this scene combines two visions: one is the distress of a Hindu widow, who sees her son breaking the rule of tradition to let her choose her daughter-in-law herself; the other is Singh’s view, that this is in fact a favour granted to his mother, in which she promptly indulges herself, because, as Singh asserts: “We are a melodramatic race and do not let pass occasions for public display.” (p. 52) Singh’s ambivalent attitude in this scene is actually only a desperate endeavour to come to terms with this difficult situation, which has been caused, indirectly, again by his being displaced on foreign lands. This scene would probably not have been experienced if Singh had lived in his country of origin, which is India.

During the first weeks of their stay in Isabella, Singh and Sandra live a life that resembles the description of a beautiful holiday on a tropical island, which only very rich people can afford. This situation is in contrast to Singh’s feelings of his arrival to Isabella, and presents therefore an “ambivalent double vision”. In fact, even the young couple is surprised at what they experience: “We had come to the island expecting the meanness and constriction of island life; we were dazzled, as by the sunlight itself, by the freedom which everyone who welcomed us proclaimed by his behaviour.” (p. 55) The binary oppositions of “constriction” and “freedom” imply the “double vision” in this event. The “double vision” continues to be applied as their island life is compared to their life-style in London. In Isabella they “consumed quantities of champagne and caviar,” because they “loved champagne and caviar for the sake of the words alone.” (p. 56) Compared to this, life in London really looks restricted and dull:

And after the anguish of London, after the mean rooms, the shut door; the tight window, the tarnished ceiling, the over-used curtains, after the rigged shilling-in-the-slot gas and electric meters, the dreary journeys through terraces of brick, the life reduced to insipidity. (p. 56)

Singh even asserts that he “felt revived,” which is again a contrast to his mood on his arrival at the harbour of Isabella, and to his longing, once, to escape it, as he states himself:

Once longing for the world, I had wished to say good-bye to the island for good. Now, at a picnic on the hot sand of a beach reticulated with succulent-looking green vines on which grew purple flowers, or at a barbecue around an illuminated swimming-pool, it was possible without fear or longing or the feeling of being denied the world to draw out from one of our group her adolescent secret of cycle rides along a dirt road to the red hills outside her town, in a state west of the Mississippi, to see the sun set; to get from another a picture, in grey and white, of snow and Germans in Prague; and from yet another an English Midland landscape at dusk, a walk among moon daisies on the bank of a stream, an endless summer walk beside water, into a night scene, with swans; these on the island, becoming pictures of a world now totally comprehended, of which I ceased to feel I could form part and from which we had all managed to withdraw. (p. 56)

This passage has been quoted at length because it not only shows Singh’s contrasting views about Isabella, but it also tells about his changing opinion about foreign, predominantly European, landscapes, which he now suddenly can totally comprehend.

Singh’s narrative is full of these contradictory ideas, which continually turn up in his account. Right after the abovementioned passage, for instance, he asserts that he loves to contemplate “this fragmented world” that his group has “put together again.” As a logical opposition to the last phrase comes then his statement that he does so with the feeling of his own “imminent extinction.” (p. 56) The idea of “extinction,” which is used here in opposition to “put together,” comes to Singh because of his existence as a member of the small Indian community on the island. This community is “an intermediate race, the genes passive, capable of disappearing in two generations into any of the three races of men, (...).” (p. 57) An “ambivalent” juxtaposition of opposites is again the case when Singh accounts for his successful investment in land properties to build “Kripalville,” soon corrupting to “Crippleville,” which is again a sort of binary opposition. The insistent recurrence of oppositions like the following confirms this study’s argument that Singh maintains an “ambivalent double vision”:

A man, passionate for security, works and saves for a lifetime and is lucky at the end to have ten thousand pounds. Another, placid with his knowledge of his own imminent extinction, makes half a million dollars in five years. (p. 60)

The binary opposition of “security” and “extinction” is employed here by the narrator Singh, to point to the paradox in the situation: Singh becomes successful in his business because of his placidity. The one who is threatened with extinction prospers quickly because he takes risks; but the person who thinks he is secure, needs a lifetime’s work to save only a tiny portion of what the placid one has won in a few years. Singh seems to be obsessed with the idea of paradoxical truths, when, in trying to explain his source of success, he again resorts to binary oppositions: “When we are in the middle of success nothing seems so easy or natural; in failure, nothing seems so unlikely.” (p. 60) Singh’s utilising of the binary couple of “success” and “failure” serves here, again, to show that the author very often sees things through a double vision, especially to express, as is the case here, a paradoxical truth. The binary oppositions in this passage that have been used to show a paradoxical truth are all related to Singh’s delicate position as a member of a small “displaced” community, whose future is to become merged within other races. Thus, Singh’s “double vision” applied here, is again related to the consequences of “colonial displacement”.

Singh once more states a paradoxical truth, when he thinks that “the time for withdrawal” has come. He verifies the paradox when he says: “It might seem perverse. But the gift which falls on us is also an intolerable burden. It sets us apart; it distorts us; (...),” (p. 61) pointing again to a double vision: “the gift,” which refers here to his success, is only one side of the coin. The other side of it is a “burden,” thus implying that there are always two perspectives to a matter.

Sandra too, appears through a “double vision”, when she is in a bad mood and complains about Isabella: “I suppose this must be the most inferior place in the world.” (p. 69) One implication that could come out of this, is that Sandra, who is a member of the coloniser’s society, looks down on the colony. But she soon shows

that her fury is directed indiscriminately towards colonised and coloniser: “Inferior natives, inferior expats. Frightfully inferior and frightfully happy. The two must go together.” (p. 69) And she does not glorify the centre of Empire either:

I suggested a trip to England. But she was not interested; it remained the country she had wished to get away from. (...) she didn't want to see the Tower or do the galleries or go to the theatre; she didn't even need to close her eyes to see what two weeks or a month in London would be like. She said, 'I can take that as read.' (p. 69)

Thus Sandra's attitude is also rendered ambivalent by Singh. It is not possible to make any single judgement about Sandra, by looking at what she has said here. For Sandra, not only Isabella and its natives are inferior, but also England and its “natives,” that is, the “expats,” which seems to indicate that not only the colonised, but also the members of the coloniser's society suffer from the “effects of colonisation”.

After the episode with Singh and Sandra's first years on Isabella as a newly married couple, the narrative turns to Singh's period of life before leaving Isabella for the first time to study in England. In this account, which starts with Singh's school years, there are “double structures” that are of importance for this study. One of these is about the origin of Singh's name, which indicates that he leads a sort of double life. The fact is that Singh's original name is Ranjit Kripalsingh. But, out of an impulse to imitate Deschampsneufs, the descendent of a French slave-master family, who has got five names other than his last name, Singh breaks Kripalsingh into two and adds the Western name Ralph in front of it, thus obtaining “R. R. K. Singh. The result of this is that Singh leads a double life: at school his identity is different from the one at home, as Singh explains: “I was simply *Singh R*. From the age of eight till the age of twelve this was one of my heavy secrets. I feared discovery at school and at home.” (p. 93) Singh's secret is indeed discovered when his teacher sees his birth certificate. However, Singh's explanation to the teacher reinforces the “ambivalence” of his “double identity”: “Ranjit is my secret name,’ I said. ‘It is a custom among Hindus of certain castes. The secret name is my real name but it ought not to be used in public.’” (p. 94) Singh's father's reaction to the

revelation of his son's "double identity", is also significant, as put by the narrator: "He was not pleased at having to sign an affidavit that the son he had sent out into the world as Ranjit Kripalsingh had been transformed into Ralph Singh." (p. 94) His father explains to himself Singh's action as the influence of his wife's family, but the truth is more indicative for this study: the "transformation" of his son's name has taken place because of the influence of Deschampsneufs, the "coloniser", not his wife's family, the "colonised", which the formal aspects of the names also confirm: Ranjit Kripalsingh is a typical Hindu Indian name, while Ralph Singh curiously sounds Western. The significance of this situation is that the "double life" that Singh has to lead is a consequence of the influence of Deschampsneufs, the son of the "coloniser". The "displaced colonial subject" imitates the coloniser's name to acquire a similar status as the coloniser's. His act thus implies that he is in a condition of distress, caused by his sense of foreignness which leads to a "search for identity".

Another aspect of Singh's early life as a school-boy that hints at his leading a "double life" is that he divides his life into private and public spheres, where the school belongs to the former, and everything outside it to the latter. How this looks in practice is told by the narrator:

Anything that touched on everyday life excited laughter when it was mentioned in a classroom: the name of a shop, the name of a street, the name of street-corner foods. The laughter denied our knowledge of these things to which after hours of school we were to return. (...) Whether we dissected a hibiscus flower or recited the names of Isabellan birds, school remained a private hemisphere. (p. 95)

The nature of this private – public "dichotomy" is concretised when Hok, one of the school-boys, who is a mixture of Chinese, Syrian or European, and African, has to talk to his negro-mother, while they are out on the street with the whole class. As a result of this, Singh describes him as "totally betrayed and as ordinary as the street." Hok is crying "for this betrayal into ordinariness." (p. 97) These are again Singh's binary oppositions: the "private" versus the "public;" the "ordinary" versus the "extraordinary." The meaning of this "double life" is explained by Hok's "dilemma". Because Isabella is a "colonial slave-island" where people of various races and cultures involuntarily have to mix with each other, its individual subjects such as

schoolboys have difficulty in adapting to the public life of the school, which is the location where the different races and cultures meet, and thus they suffer.

These binary oppositions also play a significant role in Singh's private dreams, which make his life on the island "most unbearable." Influenced by his reading about the "homeland of the Asiatic and the Persian Aryans," Singh asserts that he lives a "secret life in a world of endless plains, tall bare mountains, white with snow at their peaks, among nomads on horseback, (...) waking in the mornings to mist and rain and dangerous weather." (p. 98) In another of his dreams, which are part of his "double life", he sees horsemen in the Central Asian plains who are looking for "their leader." Then, a wise man comes along and tells them that their "true leader (...) lies far away, shipwrecked on an island the like of which you cannot visualise." (p. 98) These dreams of Singh explain why he earlier mentioned foreign landscapes, to which he then no longer aspired. But here, at this point, he lives between two worlds, in an obviously "ambivalent" position, as he himself points out: "Beaches and coconut trees, mountains and snow: I set the pictures next to one another. (...) Study the paradox of my fantasy." (p. 98) Singh's desperate longing for other landscapes is most probably also closely related to his "feeling of rootlessness", as a result of being a "displaced colonial subject" in a "manmade" environment.

There are several scenes in this section of the novel that emphasize "the paradox" of Singh's "fantasy." These scenes always convey at the same time Singh's persistent desire to escape the island. For instance, when Singh goes to his grandfather's summer house at the sea-side, idyllic description is juxtaposed with his paradoxical fantasy, which again is an indicator of his "sense of rootlessness":

The trees swayed and rustled and crackled. The white surf crashed and hissed on the wide beach. Among the trees, the two-storeyed timber house. No garden, no yard, no fence: just sand and unnatural plants and vines, glittering green, that grew in hot salt sand. Not my element. I preferred land; I preferred mountains and snow. (p. 106)

In another incident, after a sport event at school, Singh, again influenced by his fantasy, for the first time resolves to leave the island: "I wished to make a fresh, clean start. And it was now that I resolved to abandon the shipwrecked island and all on it, and to seek my chieftainship in that real world ..." (p. 118) As a result of this decision, Singh states that everything about him "became temporary and unimportant." He now believes that "reality" lies "somewhere else." (p. 118)

Singh's discontent with Isabella is even based on some sort of philosophy. He thus refers to an ancient Greek saying, according to which, "the first requisite for happiness was to be born in a famous city." (p. 118) It is no wonder, then, that Singh is not happy with his place of birth:

To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder. From an early age, almost from my first lesson at school about the weight of the king's crown, I had sensed this. (p. 118)

It seems that Singh is adopting here a denigrating and even "Orientalist view" on the "colony": it is "second-hand," and "barbarous;" moreover, it is a place of "disorder". These are just the attributes that the "Western imperialist powers" used in order to justify their enterprise of "colonising" a great part of the world. However, Singh's "double vision" renders his view, as always, "ambivalent":

Now I was to discover that disorder has its own logic and permanence: the Greek was wise. Even as I was formulating my resolve to escape, there began that series of events which, while sharpening my desire to get away, yet rooted me more firmly to the locality where accident had placed me. (p. 118)

The "ambivalence" in his view is obvious: there is "order" (or logic, as he puts it) in "disorder"; and there are events which strengthen his desire for escape, and at the same time, root him more firmly to the island. It is again typical of Singh's ideas to vacillate between opposite visions, which is again an indicator for his "restlessness" caused by his sense of being "displaced".

As Singh struggles with his relationships with class-mates of different races, his mind once more vacillates to his old desire to escape: "Withdrawal; it became

urgent now for me. Before it had been part of a fantasy, (...). Now I felt the need only to get away, ...” (p. 145) As a result of his yearning for different countries, which usually happen to be Western ones, Singh asks his teacher, if he would not prefer to live in the famous countries and cities he has seen before. The teacher replies: “(...) I used to go to England and the continent before the war on leave. It was all right. I did the usual things. But I always felt that my work was here. (...)” (p. 145) This is of course a counter-opinion to Singh’s. And Singh so much admires these famous places, that he does not believe his teacher. As a counter-argument, he mentions how the teacher once talked about such things as “the varieties of Canadian apples,” and “skiing in the Laurentians,” which immediately trigger his admiration: “The Laurentians! Beautiful name for slopes of white, uninhabited snow! (...) My element, and I feared I would be denied it.” (p. 146) Here, Singh has announced what his “element” is. Later, he will again change his mind about this, as has been quoted before, in this chapter, in a flash-forward. But at this stage, Singh’s feelings are quite strong:

There in Liege in a traffic jam, on the snow slopes of the Laurentians, was the true, pure world. We, here on our island, handling books printed in this world, and using its goods, had been abandoned and forgotten. We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new. (p. 146)

Singh’s admiring vision sees the famous Western parts of the world as the “true, pure” world. Isabella and its inhabitants are just an “imitation” of it, just “pretence”. But even in this strong statement, there is a hidden opposition: the phrase “the corruption that came to the New World,” implies that the original locality of corruption is the Old World, which is where the famous places Singh admires so much are to be found, and which is also the “world of the coloniser”. To this “ambivalence”, Singh’s change of mind about his admiration will be added later, but even here, the seeds of opposing ideas can be discerned.

It has been noted that Singh vacillates in his wish to flee the island. Indeed, this happens again when he gives an account of his incestuous relationship to his

aunt Sally, who is younger than himself. This unnatural relationship makes him think:

I began to think of the world, which I had longed to enter, as the violation that awaited us both, inevitable but not the less painful; it was like growing old or dying. I felt I was losing the courage to enter that world. My longing to escape had turned sour; the island had become my past. My world had narrowed. (pp. 155-156)

There are several elements indicated here that could serve as a reason to give up his desire to escape. One is, that the world outside will cause pain and suffering not only to Singh, but also to Sally. The mention of the words “us both” seems to imply that this sudden turn in Singh’s opinion is closely related to his relationship to Sally. The second is that he has lost courage, which is related to the first one. The third is that his waiting for his escape has lasted too long, as the uses of “turn sour” and “the island becoming his past” imply. These words also imply that the time past in a certain location produces a link between the place and the individual, even if he is a “displaced colonial subject”.

This new mood in Singh seems to continue when, at the sea-side with his young uncle Cecil and his step-brother Dalip, he reflects: “The sea. Not my element. Yet it entered so many of my memories of the island.” (p. 161) Here again, the idea of the value of a certain location’s memory is working against Singh’s determination to leave.

A similar mood befalls Singh in another scene, when he visits his school-mate Deschampneufs’s home. His friend’s father tells him the story of one of his female ancestors, who meets Stendhal during her visit in Paris. Stendhal refers indirectly, and out of context, to this Lady in two paragraphs of one of his famous novels. Singh is very impressed to hear about this famous European novelist’s connection to his island, which he used to denigrate. The following paragraph shows a sudden change in Singh’s perception of his world:

I was deeply impressed. I felt that Mr Deschampneufs’s story had brought the past close. It was possible to believe in the link between our island and the

great world. My own dreams were rendered absurd. The outside world was stripped of its quality of legend and reduced to the comprehensible. A writer accounted great had been turned into a simple man, fat and middle-aged and ironic. And nearness exalted; it did not diminish. (pp. 174-175)

What is it that Singh considers as so important as to render his dreams absurd, but a coincidence? But perhaps, this is how experience is gained; by random coincidence. Important is also that Singh feels that his island is redeemed because of its connection to a European person, indicating his admiration for the “world of the coloniser”. Nevertheless, this experience does not put a full-stop to Singh’s desire to escape the island, as will be seen in the analysis of the next scene, and as would be expected from Singh’s custom of approaching his matter through an attitude creating “ambivalence”.

Shortly before Singh leaves Isabella to study in England, he visits his father, the “Gurudeva” who lives as a spiritual leader in a hut at a remote place near the woods and the sea. On his return, Singh meets a friend of Deschampneufs’s father who tells him: “All my friends they go abroad and come back and say what a wonderful time they had. But I note they all come back. I tell you boy, this is a paradise.” (p. 179) It is significant that Singh’s responsive thoughts are in complete opposition to this statement, and these thoughts also indicate that Singh has once again turned to his former position on the subject of leaving Isabella for good:

Fresh air! Escape! To bigger fears, to bigger men, to bigger lands, to continents with mountains five miles high and rivers so wide you couldn’t see the other bank, to journeys that took two days and a night. Good-bye to this encircling, tainted sea! (p. 179)

Very soon after these thoughts pass through Singh’s mind, as he is on the ship heading towards England, his sentiments again vacillate. His school-friends have given him a book with a strip of paper between the pages, saying: “*Some day we shall meet, and some day ...*” (p. 180) This partly obscure message does not seem to have a particular significance, but Singh is deeply affected: “It came to me on the ocean, this message ending in dots, telling me that all my notions of shipwreck were false, telling me this against my will, telling me I had created my past, ...” (p. 180)

By these thoughts Singh, in a way, announces that he has been wrong in longing to escape the island, that the fantasy of being “shipwrecked” on Isabella has been false, because a person’s past in a certain “location” matters very much. Surprisingly, however, as the cold climate of the “imperial Centre” draws nearer, the sunlight grows paler and fades, and the rainbows disappear, Singh’s opinion again changes: “I thought of that world which, as I was steadily separated from it, became less and less discovered, less and less real. No more foolish fears: I was never to return.” (p. 180) It is not difficult to notice the “ambivalence” in the situation. Throughout this chapter it has been observed that Singh’s view about his yearning to escape from Isabella has vacillated from one end to the other. Here, it finishes with a dramatic irony: the reader already knows that Singh will return to Isabella, after this strong assertion of his, about never to return.

The vacillation of Singh’s mind never seems to stop, when the narrator, at this point, returns to the time the novel started, Singh in the attic of the boarding house:

And witness me then, just four months later, standing in the attic of a boarding-house (...), holding a photograph of a girl and praying for a little bit of immortality, a prophylactic against the greater disorder, the greater shipwreck that had come to me already. (p. 180)

As if to emphasise the “ambivalence” in Singh’s vacillation, the narrator finishes this section of the novel by mentioning the time Singh is about to return to Isabella, to the place he has just vowed never to return:

And suddenly I discovered I was ready to leave. We left from Avonmouth. It was August but the wind was chill. Gulls bobbed like cork amid the harbour litter. We headed south and sailed for thirteen days. (p. 181)

The repetition of this passage, at the end of this section, seems like the example of a ring that combines with the beginning of a chain, thus building a vicious circle, composed of rings of vacillation. Singh vacillates and vacillates until he arrives at the point where he started. This is a figurative example for the “ambivalent approach”, through which Singh prefers to view the world. In this case, Singh’s “ambivalent

view” reveals the confusion “colonialism’s displacing of people” like himself has brought to their lives.

The third and final section of the novel continues at the point where the first one stopped: Their unhappy marriage comes to an end as Sandra leaves Isabella. The final section of *The Mimic Men* is characterised by Singh’s entrance into politics, an adventurous period that concludes with Singh’s exile to a London suburb hotel, where he finally finds an “order” of some sort.

Singh’s political career is initiated by his former school-mate Browne’s proposal to Singh to write an article in *The Socialist* about his father’s movement. Singh accepts, because he is attracted by the idea of proclaiming his father’s name and the idea of the magazine. Singh and Brown’s political movement starts then, with the publication of “the anniversary issue of the new-look *Socialist*.” (p. 189) Brown, Singh’s colleague of African origin, is described by the narrator as having an “ambivalent attitude towards the subject he most exploited: the distress of his race” (p. 185) An example for his “ambivalent attitude” is shown in the following case: While campaigning for the employment of Negroes in the firm of “Cable and Wireless,” Brown thinks that they should be excluded from the banks. He justifies his opinion with the idea that, “If I thought black people were handling my few cents I wouldn’t sleep too well.” Even if this “ambivalent point of view”, as expressed by one of Naipaul’s characters, seems like an insult on Negroes, the implication that Brown’s attitude evokes shows the case from a different perspective. The counter idea that is implied by Browne’s attitude is that such a point of view in a person of African origin has only become possible because of the African people’s displacement to this island to mix with different races, where conflict is inevitable. A second counter idea is that this point of view cannot, in fact, naturally belong to Brown. It is an idea that must have come from a non-African race, because it is illogical for an African to discriminate against his own race. The source of this attitude is most probably the “colonialist”, who is notorious for this kind of race discrimination.

The evidence for the idea that Browne's attitude can be the result of his "displacement" is provided by Browne himself, when he tells Singh that the vegetation of Isabella is man-made. As Singh reports:

Browne showed me that its tropical appearance was contrived; there was history in the vegetation we considered most natural and characteristic. (...) In the heart of the city he showed me a clump of old fruit trees: the site of a slave provision ground. From this point look above the roofs of the city, and imagine! Our landscape was as manufactured as that of any great French or English park. But we walked in a garden of hell, among trees, some still without popular names, whose seeds had been brought to our island in the intestines of slaves. (p. 147)

It is no wonder then, that Browne, the descendant of slaves deported from Africa, does not feel at home on this island with its contrived vegetation and its trees brought to Isabella in the intestines of his ancestors. His "ambivalent attitude" towards his race only emphasises, by acting as a mirror of the "colonialist values", the "colonialists' racist attitude".

Singh's and Brown's political movement has success, and they come into power. During their government they have to solve problems that are of significance for this study. For instance, they have to tackle the issue of the expatriate English work-force "who virtually monopolised the administrative section of" (p. 209) Singh's society. Singh's government argues that their presence is "an indignity and an intolerable strain" (p. 209) on their Treasury. Each expatriate costs them twice as much as a local man, because they receive overseas allowances, their housing is subsidised, and every three years they and their families are given passages to London. These arguments, which appear to be justified, are soon declared false by Singh who asserts: "One degree less of innocence would have shown us how incapable we were of doing without expatriates." (p. 209) The use of the word "innocence" implies that the matter is far more complicated, and that the "coloniser" is not willing to let loose of his grip so easily, for: "they were so numerous that to pay them all compensation would have wrecked our finances for at least two years, (...)." Besides, the "coloniser" has justified his presence in the "colony" by an interference that looks positive: "Besides, not a few of the higher technical men, in

forestry and agriculture, were subsidized by London, under a generous scheme for colonial aid.” (p. 209) This example clarifies the motive of the coloniser’s “generosity” in “aiding” the colonies.

Once the presence of the expatriates is secured, their justification by the “colonised” himself also follows soon. Singh admits that they “were beginning to discover” in themselves “a deep reluctance to render the civil service more local.” Some people in Singh’s government even prefer “to be served by men who were no threats to them, who at the end of their service would return to their own country.” (p. 209) What seems like an “ambivalent attitude” of Singh’s government, in fact makes it more obvious how cleverly the “coloniser” manages to keep the control over its “colony” even after granting independence.

When there is resistance among the local civil servants, Singh’s government solves the disturbance by uncovering the “ambivalent attitudes” of “one or two of the higher and more vocally disappointed local men.” Singh explains: “The offending civil servants were coloured men; they spent their leaves in England and sent their children to English schools; they sought to keep their complexions clear and their hair straight by selective marriages.” (p. 210) Singh adds that “Their punishment was just,” and that “the public approved,” because nothing they “said was untrue.” (p. 210) The fault that Singh blames his citizens with, is in fact exactly what has been described in the Introduction of this study as the “partly reformed” colonial’s attitude of imitating the coloniser’s way of life. But it has to be remembered that this act of the “colonial’s mimicry” of the “coloniser” always also contains a sense of threat to the coloniser. For example, missionary Grant advocates only a “partial reform of the colonised”, so that he does not demand equal rights with and freedom from the coloniser. Bhabha’s view on the “colonial’s mimicry” is even more relevant here: the colonial’s efforts to become exactly like the “white man” poses a “threat” to the “coloniser”, because at some point he realises that they are not “so different” after all. Their difference reassures the “coloniser” of his right to rule the “inferior races.” Once this difference diminishes, his “superiority” is threatened. In this respect, the

black civil servants' endeavour to look like the "white English coloniser" contains in itself a threat towards the "coloniser's authority".

Singh's following statement about how they accept even more English civil servants shows how effective the coloniser's precautions are to keep his control over the colony, which gradually moves towards independence: "From London there presently came more offers of technical aid and experts on short-term contracts. We gratefully accepted; so that in the end there were more expatriates than before." (p. 210) Singh and his government is apparently satirically criticised here as traitors to their country, but the use of terms like "technical aid" and "experts" implies at the same time how sinisterly the "coloniser" creeps into the colony's internal affairs. The irony in the following situation that comes as a result of Singh's government's policy on this matter, satirises the "colonial politician", and at the same time shows the success of the coloniser's sinister policy to interfere with its colony even after independence:

Some of our ministers took pains to be seen in public with their English permanent secretaries, who behaved impeccably. It was what these ministers offered their followers; the spectacle of the black man served by the white: revolution we claimed to have created. (p. 210)

Naipaul's way of presenting his character's "ambivalent attitude" serves, as has been studied here, to reveal the coloniser's sinister policies in striving to keep control over the colonies, while seeming to satirise the colonials' attitudes.

A similar example to this can be observed in the instance when an old Negro comes to Browne shortly after their victory in elections. He has been working for years in an English contracting firm, where he has always been passed over when it came to promotion, because, as Singh explains, "Inferior Negroes were the ones his employers selected for promotion, to prove that Negroes couldn't do responsible jobs well." (p. 202) While the old Negro is expecting Browne to help him, Browne astonishes him by replying: "You must leave this firm. It is the only advice I can give you." (p. 202) Browne's explanation for his unexpected advice is equally surprising:

‘Look. I could take up this telephone here and get on to the Chairman. Tomorrow morning you would be sitting in the Manager’s chair.’ (...) ‘Then what?’ Browne said. ‘You want me to tell you? Somebody in London would decide that they want to get this contract or that contract. And then what? Who would be the man they would send to ask me? To bribe me. Who?’ (pp. 202-203)

Browne’s “ambivalent” manner of dealing with this matter is revealing in several aspects. First, it shows that the colonial politician has in fact no power. The phrase “somebody in London” clearly indicates where the “source of power” actually resides. The second aspect revealed in Browne’s attitude is that the “coloniser” is not only the “source of power”, but also the “source of corruption”, as is implied by Browne’s statement about being bribed. The third is that it gives proof as to where the source of the idea that “Negroes cannot do responsible jobs well” is to be found: as has been shown above, it has been applied in an English firm for many years. Interesting is also that Browne himself has adopted this belief, as analysed before, and this instance also proves that Browne has been influenced by the thought of the “coloniser”. This example, then, like the instance about the expatriate civil servants, establishes that the “ambivalent attitude” Naipaul creates in his characters, satirises not only the “colonised”, but the “coloniser” as well.

It is during these futile struggles in governing the colony, where he feels the overwhelming power of the imperial centre, that Singh becomes pessimistic:

But on power and the consolidation of passing power we wasted our energies, until the bigger truth came: that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and landscape, a society not held together by common interests, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from the outside. (p. 206)

This passage should be observed for its “ambivalent vision”. At first glance, it seems like a critique of a “colonial Third World country”. But the statement in this passage about the colonial island’s being “fragmented”, “inorganic”, offering no link between man and landscape, lacking common interests implies, in fact, that this country is so because it is a “colonised land”, where “displaced people” have been brought together by force, by the “colonial powers”. It is artificial because it has been created by the colonialists and depends therefore on them for power. Thus, here is another

example for Singh's "ambivalent attitude" in his criticism of his "homeland" where he actually, by implication, criticises the real source of this "chaotic" society.

Singh gets more and more frustrated in this "chaotic" society and gradually his longing for "order" and "escape" revives:

A man, I suppose, fights only when he hopes, when he has a vision of order, when he feels strongly there is some connexion between the earth on which he walks and himself. But there was my vision of disorder which it was beyond anyone to put right. (p. 207)

Again, here is "double criticism". These deficiencies attributed to the island are there because they have been produced by the "colonising powers". Singh, like so many of the "artificial" citizens of the place, does not feel at home in the "colony":

I looked on the slave Island and tried to pretend it was mine. There was my sense of intrusion which deepened as I felt my power to be more and more a matter of words. So defiantly, in my mind, I asserted my character as intruder, the picturesque Asiatic born for other landscapes. (p. 207)

It is not Isabella that is criticised here. It is the "coloniser", who has "displaced" Singh and made him an "intruder" on the island, where the African "slaves" and the white "masters" already lived, causing for "picturesque Asiatics" like Singh to experience "double distress", or a "double displacement".

Singh's desire to escape is fulfilled as the country more and more slips into racial conflict over a subject, which, not surprisingly, has to do with the coloniser. The task of nationalising the sugar estates, which are owned by the English Lord Stockwell, has been given to Singh, but the matter is difficult and Singh names the source of the obstacle: "Nationalisation was as impossible as getting rid of the expatriate civil servants: so much London has made clear." (p. 220) This statement makes clear that the outbreak of turmoil in Isabella is influenced by the coloniser, who is not at all willing to help with this problem. To give the appearance of trying to solve this problem, Singh prepares for a trip to London with a delegation, which is known from the beginning to be futile. Singh explains: "And London had made its attitude clear. It would not be received by the Minister. London was playing the

game up to a point, doing us a favour.” (p. 221) Singh’s longing for escape has revived as he feels that this is the end of his political career and he asserts: “I would have nothing to return to. I began to know relief, to tell the truth; I longed to leave.” (p. 221)

It has previously been observed that Singh was “ambivalent” in his desire to escape from Isabella. But now he seems satisfied with the idea: “Relief: I was astonished by the mood that settled on me. Departure had eluded me once before. Now at last, deviously, it was coming: fulfilment and truth.” (p. 221) But on arriving in London, Singh again seems to vacillate: “But this was the city which, exploring now from the hotel, I consciously tried to abolish. I had dissected and destroyed the glamour of this city; I had seen it as made up of individuals; I had ceased to see.” (p. 223) After his humiliating interview with the British Minister, who tells him: “You can take back to your people any message you like” as an answer to his question, “How can I take this message back to my people?”, Singh again turns to his negative view about the “centre of Empire”: “Undignified, but I felt I was bleeding, with that second intimation of the forlornness of the city on which, twice, I had fixed so important a hope.” (pp. 224-225) This “sense of homelessness” in Singh is important, because it represents the “displaced” colonial’s difficult situation of not knowing where he belongs. The “displaced colonial” desperately is in search for a “homeland”, but wherever he turns, he is disappointed. The colony is “fragmented”, “makeshift”, and “chaotic”; the “centre of Empire” is “forlorn” and “made up of individuals”. But, being an exile, Singh has to make a decision about where to live.

Ironically, it is Lord Stockwell, who is the owner of the sugar estates to be nationalised, who gives him solace. “Balm came from an unexpected source, ...” (p. 225) as Singh describes it. After Singh’s disappointment with the British Minister, he goes to the house of Lord Stockwell, where he is invited for dinner. His mood contrasts with his feelings before and after the visit. He reports about his mood on leaving the Minister: “I felt the hopelessness of the wish for revenge for all that this city had inflicted on me. (...) Where now the magical light? I walked about the terrible city.” (p. 224) It is remarkable that Singh now views London through this

negative light, after having been reproached by the Minister of the “Imperial Centre”, because, perhaps, it shows the extent to which the “coloniser’s authority” influences the psyche of a “colonial subject”. In the taxi, on his way to Lord Stockwell’s, Singh’s tension is at its peak: “I was prepared to assault the driver at the first sign of deviousness. I was ripe for a full public scene. It was a reaction of simplicity, based on an ignorance both of Lord Stockwell and of the behaviour of the secure.” (p. 225) If the last sentence implies a sentiment in favour of Lord Stockwell, the “coloniser”, it at the same time contains the counter-view: “the behaviour of the secure.” If the coloniser, the tormentor of the “colonised”, shows mature and balanced behaviour, then it is because he is secure, he can afford to do so in his security. The behaviour of Lord Stockwell that comforts Singh so much, consists of a sentence he utters: “You’ll never grow bald, that’s for sure.” (p. p225) Singh feels relief: “And the room became real again. I was impressed; I was pleased; I was relieved. This balm I sorely needed. I was foolishly grateful.” (p. 225) Above, it has been noted that a reproach of the “Imperial Minister” demolished Singh’s mood. Now, in this scene, it is an utterance of a feudal Lord of the “colonisers”, which is not really an extremely positive remark, that restores Singh’s mood to such an extent. But as always, there is a counter-vision in this scene: Singh admits himself that his gratefulness is “foolish.” However, considering that his condition of being “displaced” and “homeless” is the direct result of the “colonial enterprise”, he cannot be blamed. He is a “displaced”, weak “colonial” and needs a place where he can belong; and he chooses the “coloniser’s home”. Another thing that affects Singh at the Stockwells is that the Lord’s daughter gives him a children’s rhyme book to be returned on a date they agree upon. Singh is again overwhelmed: “It was not at all what I was expecting. I was tremendously flattered. A link with the past, with the city of magical light.” (p. 229) Through Stella, Singh suddenly establishes a link with what he calls “the city.” But, in fact, the above analysed quotations have already given signals of the “transformation” in Singh. This transformation continues when he meets with Stella and starts an affair with her. Stella’s way of delighting in things affects him:

It was a way of looking at the city and being in it, a way of appearing to manage it and organise it for a series of separate, perfect pleasures (...) It was a creation, of the city I had once sought; an unexpected fulfilment. Perhaps I

was deceived by Stella's manner and skills, which might have been the manner and skills of her class. But I was willingly deceived. (p. 231)

This passage is important because it contains Singh's "unexpected fulfilment" of his search for a connection to a certain place. Yet, Singh's approach is again "ambivalent", since he acknowledges that he is deceived. However, he asserts that he does it willingly, which verifies the above-made argument that Singh, as a "homeless", "displaced", exiled colonial, has no other choice. He almost is looking for an excuse to find a link to the "centre of Empire", which coincidence provides him with.

When Singh is on the aeroplane, returning temporarily to Isabella, he realises that there was no need for him to return: "The city and the snow, the island and the sea: one could only be exchanged for the other." (p. 232) Singh's dilemma of having to choose between the two landscapes thus comes to an end. By this statement he means that for him, there can be only one of these landscapes; he has to decide for one of them. Singh chooses the first.

Before returning to the scene of writing his biography in the hotel-room in London, Singh's narrative finally tells about his final days in Isabella. On his return there, he finds that there is racial conflict in the country and his position is undermined. Singh again points out his regret for having returned to Isabella after completing his studies in London, and takes the blame for the social disaster in Isabella on himself: "I must bear much of the responsibility. It was a responsibility that began with that moment of return to the slave island, that moment of morning stillness; it continued to the moment of final departure." (p. 240) These lines again express a "sentiment of homelessness", where the term "slave island" is especially significant in that it reminds of the fact that this place has been created by the colonisers and their practice of "displacing" people. For that reason, Singh simply feels he does not belong here.

Then, the narrative flashes forward, to the moment Singh is about to finish this work. Singh tells about another fulfilment, after the one at the Stockwells, he has

found in this suburban hotel of London: “After eighteen months of the anaesthetizing order of life in this hotel, despair and emptiness had burnt themselves out.” (p. 242) It seems that he has finally found the order he has been seeking throughout his life. However, his ambivalent attitude can be discerned here too: attention has to be paid at his use of the words “anaesthetizing order.” The order he has found, and which has removed “despair and emptiness,” is “anaesthetizing,” which means that it is not really curing, it is only numbing Singh’s feeling of suffering. It means, by implication, that Singh’s pain is still there.

However, Singh is somehow satisfied with this situation. The act of writing and the routine of the hotel have given him tranquillity:

It never occurred to me that the writing of this book might have become an end in itself, that the recording of a life might become an extension of that life. It never occurred to me that I would relish the constriction and order of hotel life, (...). Order, sequence, regularity: it is there every time the electric meter clicks, accepting one more of my shillings. (p. 244)

In a scene before, Singh stated that he was being deceived willingly by the fulfilment Stella gave him. It may well be assumed that Singh is willingly deceived here as well, because, being a “displaced”, “homeless”, exiled “colonial”, he has no other alternative. The order that the routine of hotel life offers can only be “anaesthetizing,” as Singh admits above, and the same can be said for the clicking of the electric meter. Moreover, in the above quotation the order provided by the hotel is described as being “constricting:” Singh “relishes” the constriction and order of hotel life. Singh’s attitude seems to be “ambivalent” here again. But, as said before, he has to opt for what he can get, having not much choice.

The novel finishes with Singh being settled in his hotel-room. Singh’s final observations on his present situation are worth to analysing. By attaching himself to the “simple order” of this hotel in the “Centre of Empire”, Singh has got rid of his longing for ideal landscapes: “I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes and no longer wish to know the god of the city. This does not strike me as loss. I feel, instead, I have lived through attachment and freed myself from one cycle of events.” (p. 250)

Singh's search for ideal landscapes has been the natural consequence of his being "displaced" onto a "slave-island," where population, as well as vegetation is "manmade". From this "chaotic" geography Singh has taken refuge into the "heart of Empire", the arbiter of the suffering in the colonies. Nevertheless, Singh's final fulfilment comes from his own civilisation, rather than that of the coloniser's:

It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have fulfilled the fourfold division of life prescribed by our Aryan ancestors. I have been student, householder and man of affairs, recluse. (pp. 250-251)

This statement by Singh in the last page of his biography is quite significant. Singh has sought refuge from his "homelessness" in the "heart of Empire", the original source of his suffering; the real sense of fulfilment, however, comes from his ancestors, the source of his own culture, which can be regarded as an indicator that Singh is not, after all, immersed in the "culture of the coloniser", that the dull landscape of the "imperial centre" is only bearable with the supporting spirit of his own culture.

CHAPTER IV

AMBIVALENT VISIONS IN A *BEND IN THE RIVER*

A Bend in The River (1979) was published twelve years after *The Mimic Men* (1967). The latter was different from the two previously analysed novels in that it contained less dialogue and had a first person narrator, who used a contemplative narration. *A Bend in The River* has in common with *The Mimic Men* a contemplative first person narrator, but it adds another difference from the earlier works of Naipaul: the setting is radically changed; this time the protagonist, Salim, lives in a tropical country of Africa. In addition, he is a Muslim; nevertheless, this difference is only superficial, because Salim is the member of an immigrant family whose ancestors have migrated to Africa from India and belong to a sect of Muslims who are closer to Hindus. In that respect, the religious difference between Salim and the previous protagonists, only reflects itself in the name, and little else.

Having pointed to the complete change of geography, it has to be said, however, that this difference does not decrease the usefulness of this text for this study, as it depicts an African country that has been under the rule of “colonial powers” for some time, but has achieved independence. On the contrary, the change of setting to a “post-colonial country” in Africa will give this study the chance to explore how Naipaul depicts characters and events in this distant “colonial location”.

A Bend in The River, starts with an account of Salim’s drive from the East Coast of Africa to the centre, where he has bought a shop. After this account, the narrative flashes back to the East Coast to tell about Salim’s motives for leaving his family and community and start a new life in the town at the bend in the river. Salim is the member of a community which settled on the coast of East-Africa some centuries earlier. Ethnically they belong to the North-Western part of India. He believes that their community is under imminent threat and therefore decides to buy Nazruddin’s shop in the centre of the African continent.

The town where this shop is placed has just survived a rebellion of native Africans, which took place after the colonial power granted independence to the country. The first chapter of the novel, *The Second Rebellion*, is about this period of Salim's life, when he struggles to build his own existence in this foreign post-colonial African country, until a second rebellion hits the town. The second chapter, *The New Domain*, tells about the period that follows the second rebellion, in which the town goes through an economical boom, and Salim meets Indar, an old friend and member of his former community, and Yvette, the wife of a Belgian historian who has come to the new Domain in the town to give lectures. In the third chapter, *The Big Man*, the authority of the new native ruler, "the Big Man," is felt more and more until the town suddenly slides into social unrest again. In the final chapter, *Battle*, Salim loses much of his property as a result of the president's scheme of "nationalisation" and narrowly escapes the imminent destruction in the town by boarding the steamer that takes him away from the field of battle on the dark river.

This text has in common with all the previously studied novels, a criticism of the colonised. Remarkably, this criticism appears in the very first sentences of the text:

The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it. Nazruddin, who had sold me the shop cheap, didn't think I would have it easy when I took over. The country, like others in Africa, had had its troubles after independence. The town in the interior, at the bend in the river, had almost ceased to exist; and Nazruddin said I would have to start from the beginning. (Naipaul, 1979: p. 9)

The critique in the first sentence is not an open one, but the following sentences of the paragraph explain who the addressee of the implied critique is: the colonised people of Africa. There are two different arguments in this paragraph, which remind of typical arguments of "colonial discourse" that try to "justify" the "conquering and exploiting" of foreign lands: The first one is, if they "allow" themselves to be conquered, they deserve it; the second is, they "cannot rule" themselves, because as soon as they get "independence" they fall into turmoil.

As Salim tells about his difficult journey to the interior of the African continent, the reader learns what kind of troubles appear after this African country has achieved independence from the “colonial powers”: Salim, in his Peugeot, has to pass frontier posts with gunned men negotiating for half a day “in the forest outside wooden huts that flew strange flags” (p. 9) to bribe them finally with a few dollar notes and tinned food. The corruption is clearly expressed in Nazruddin’s reply to Salim’s inquiry about visas: “bank-notes were better.” (p. 9) When Salim arrives at the town, he sees what “trouble” after independence concretely means:

the town at the bend in the river was more than half destroyed. What had been the European suburb near the rapids had been burnt down, and bush had grown over the ruins; it was hard to distinguish what had been gardens from what had been streets. (p. 10)

The binary opposition involved in this description of “trouble” after the “coloniser” has left is obvious: “civilisation” versus “bush,” civilisation represented by the “European suburb,” and bush representing the “African people.” The interpretation of this would be then, that as soon as the coloniser leaves the African alone, he destroys the civilisation that the “European coloniser” has brought into the jungle.

However, Salim also shows the other side of the coin. As he makes his difficult journey through bush and jungle, he thinks of the past, when enslaved Africans had to make the same journey, but in the opposite direction, to reach the East Coast. Salim can suddenly sympathise with them, as he experiences a similar paradoxical irony to the one the slaves used to face:

The further away they got from the centre and their tribal area, the less liable they were to cut loose from the caravans and run back home, the more nervous they became of the strange Africans they saw about them, until at the end, on the coast, they were no trouble at all, and were positively anxious to step into the boats and be taken to safe homes across the sea. Like the slave far from home, I became anxious to arrive. (...) (p. 10)

This paradox of the slave’s journey shows the dramatic plight and “victimisation” of the African, and provides a counter opinion to Salim’s use of “critical discourse against the colonised”, thus indicating an “ambivalent attitude” in Salim.

Another element in Salim's discourse that points to "ambivalence" in his attitude can be observed in the way he describes the African forest and village. For Salim, there is something extraordinary about the forest and the river, especially at night. It is as if the African forest is against any foreigner: "The river and the forest were like presences, and much more powerful than you. You felt unprotected, an intruder." (p. 14) This idea is highly significant when applied to the "coloniser", who is after the "conquest and exploitation" of foreign lands. The river and the forest, if seen as described by Salim, protect the land from "intruders". During the period of "formal colonisation", before independence, Salim regards the land as "ordinary": "You could imagine the land being made ordinary, fit for men like yourself, as small parts of it had been made ordinary for a short while before independence – the very parts that were now in ruins." (p. 14) So it was the "coloniser" who has made the land "ordinary"; but it has to be noted that it was only "on small parts of it" and only "for a short while;" yet, as soon as the coloniser goes, the bush takes back what belongs to itself.

For the native African, however, the forest means security and protection. Salim describes, for instance, the trader woman Zabeth, who buys goods from Salim in the town and carries them "to her fishing village, the true, safe world, protected from other men by forest and clogged-up waterways. (...) In the deepest forest was the greatest security. (...) No one liked going outside his territory" (p. 15)

To summarise the "ambivalent vision" that has been studied above, on the one hand, Salim sees the Africans as a corrupt people, who cannot run themselves without the guidance of the colonisers. So they "deserve" to be colonised. The ruined European suburb shows that independence means turmoil and destruction for the colonised African. On the other hand, Salim sympathises with the plight of the enslaved Africans, and he describes how the African forest provides protection and security for the African villager, while it threatens any intruder. Moreover, it has been noted that the use of the concept of the "intruder" bears significance in its possible implication of the European coloniser as "intruder" in Africa.

After his account of his journey to the town at the bend in the river, Salim's narrative returns to the time he stills lived with his family on the East Coast of Africa, where he tells about the origin of his family. It is important to observe that Salim again applies criticism on the colonised; before, he criticised the native Africans; here, he criticises his family, which is Muslim, but in its customs and attitudes closer to the Hindus of north-western India:

When we had come no one could tell me. We were not that kind of people. We simply lived; we did what was expected of us, what we had seen the previous generation do. We never asked why; we never recorded. We felt in our bones that we were a very old people; but we seemed to have no means of gauging the passing of time. (...) The past was simply the past. (p. 17)

This criticism is a harsh one, because it simply describes the “stereotypical attributes” of “backward” people who morosely do what they have seen in their ancestors. Salim then talks about the “period of upheaval” in Africa, “the expulsion of the Arabs, the expansion of Europe, the parcelling out of the continent,” (p. 18) which can be considered to contain an implied criticism of the “coloniser”. However, right after this reference to Europe's aggression on Africa, Salim expresses his admiration for European scholarship: “All that I know of our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written by Europeans.” (p. 18) This statement is important in that it implies two arguments: one is that Salim is grateful to Europeans because they provide him with his own history; the other is that Salim sees his history through the eyes of European scholars, who might give him their subjective interpretation of history. The former idea implies benevolence, but the latter implies threat. When Salim states examples of historical knowledge about their history, the implied ideas are again twofold:

If I say that our Arabs in their time were great adventurers and writers; that our sailors gave the Mediterranean the lateen sail that made the discovery of the Americas possible; that an Indian pilot led Vasco da Gama from East Africa to Calicut; that the very word *cheque* was first used by our Persian merchants; if I say these things it is because I have got them from European books. They formed no part of our knowledge or pride. Without Europeans, I feel, all our past would have been washed away, like the scuff-marks of fishermen on the beach outside our town. (p. 18)

There are “two visions” involved in Salim’s argument above: the first is that his ancestors made great achievements in the past and contributed to “modern civilisation”; the making possible of the discovery of the Americas is not a little thing. The second, however, is quite a negative one: the fact that the Europeans have made it possible for Salim and his people to know about their great achievements of the past, means that their great time is over, and it is now the great time of the Europeans.

Nevertheless, even if Salim has this feeling of great admiration towards Europeans, he is aware of the negative sides of the Europeans as he makes clear in his comparison between the nature of slavery practiced by Orientals on the East Coast, and by Europeans on the West Coast:

The slavery of the east coast was not like the slavery of the west coast. No one was shipped off to plantations. Most of the people who left our coast went to Arabian homes as domestic servants. Some became members of the family they had joined; a few became powerful in their own right. To an African, a child of the forest, who had marched down hundreds of miles from the interior and was far from his village and tribe, the protection of a foreign family was preferable to being alone among strange and unfriendly Africans. (p. 19)

The difference between Oriental style slavery and Western style slavery, as described by Salim, is striking. This comparison clearly shows Salim’s “ambivalent attitude” in his criticism of his own people, as studied above, and the Europeans, as observed here. Another thing that has to be remarked about this passage is that it reveals the “multi-faceted” view-points that Salim employs. Because, in addition to the comparison of the styles of slavery that the two “antagonistic civilisations” practice, Salim also implicitly states that the African slaves have no choice but to accept the families they are sold to, because of the hostile environment. Then there is the second criticism embedded in this one, that the African people, outside their familiar tribal environment, are hostile to each other and lack solidarity. So this paragraph involves criticism of all parties concerned: the Europeans, the people from the Indian Ocean, and the native Africans.

There are more passages where Salim applies an “ambivalent attitude” in his criticism of Europeans as well as his own people, which is the immigrant community on the coast of East Africa. Salim tells about how the stability of their region deteriorates as a rebellion breaks out in the north, which “the British seemed unable to put down.” (p. 22) This statement reveals that the “colonial power” of the region is British, and Salim’s following argument gains more significance in the light of this knowledge: “...I don’t think it was my nervousness alone that made me feel that the political system we had known was coming to an end, and that what was going to replace it wasn’t going to be pleasant.” (p. 22) The meaning of this is that the coloniser will have to go, but the native rulers will be worse than the “colonial rulers”. Salim’s explanation for this paradox is a good example for his “ambivalent attitude”: “I feared the lies – black men assuming the lies of the white men.” (p. 22) Again, Salim criticises two sides at once: the blacks who will take over are going to be worse than the colonisers; paradoxically however, what makes them worse are the very lies of the former colonisers, “the white men.” The native African becomes worse than the “white man” when he adopts his “lies.”

Salim seems to be aware of his “ambivalent” sentiments about the Europeans when he says: “If it was the Europeans who gave us on the coast some idea about our history, it was Europe I feel, that also introduced us to the lie.” (p. 22) The word “introduced” implies that the colonisers came with their lies. Indeed, Salim states that, “those of us who had been in that part of Africa before the Europeans had never lied about ourselves.” (pp. 22-23) However, for Salim, the non-European is not virtuous either. If he does not lie, it is because of his simple existence: “Not because we were moral. We didn’t lie because we never assessed ourselves and didn’t think there was anything for us to lie about; we were people who simply did what we did.” (p. 23) Salim’s point of view about his own people is in fact humiliating: they are honest not because they are virtuous, but because they are “simple” people who do not assess their present situation and therefore can be considered to be of an “inferior race”. The vice of the European, however, comes from his “superiority”:

But the Europeans could do one thing and say something quite different; and they could act in this way because they had an idea of what they owed to their

civilisation. It was their great advantage over us. The Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else; but at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being an intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their powers, they could express both sides of their civilisation; and they got both the slaves and the statues. (p. 23)

Salim's "ambivalent attitude" is once more notable here. There is both criticism and praise of the "European coloniser". The Europeans are "intelligent," "energetic," and "at the peak of their power." But their civilisation has got two sides: "the slaves," and "the statues." The meaning of this is perhaps also expressed in the statement that "the Europeans could do one thing and say something quite different." What the colonisers say is expressed by the statues they put up; however, what they do, finds its expression in the "slaves." Another interpretation of the phrase is, of course, that the European coloniser is hypocritical. Salim's "ambivalent attitude" in this passage seems more like praise than criticism, at first glance, especially as a comparison to his own people; but the analysis here shows that the critical aspect in this passage is not a negligible one, if one assumes that one of its main arguments is that the European coloniser is hypocritical.

Salim finishes his comparison of the immigrant community from the Indian Ocean in Africa and the European coloniser by concluding that the ability of the European to assess himself equips him to cope with the changes. Salim's point of view reveals that he sees the "coloniser" as "superior" to his own people: "And I saw, when I compared the Europeans with ourselves, that we had ceased to count in Africa, that really we no longer had anything to offer. The Europeans were preparing to get out, or to fight, or to meet the Africans half-way. We continued to live as we had always done, blindly." (p. 23) Salim's comparison of his own people and the Europeans is interesting in that it is one between two "intruders" in Africa. It shows, however, how different the two "intruders" are. Salim's people seem more like an innocent kind of intruder. The European intruder, however, is a contrived one. They practice slavery and, at the same time, put up statues of their virtues. They occupy African lands to exploit its natural and human resources, but when they get into trouble, they are prepared to pursue any solution that suits their interests: leaving,

fighting, or agreeing to compromises. Salim's criticism of his own people by comparing them to the Europeans, serves here, as the study of his "ambivalent attitude" reveals, to criticise the colonisers' contrivance, hypocrisy, and passion for material gain.

After the narrator's short return to the time before Salim leaves the coast, it continues with his new life at the bend in the river. As Salim gets into contact with the people of this formerly colonised country, he reveals an "ambivalent attitude" in his criticism of Africans as well as Europeans.

To observe his "ambivalent attitude" towards the Africans, several examples of criticisms of Africans will be studied. For instance, the issue of women is related in such a way, that it reminds of the argument of "colonial discourse" that Africans are "the embodiment of rampant sexuality," which has been quoted before in the Introduction of this study. Thus Salim reports:

About the women, the attitude was just as matter-of-fact. Shortly after I arrived my friend Mahesh told me that women slept with men whenever they were asked; a man could knock at any woman's door and sleep with her. (...) To Mahesh the sexual casualness was part of the chaos and corruption of the place. (p. 44)

If this account is compared with the passage Edward Said quotes from Flaubert to illustrate how the Orient is made a "living tableau of queerness," (Said, 1978: p. 103) the similarity of the approach will be seen to be striking:

To amuse the crowd, Mohammed Ali's jester took a woman in the Cairo Bazaar one day, set her on the counter of a shop, and coupled with her publicly while the shopkeeper calmly smoked his pipe. (Said, 1978: p. 103)

Even if this attitude of mentioning this "queer" observation of Mahesh moves Salim into the same frame with a European like Flaubert, Mahesh's final sentence in the passage re-establishes an "ambivalent attitude", because it implies that this strange sexual behaviour of the Africans in the town is a result of the "corruption and chaos of the place." The chaotic situation of the town has been indirectly caused by the

“colonising Europeans” who first built the town during the “period of colonialism”, and then left it to turmoil by granting independence.

In another example of criticism towards Africans it is again Mahesh who almost becomes the mouthpiece for a “stereotype” often used by “colonial discourse”:

Shortly after I arrived Mahesh had said to me of the local Africans, ‘You must never forget, Salim, that they are *malins*.’ He had used the French word, because the English words he might have used – ‘wicked’, ‘mischievous’, ‘bad-minded’ – were not right. The people here were *malins* the way a dog chasing a lizard was *malin*, or a cat chasing a bird. The people were *malins* because they lived with the knowledge of men as prey. (p. 60)

Bhabha has been quoted in the Introduction to assert that according to a “colonial stereotype”, “the black is savage.” Here, Mahesh does not use exactly the same word, but the explanation of *malins* can be said to come very close to the meaning of “savage.” The “ambivalent aspect” of this passage, however, is that the “savage nature” of the African is mentioned in this passage not to humiliate them, but to emphasise that this is the native African’s way of life, and that he has to be accepted as that. Mahesh’s warning that “you must never forget that they are *malins*” can be regarded as a sort of warning to be cautious about the Africans, just as one is cautious about a wild animal. But at the same time, it can be taken to mean that whoever does not behave according to the nature of the African, does not have the right to blame him when a disaster happens.

When the second rebellion of native Africans takes place, it is again Mahesh who knows a “stereotype attribute” of the Africans: “It’s a good thing Africans have short memories. Go and have a look at the people who’ve come to save them from suicide.” (p. 79) Mahesh’s criticism seems to be directed at Africans. But it has to be noted that he describes them as having short memories, because the men who have been sent by the new president of the country to stop the rebellion are white men. So this criticism at the same time refers to the colonial period of the country, and thus to the colonial rulers.

An example where this “double criticism” is more obvious is Salim’s description of the African native’s rage. When he arrives in the town he sees the signs of destruction that followed after independence from “colonial rule”: All colonial statues and monuments have been knocked down. Salim’s account is as following:

Pedestals had been defaced, protective railings flattened, floodlights smashed and left to rust. Ruins had been left as ruins; no attempt had been made to tidy up. The names of all the main streets had been changed. (...) No one used the new names, because no one particularly cared about them. The wish had only been to get rid of the old, to wipe out the memory of the intruder. It was unnerving the depth of the African rage, the wish to destroy, regardless of the consequences. (p. 32)

Salim is clearly critical of the African rage in this passage, but it is also possible to partly sympathise with the Africans, who are angry at the “colonial intruder” and his memory, which they understandably want to wipe out.

In another passage, which is told by Salim during the second rebellion in the town, his “ambivalent attitude” towards the Africans is even more apparent:

At independence the people of our region had gone mad with anger and fear – all the accumulated anger of the colonial period, and every kind of awakened tribal fear. The people of our region had been much abused, not only by Europeans and Arabs, but also by other Africans; and at independence they had refused to be ruled by the new government in the capital. (...) If the movement had been more reasoned, had been less a movement of simple reaction, the people of our region might have seen that the town at the bend in the river was theirs, the capital of any state they might set up. But they had hated the town for the intruders who had ruled in it and from it and they had preferred to destroy the town rather than take it over. (p. 72)

On the one hand, Salim sympathises with the Africans who have been much abused by the “intruders,” on the other hand he blames them for being “simple minded,” as his use of the term “simple reaction” indicates, which again reminds of one of Bhabha’s examples for “colonial stereotypes”: “the black is simple minded.” Yet, Salim sympathises with the Africans. Thus he further asserts: “They were like people who didn’t know their own minds. They had suffered so much; they had brought so much suffering on themselves.” (p. 72) However, as can be seen in this example,

even Salim's sympathy is not without criticism. The Africans suffer not only from the "intruder", but also from themselves.

Salim's description of the Africans' rage shows that even the Africans have an "ambivalent attitude" in their rage:

Having destroyed their town, they had grieved for it. They had wished to see it a living place again. And seeing it come to a kind of life again, they had grown afraid again. (...) They looked so feeble and crazed when they came out of their villages and wandered about the town. They looked so much like people needing the food and the peace that the town offered. But it was people like them, going back to their villages, who wished to lay the town low again. Such rage! (...) (pp. 72-73)

What is being described in this passage is indeed a vacillating behaviour of the native Africans. Their rage at the suffering that has been inflicted on them is so large that it is hardly possible to tame it. It is, as Salim asserts, "like a forest fire that goes underground and burns unseen along the roots of trees it has already destroyed ..." (p. 73) The depth of the Africans' rage, which Salim criticises, shows at the same time the dimension of suffering that the "intruders," among them the Europeans the most recent and probably the most effective ones, have inflicted on the native African people.

Another evidence for Salim's "ambivalent attitude" is that he also criticises the European colonisers. In a passage, for instance, where he describes a certain area of the town the following critical observation is made:

The smoke of charcoal braziers and other open fires rose blue among the imported ornamental trees – cassia, breadfruit, frangipani, flamboyant – and gave a touch of the forest village to a residential area where, as I had heard, in the old days neither Africans nor Asians were permitted to live. I knew the trees from the coast. I suppose they had been imported there as well; but I associated them with the coast and home, another life. The same trees here looked artificial to me, like the town itself. (...) (p. 57)

This passage seems like a partial explanation for the Africans' rage. The Europeans have come into the jungle, built this "artificial" town, and have even created

residential areas where the native of this country is not allowed to live. This description makes it easier to understand the rebels whose rage “was like a rage against metal, machinery, wires, everything that was not of the forest and Africa.” (p.86) It is in this state of psychology that the African vacillates between his rage to the “coloniser”, and his need for civilisation, to which, once he has been introduced, he cannot turn his back anymore, as is noted by Salim, at the end of the second rebellion:

As for the starveling rebels of our region, they soon began to reappear in the town, more starved and abject, their blackened rags hanging on them, (...). There was bitterness in their wasted faces, and for a little while they were withdrawn, like people slightly crazed. But they needed the town they wanted to destroy; ..., and they returned to their old habit of obedience. (p. 85)

There is a second passage, where Salim criticises the vanity of the colonisers, which, in his view, invites the rage of the Africans. On the monument near the dock gates, which has been ruined during the first rebellion after independence, a Latin sentence is carved. The carved motto *Miscerique probat propulos et feodera jungi* means, “He approves of the mingling of the peoples and their bonds of union.” (p. 68) Salim reports that according to myth, the first Roman hero, in his search to found his city, arrives at the coast of Africa, where the local queen falls in love with him. When this event seems to threaten the hero’s return to Italy, one of the gods interferes, saying that “the great Roman god might not approve of a settlement in Africa, of a mingling of peoples there, of treaties of union between Africans and Romans.” (p. 68) Salim is astonished at this because the carving on the monument outside their dock gates states exactly the opposite: “... a settlement in Africa raises no doubts: the great Roman god approves of the mingling of peoples and the making of treaties in Africa.” (p. 68) Salim’s interpretation of this corruption by the European colonisers clearly reveals his critical approach to the coloniser:

I was staggered. Twisting two-thousand-year-old words to celebrate sixty years of the steamer service from the capital! Rome was Rome. What was this place? To carve the words on a monument besides this African river was surely to invite the destruction of the town. Wasn’t there some little anxiety, as in the original line in the poem? And almost as soon as it had been put up the monument had been destroyed, leaving only bits of bronze and the mocking words, gibberish to the people ... (p. 68)

This passage obviously indicates that not only the “great Roman god” and the Africans, but also Salim does not approve of the “settlement and mingling with peoples in Africa,” which is only a too mild euphemism for the act of “colonising Africa”. Indeed, the European colonisers have gone much further than settling, mingling with people, and making treaties in Africa. They have assumed themselves to be the “master” and “owner” of the land and the people of the continent.

In another passage, that emphasises both the chaos of the town and the wrongness of the coloniser, Salim’s “ambivalent attitude” in his criticism is once again notable:

To talk of trouble was to pretend there were laws and regulations that everyone could acknowledge. Here there was nothing. There had been order once, but that order had had its own dishonesties and cruelties – that was why the town had been wrecked. We lived in that wreckage. Instead of regulations there were now only officials who could always prove you wrong, until you paid up. (p. 63)

This passage is quite remarkable in that it criticises both the “colonised” and the “coloniser”. The colonised African is criticised for being chaotic and corrupt. The coloniser is criticised for being dishonest, as illustrated above, and cruel. This quotation does perhaps not reveal which of the two Salim favours, but there are passages in the novel that indicate that Salim in fact seems to believe that the Africans should be left alone, because they are self-sufficient. For instance, when Salim arrives in the town, conditions after the rebellion are poor, but not so for the native Africans:

It was hard to get the simplest food; and if you wanted vegetables you either got them out of an old – and expensive – tin, or you grew them yourself. The Africans who had abandoned the town and gone back to their villages were better off; they had at least gone back to their traditional life and were more or less self-sufficient. (p. 31)

This statement clearly indicates that the Africans have a traditional life, which makes them self-sufficient, and to which they can return any time. What has pushed them

into chaos and corruption, however, is the new way of life the European colonisers have brought and imposed on the Africans.

How the coloniser has affected the Africans' lives can be seen when Salim tells about his customer Zabeth and her son Ferdinand. In this account, the colonial period looks like a blessing to Africans, which is soon lost after independence:

The boy's father was a trader. As a trader he had travelled about the country during the miraculous peace of the colonial time, when men could, if they wished, pay little attention to tribal boundaries. That was how, during his travels, he and Zabeth had met; (...) At independence tribal boundaries had become important again, and travel was not safe as it had been. (p. 40)

If seen through this point of view, colonialism has brought "miraculous" peace to this African country. But the continuation of the account shows that the land has got its own tribal laws, and to interfere with these might be the cause for social turmoil in the country. For instance, Salim states that Ferdinand's father takes his son back to his tribe because, "a father could always claim his child; there were any number of folk sayings that expressed this almost universal African law." (p. 40) And when his father, for some unknown reason, wants to get rid of his son, he "again according to tribal custom, had been received into his mother's tribe." (p. 41) These examples indicate that the African native tribal society has got its own unwritten laws, which have been violated by the intrusion of the coloniser. Hence, the resulting "miraculous" time of peace is only artificial, to be followed by far worse conditions after independence, of which the real cause is the "coloniser".

Salim has been observed to criticise the Africans in many passages, but in several of his statements he emphasises that Africa is eventually the home of Africans, and that "intruders" will always remain "intruders":

Who wanted philosophy or faith for the good times? We could all cope with the good times. It was for the bad that we had to be equipped. And here in Africa none of us were as well equipped as the Africans. The Africans had called up this war; they would suffer dreadfully, more than anybody else; but they could cope. Even the raggedest of them had their villages and tribes, things that were absolutely theirs. They could run away to their secret worlds and become lost in those worlds, as they had done before. And even if terrible

things happened to them they would die with the comfort of knowing that their ancestors were gazing down approvingly at them. (p. 76)

This passage clearly shows Salim's "ambivalent attitude". On the one hand, in previous statements he has severely criticised the Africans; on the other hand, he here admits in a way that Africa belongs to Africans, and if they seem guilty for inflicting suffering on themselves and others by starting the second rebellion in the town, then it has previously been noted that these aggressions of the Africans come from their uncontrollable rage against the "intruder" from colonial Europe.

There is a passage about Salim's reflections that openly reveals the dilemma that he experiences in his feelings towards Africans. Salim observes the hotel staff, after the white soldiers have arrived to fight the rebellion of native Africans, and contemplates:

Until this morning those hotel servants had been telling one another stories about the invincibility of their people in the forest; and those hotel servants were men who, given an uprising in the town, would have done terrible things with their small hands. Now, so quickly, they had become abject. In one way it was good; in another way it was pitiful. This was how the place worked on you: you never knew what to think or feel. Fear or shame – there seemed to be nothing in between. (p. 81)

These are of course the feelings of Salim as an "intruder." He has to fear the rebellion, because he is an intruder in the African forest. On the other hand, he feels pity for the Africans, because he sees the humiliation that "colonialism" has brought upon these people of the forest. In fact, all of this confusion in Salim, as well as in the Africans, has been brought about by European colonialism, which has built this town at the bend in the river, in spite of the "Roman god's" disapproval of "settlement and mingling with the people."

In the chapter *The Second Rebellion*, which has been studied up to this point, it has been observed that the native Africans are portrayed by Salim as the stronger inhabitants of the country because they have the security of their forests, their villages, and the spirits of their ancestors. It has been argued that if Africans are criticised and shown inferior at certain instances, then it is because of their contact

with the “coloniser” and his “culture”. This argument finds support in the next chapter of the novel. In this chapter with the title *The New Domain*, it is a paradox, which is part of Salim’s “ambivalent approach”, that verifies the above mentioned claim that Africans are criticised only when they come in contact with and are corrupted by the “culture of the coloniser”.

The paradox is as following: After the second rebellion in the region of the town, a new period of peace starts. This peace is brought by the new president, “the new ruling intelligence,” (p.94) of the country. Peace also brings stability and material development to the town, which soon goes through what Salim calls “a period of boom.” (p. 94.) From the capital comes “order and money.” All kinds of projects are started; various government departments come to life again. In addition to the existing steamer service, the air-field is re-commissioned and extended. The settlements fill up again, and bus and taxi services are started. A new telephone system which is “far too elaborate” (p. 94) for the town’s needs is established. Salim states that “the town at last became a place that could be made to work.” (p.94) The town becomes the trading centre of the region and Salim even acquires a number of agencies. All these developments, the coming of peace, the development of the town, and the profitable business would normally make a person believe that Salim is satisfied with the new situation. However, the paradox in this event is that Salim does not at all feel in that way, as he openly asserts: “So in the midst of the boom I had my anxieties and became almost as dissatisfied and restless as I had been at the beginning.” (p. 103) Salim explains that his paradoxical mood comes not only as a result of “outside pressures,” his “solitude,” and his “temperament,” but also as a result of “the place itself, the way it had altered with the peace.” (p. 103) This statement is important in that it indicates that it is the peace and what has come with it that has made Salim dissatisfied, paradoxically. The way that Salim accounts for this paradoxical situation is significant:

During the days of rebellion I had had the sharpest sense of the beauty of the river and the forest, and had promised myself that when the peace came I would expose myself to it, learn it, possess that beauty. I had done nothing of the sort; when the peace came I had simply stopped looking about me. And now I felt that the mystery and the magic of the place had gone. (p. 103)

This passage clearly shows that the elements of “Western civilisation” that have come with peace, have placed a barrier between Salim and the nature of Africa, and destroyed the “mystery and magic of the place,” which it seems, Salim values very much. The continuation of the passage reveals that the arrival of “Western civilisation” in the town has even more destructive effects on the native African:

In those days of fear I felt we had been in touch, through the Africans, with the spirits of the river and forest; and that everything had been full of tension. But all the spirits appeared to have left the place, (...). We had been so nervous of the Africans during those days; we hadn't taken any man for granted. We had been the intruders, the ordinary men, they the inspired ones. Now the spirits had left them; they were ordinary, squalid, poor. (p. 104)

The phrase “in those days” refers to the time before peace, development, and financial boom came to the town. For Salim it was a time of deprivation, but for the Africans it was a time of strength. It is quite significant that Salim believes that the Africans are “superior”, and he “ordinary” when the “blessings” of “Western civilisation” are most inaccessible, and he “superior”, and they “ordinary”, when “Western civilisation” conquers the region. Thus he says: “Without effort, we had become, in a real way, the masters, with the gifts and skills they needed.” (p. 104) This situation confirms the truth of what Mahatma Gandhi says about India's struggle for independence from the British coloniser: “Why do you forget that our adoption of their civilisation makes their presence in India at all possible? Your hatred against them ought to be transferred to their civilisation.” (Gandhi, 1938: p. 66) In the present case, the coloniser has retreated, but his civilisation comes without him, and the once colonised is again humiliated; as Salim has put it: the “spirit” has left them; they are “ordinary, squalid, and poor.” It is interesting to note that another remark by Mahatma Gandhi perfectly applies to this case: “... we want the English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature but not the tiger ...” (Gandhi, 1938: p. 30) Similarly, the “coloniser” has left this African country, but his rule returns through his “civilisation”, which is imported by the new native ruler of the country.

Salim criticises the corruption and many more unpleasant behaviours of Africans in this chapter, and indeed, the rest of the novel, but having asserted his sentiments about how the arrival of civilisation in the town has deprived the African of his dignity, and led to his fall to this “inferior” state of existence, Salim’s harsh criticism of Africans only emphasises the truth of this argument. This “ambivalent attitude” in Salim once again serves, then, to show that it is in fact the “coloniser” and his “culture” and “civilisation” that causes the African to suffer. How this is concretely shown by Salim will be studied in the following passages.

One of the effects of the arrival of Western civilisation in the region is that the town grows fast, and the native Africans, who are used to live with their spirits in the forest villages, cannot adapt to urban life. This phenomenon is described by Salim as follows: “The growth of the population could be gauged by the growth of the rubbish heaps in the *cites*. (...) Those mounds of rubbish, (...), grew month by month into increasingly solid little hills, ...” (p. 94) Salim finds here an opportunity to satirise the African when he observes that, “Nobody wanted to move the rubbish. But the taxis stank of disinfectant.” (p. 95) The explanation of this paradoxical behaviour of the African contains again satirical criticism:

In the colonial days public vehicles had by law to be disinfected once a year by the health department. The disinfectors were entitled to a personal fee. That custom had been remembered. Any number of people wanted to be disinfectors; and now taxis and trucks weren’t disinfected just once a year; they were disinfected whenever they were caught. The fee had to be paid each time; and disinfectors in their official jeeps played hide and seek with taxis and trucks among the hills of rubbish. (p. 95)

Without the considerations made above, Salim’s criticism of Africans would make him appear as a supporter of a “colonial discourse”, that sees the colonised as “inferior” and thus “justifies” their conquest. But now, with Salim’s idea about the loss of the Africans’ spirit, Salim’s criticism, though it is quite harsh, can always be seen through this “ambivalent vision”. Moreover, what is of additional interest here is that what corrupts the behaviour of the African, is a custom that was introduced by the coloniser. So everything that the “coloniser” brings into the African jungle, either personally, or by his “civilisation”, corrupts the African and his way of life.

Another scene in this chapter of the novel that provides a good example for the corruption that Western civilisation causes to emerge in the African, is the one where Mahesh wins the franchise for “Bigburger.” The “Bigburger” shop, which is an incognito name for one of the famous fastfood restaurants of the Western world, and which is one of the symbols for “global capitalism”, is sent as a whole to the town. Salim describes the shop as “a dazzling snack bar that seemed to have been imported from the United States.” (p. 105) The striking contrast between the shop and the street outside is one of “two worlds and civilisations”: “..; and it was great fun to be in Bigburger, to leave the sewer smells of the streets, and the dust and the rubbish, and to step into this modern interior, with the advertisements and everything.” (p. 105) The corruption that this literally imported Western shop brings to the African can be observed in Ildephonse, who is the house servant of Mahesh. Salim notes that,

No one was quicker and more friendly and more anxious to please than he was, when Shoba or Mahesh was around. They trusted Ildephonse; they boasted of their trust in him, in his presence. Yet as soon as he was left alone he became a different person. He went vacant. Not rude, just vacant. I noticed this alteration in the African staff in other places as well. (pp. 105-106)

Salim’s attitude here towards the African seems like a “denigrating” criticism, but if one keeps in mind what Salim said about the African’s loss of spirit after the boom, then this corrupt behaviour of Ildephonse can be seen to be the natural result of the effect of the “intruding culture” of the coloniser.

The study of the effect of the advancement of “Western civilisation” in Africa is also interesting because it shows that now the “coloniser” does not have to be there physically to exploit the resources of a “post-colonial” country. The culture and civilisation of the former coloniser is now brought into the region by the new ruler of the once colonised country, who falls into the same trap that Mahatma Gandhi warned his people against: to strive for the tiger’s nature, while seemingly keeping the tiger out. The post-colonial critic Leela Gandhi asserts that Mahatma Gandhi “laments the Indian desire for the superficial glitter of ‘modern’ civilisation.” (Leela

Gandhi, 1998: p. 19) The new president of this African post-colonial country also seems to have been lured by the “superficial glitter” of “modern” civilisation. Thus Salim comments that,

He was creating modern Africa. He was creating a miracle that would astound the rest of the world. He was by-passing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages, and creating something that would match anything that existed in other countries. (...) Under the rule of our new President the miracle had occurred: Africans had become modern men who built in concrete and glass and sat in cushioned chairs covered in imitation velvet. It was like a curious fulfilment of Father Huismans’s prophecy about the retreat of African Africa, and the success of European graft. (pp. 107-108)

This passage again confirms Salim’s argument that the development of the town after the second rebellion has taken away the spirit of the African. Ironically, it emerges from this passage that the creation of “modern Africa” leads to the retreat of “African Africa,” and the “success of European graft.” It is also ironical, that this “modern Africa” is built on the ruins of the European suburb of the “colonial period”. The government has taken over all that area and decreed it the domain of the state. The ruins are levelled by bulldozers. Salim’s descriptions of this activity seems to evoke the impression of an ongoing battle between “African Africa” and the “monsters” of Western civilisation: “The deep, earth-shaking burr of the bulldozers competed with the sound of the rapids.” (p. 107) However, Salim provides the reader with foreshadowing ideas about the outcome of this battle: “There had been a boom before, just at the end of the colonial period, and the ruined suburb near the rapids was what it had left behind.” (pp. 106-107) Another hint is given by Nazruddin who, shortly before the first rebellion in the town, decides to sell most of his property and leave the town, after he has a sudden insight one morning: “I listened to the river and looked up at that sky and I thought: ‘This isn’t property. This is just bush. This has always been bush.’” (p. 29) Yet, for the time being, the President’s weakness for the “superficial glitter of ‘modern’ civilisation,” helps the former coloniser to continue with the exploitation of African resources. Hence Salim reports that, “Every steamer brought up European builders and Artisans, every aeroplane.” (p. 107) This fact adds another irony to this event: new Africa is built on the ruins of the colonial European suburb; yet, it is built by European builders and artisans.

Salim's opinion about this ongoing exploitation is important in that it shows again his "ambivalent attitude" to Africa and Africans. There is sympathy in Salim's thoughts when he contemplates that, "It was painful and sad" to see that "in the bars in the town the foreign builders and artisans drank and made easy jokes about the country." (p. 108) These thoughts of sympathy are followed by a long passage which contains both sympathy and criticism:

The President had wished to show us a new Africa. And I saw Africa in a way I had never seen it before, saw the defeats and humiliations which until then I had regarded as just a fact of life. And I felt that – full of tenderness for the Big Man, for the ragged villagers walking around the domain, and the soldiers showing them the shabby sights – until some soldier played the fool with me or some official at the customs was difficult, and then I fell into the old way of feeling, the easier attitude of the foreigners in the bars. Old Africa, which seemed to absorb everything, was simple; this place kept you tense. What a strain it was, picking your way through stupidity and aggressiveness and pride and hurt! (p. 108)

What is remarkable here is that Salim points to the binary oppositions of "old Africa" and "new Africa;" and the "easier attitude" and the "difficult attitude." The new Africa is the one that the President wants to create by importing "the nature of the tiger," and therefore causes "defeats and humiliations," as Salim sees it. The old Africa was simple, but it was African Africa and kept the dignity of the African alive. The easier attitude is the one of the foreigners in the bars of the town who do not try to understand the nature of Africa and Africans, but try to apply their own "Western values" on the completely different culture of the African, and therefore find the country "inferior". The difficult attitude, however, is the one that Salim applied before he encountered the corrupt behaviour of a soldier or an official at the customs. He felt the humiliation and defeat that the blind import of "Western civilisation" into the African jungle has brought to the African people of the region. Significantly, this study seems to indicate at this point that Salim's criticism is pointed here towards multiple directions. While he criticises the African for his corruptness, he at the same time criticises himself for choosing the easy attitude of adopting the condescending approach of the Westerner who carries in himself the influence of the "colonial discourse" he might have picked up in his own society.

The President is criticised to have produced only “stupidity and aggressiveness” in his attempt to create the new Africa by importing the civilisation of the “former coloniser”. What is important to note here is, however, that Salim’s “ambivalent attitude” in his multiple criticism once again shows to the perceiving observer that what is the most emphasised message in Salim’s narrative is the plight and the “victimisation” of the African people by the “coloniser”, be it directly, or indirectly, through the (ab)use of a native ruler.

An study of the new President will now be made to reveal the influence of the “coloniser’s civilisation” on him. Indar, Salim’s friend from his community on the east coast, who has come to teach at the polytechnic in the “new domain,” describes the new ruler as a man who combines both civilisations in his personality: “He is the great African chief, and he is also the man of the people. He is the modernizer and he is also the African who has rediscovered his African soul. He’s conservative, revolutionary, everything.” (p. 144) This inevitably reminds of Mahatma Gandhi’s argument that India cannot desire “modern civilisation” without the “coloniser”. The same rule seems to be valid for this post-colonial African country, because in the end the President’s eclectic scheme does not work. The country slides into turmoil again.

The “Big Man” is talked about by various characters in many places of the novel, and these descriptions usually tell about his strength and ability to keep the peace in the country, but Salim’s account near the end, when he is stopping over in the capital, seems to verify Gandhi’s argument:

This was the President’s city. This was where he had grown up and where his mother had worked as a hotel maid. This was where, in colonial days, he had got his idea of Europe. The colonial city, more extensive than ours, with many residential areas (...), was still to be seen. It was this Europe that, in his own buildings, the President wished to compete. The city, while decaying in the centre, with dirt roads and rubbish mounds just at the back of the great colonial boulevards, was yet full of new public works. (pp. 258-259)

Here, the error of the President’s strategy is openly announced: he wants to compete with the “coloniser’s civilisation”, which is so different from the one of his people. The “colonisers” have once tried to bring it to the town at the bend in the river, but it

has been destroyed by the rage of the Africans. Now, the President starts the project from the beginning again, not knowing that his fate will be the same with the colonisers.

Indeed, the boom in the town finally comes to an end as violence returns to the town. Suddenly the authority of the President in the town vanishes, as Salim reports: "Everything in the town was as it had been (...). But men had lost or rejected the idea of an overseeing authority, and everything was again as fluid as it had been at the beginning." (p. 217) However, Salim continues his account with some paradoxical information: "Only this time, after all the years of peace and goods in all the shops, everyone was greedier." (pp. 217-218) This paradoxical information again indicates that the "intrusion" of Western civilisation into the African native society corrupts the people. The source of the corruption brought upon the native Africans is eloquently expressed by the "The Liberation Army," which this time is the source of unrest in the town:

The ancestors are shrieking. If we are not deaf we can hear them. By ENEMY we mean the powers of imperialism, the multi-nationals and the puppet powers that be, the false gods, the capitalists, the priests and teachers who give false interpretations. The law encourages crime. The schools teach ignorance and people practice ignorance in preference to their true culture. Our soldiers and guardians have been given false desires and false greeds and the foreigners now qualify us everywhere as thieves. (...) ... we acknowledge this land as the land of the people whose ancestors now shriek over it. OUR PEOPLE must understand the struggle. They must learn to die with us. (p. 219)

There is a message among the many messages in this leaflet, that is in harmony with what Salim has stated he has felt when peace and material development came to the town: the Africans have lost their "spirit" and "superiority" with the arrival of Western civilisation. The wording of the same message here is that the colonisers are gone, but their "culture and civilisations" has turned back in the shape of "imperialism, the multi-nationals, and the puppet powers," to exploit the country, and to humiliate its people. If Africans have become thieves, it is because the former "coloniser's capitalist culture" has taught the people "false desires and false greeds." Just as Salim has seen the true value of the African in his forest and village among

the spirits of his ancestors, so the “Liberation Army” advocates a return to the ways of the African ancestors.

Yet, as always in Salim’s narrative, there are “ambivalent” elements to this. This message, which is true by itself, is conveyed by “the Liberation Army,” which in fact has been formed by the President’s disbanded “Youth Guard.” Salim notes this paradox as follows:

Still, it was very strange. The officers of the Youth Guard, while they had been serving the President, had been hateful to the people they tried to police. Now, humiliated by the President in that ‘monkey speech,’ stripped of power and jobs, they offered themselves to the people as humiliated and anguished men of the region, as defenders of the people of the region. And the people were responding. (p. 220)

The “ambivalent” element in this account is that a true message is conveyed by “the Youth Guard,” which does not at all seem sincere in its cause, and which seems to be acting out of a pure motive of revenge and opportunism. A second element of “ambivalence” is contained in the fact that the people are “responding” to the former Youth Guard, which has been disbanded by the President because one of the Guards was killed in the town “by dozens of small hands.” Instead of persecuting the killers, the President dismisses the Youth Guard. Salim asserts that by acting in that way, the President “showed himself again as the friend of the people, the *petit peuple*, as he liked to call them, and he punished their oppressors.” (p. 216) The paradoxical situation here is, then, that Salim conveys in his narrative an important message about the true state of affairs in a post-colonial African country, but while doing this he criticises the colonised as well.

What the “Liberation Army” has said about the “Big Man’s” government is confirmed by Ferdinand who has become the commissioner of the town and helps Salim to leave it:

They feel they’re loosing the place they can run back to. I began to feel the same thing when I was a cadet in the capital. I felt I had been used. I felt I had given myself an education for nothing. I felt I had been fooled. Everything that was given to me was given to me to destroy me. I began to think I wanted

to be a child again, to forget books and everything connected with books. The bush runs itself. But there is nowhere to go. I've been on tour in the villages. It's a nightmare. All these airfields the man has built, the foreign companies have built – nowhere is safe now. (pp. 281-282)

Ferdinand's criticism of the President's rule reveals one terrible truth: the arrival of "civilisation" in this part of Africa has irreversibly destroyed the safety of the villages in the forest. During the second rebellion the African people could hide and find safety in their forest villages, where they could sustain themselves self-sufficiently, even if in very primitive conditions. But now, "nowhere is safe." Paradoxically, the "conveniences" of "modern Western civilisation", such as airfields and education, have brought suffering and the loss of safety to the forest villages. That is why Ferdinand and the "Liberation Army" and its supporters long to return to their basic natural life in their forest villages. How the "liberation Army" wants to achieve this, is told by Metty, the former slave servant of Salim's family, who lives together with him:

... everybody will have to dip their hands in the blood. They are going to kill everybody who can read and write, everybody who ever put on a jacket and tie, everybody who put on a *jacket de boy*. They are going to kill all the masters and all the servants. When they are finished nobody will know there was a place like this here. They are going to kill and kill. They say it is the only way, to go back to the beginning before it's too late. ... (p. 284)

What is told here about the rebels is of course brutal. This brutality is part of Salim's criticism of the Africans, who are implied here to be "savages", which is one of the typical "colonial stereotypes" used against black Africans. On the other hand, this passage supports the above mentioned argument that Africans want to go back to their traditional way of life in the forest villages. This is indicated by the objective of the rebels to destroy all elements of Western civilisation, such as those individuals who had any contact to items that represent Western civilisation, i.e. jacket, tie, and education. This text also echoes the rage of the African against this "intruding civilisation", which has previously been mentioned by Salim. It is so vast that it intends to wipe out the town completely, so that "when they are finished nobody will know there was a place like this here." This exaggerated rage seems to indicate the extent of injustice and suffering brought upon the native African people. But the

method by which this rage is intended to be applied by the rebels, gives this text its “ambivalent aspect”, as this adds a very negative shade to the right cause of the native Africans.

Up to this point, it was the “victimisation” of the native African that has predominantly been emphasised, in this Chapter. There are, however, other “victims of colonialism” that have been dealt with in this novel. One of them is Indar, Salim’s friend from his community on the east coast of Africa. Indar and Salim’s community is a group of immigrants from the Indian Ocean. Salim states that knowledge about their country of origin has become vague in time, but from judging what is said in one passage of the novel, their original country is “north-western India.” (p. 17) This fact leads to the important observation that Indar’s and Salim’s country of origin, their adopted country on the eastern coast of Africa, and the country of the town at the bend in the river, have all been colonies of European powers. This state of affairs has caused people like Indar and Salim to feel “homeless” and “restless”.

There is an extensive passage in the novel where Indar takes over the narrative from Salim to tell about his situation in the world as an “uprooted” person. The first point that he emphasises about his situation is the peculiar conception of the past, which for a person whose life has been destabilised by the “influence of colonisation” cannot be the same as for people in other countries. Indar believes that to “cherish the past and think of passing on furniture and china to their heirs” men have to live in “dead countries, or secure and by-passed ones.” (p. 147) He argues that this can be done in secure countries like “Sweden and Canada.” But “everywhere else men are in movement, the world is in movement, and the past can only cause pain.” (pp. 147-148) Indar is here talking about the suffering brought to people in various parts of the world by the “destabilising effect of colonialism”, which “uproots” the lives of a great number of people by “displacing” them. To overcome this “pain,” Indar argues that they “have to trample on the past.” (p. 147) Indar admits that “it isn’t easy to turn your back on the past.” For that reason he maintains that “it is something you have to arm yourself for, or grief will ambush and destroy you. That is why I hold on to the image of the garden trampled until it

becomes ground – it is a small thing, but it helps.” (p. 148) The words “pain,” “grief,” “ambush,” and “destroy,” hint at the hugeness of suffering that Indar and people like him have to endure as a result of the “destabilising effect of colonialism”.

Indar’s narrative continues by telling about the time he finishes his university education in London and finds himself in a painful situation of feeling himself like a man “of two worlds.” (p. 151) That he is not of the “coloniser’s world” he sees when he attends the “University Appointments Committee” interview and realises that “the committee was meant to put English boys in English jobs.” (p. 150) In his search for a job, Indar also seems to be forced to find a country too. Thus he decides that he belongs to the country of his ancestors and applies for a job at the Indian Embassy in London. This scene is another one of those that reveal an “ambivalent attitude” in the narrator. When Indar arrives in front of “India House,” which looks like “an English building, which pretended to be of India,” (p. 152) he states that, “for the first time in my life I was filled with colonial rage. And this wasn’t only a rage with London or England, it was also a rage with the people who had allowed themselves to be coralled into a foreign fantasy.” (p. 152) The “double criticism” here is obvious, and it is typical of the “ambivalent attitude” that has been observed until this point in this Chapter, in the criticism applied by the narrator. Once Indar enters the building, his “sense of belonging” is once again shattered:

‘I had never felt so involved with the land of my ancestors, and yours, and so far from it. I felt in that building I had lost an important part of my idea of who I was. I felt I had been granted the most cruel knowledge of where I stood in the world. And I hated it.’ (p. 152)

Indar is highly disappointed with what he sees inside the embassy, and the descriptions of the causes for his disappointment form a criticism of Indians in their own right. The first person Indar is led to is sitting at a “bare” desk, and the man himself seems “quite vacant and easy in his mind.” In addition to the quite negative attributes of a “bare,” desk and a “vacant”, and “easy” “mind,” the man does not know what Indar “had come about.” (p. 153) Indar thinks that “in spite of jacket and tie,” “I thought he belonged to another kind of office, another kind of building, another kind of city.” (p. 153) Indar imagines him “in a dhoti reclining against a

bolster in a cloth shop in a bazaar lane, with his bare feet, and his fingers massaging his toes, rubbing off the dead skin.” For Indar he is the kind of man who would say, “Shirtings? You want shirtings?” (p. 153) Indar’s criticism of Indians and their futile bureaucracy continues when this man tells Indar, “You had better go and see Mr. Verma.” (p. 153) Mr. Verma, after a “half-hearted” interview, that “never got going” because of numerous telephone calls, tells him that he “should go to an office on another floor.” A “small man” sitting in front of “an old-fashioned standard typewriter,” asks Indar to wait in a “dark little antechamber.” In this room Indar sees the photographs of “Gandhi and Nehru” and wonders how “out of squalor like this, those men had managed to get themselves considered as men.” (p. 154) Indar, at that point, experiences the disillusionment which has been referred to above. Seeing those “great men,” “in that building in the heart of London (...) from the inside, as it were,” (p. 154) changes Indar’s view about Gandhi and Nehru. Indar’s sentiments are worthy of a lengthy quotation:

Up till then, from the outside, without knowing more of them than I had read in the newspapers and magazines, I had admired them. They belonged to me; they ennobled me and gave me some place in the world. Now I felt the opposite. In that room the photographs of those great men made me feel that I was at the bottom of a well. I felt that in that building complete manhood was permitted only to those men and denied to everybody else. Everybody had surrendered his manhood, or a part of it, to those leaders. Everyone willingly made himself smaller the better to exalt those leaders. These thoughts surprised and pained me. They were more than heretical. They destroyed what remained of my faith in the way the world was ordered. I began to feel cast out and alone. (p. 154)

This is obviously a harsh criticism of post-colonial Indians. But it has to be noted that these two leaders whom Indar used to admire are two personalities that lead India’s struggle for Independence from the British ruler. What makes Indar revert his admiration, is his view of the interior of “India House,” “an English building, which pretended to be of India,” located “in the heart of London,” the “heart of the British Empire”. So, although Indar’s criticism of the post-colonial Indians in the embassy is a valid one, the information he himself provides about the location where his disillusionment with the Indians takes place, adds an “ambivalent aspect” to his critical attitude, and leaves him again a “man of two worlds.”

Indar's disillusionment is complete when the "small man" leads him into another room, where he faces "one of our black Indians" who "reeked of caste and temple." (p. 155) This man reminds Indar of his "homelessness" when he asks, "But you say in your letter you are from Africa. How can you join our diplomatic services? How can we have a man of divided loyalties?" (p. 155) The "black" Indian dismisses him then with the explanation, "You people have been living the good life in Africa. Now that things have got a little rough you want to run back. But you must throw in your lot with the local people." (p. 155) Although this statement is a criticism of Indar and his people, it nevertheless also shows that all peoples who have been affected by colonialism have to suffer. Now this suffering also touches Indar, who feels "cast out and alone." There is no place he can call home now: Africa belongs to the Africans; English jobs are for English boys; and India sees him as an Indian with "divided loyalties." In this situation of distress, Indar comes to a resolution that relieves him from his pain, but indicates that he has been a "victim" of "colonial displacement":

I began to understand at the same time that my anguish about being a man adrift was false, that for me that dream of home and security was nothing more than a dream of isolation, anachronistic, and stupid and very feeble. I belonged to myself alone. I was going to surrender my manhood to nobody. For someone like me there was only one civilisation and one place – London, or a place like it. (p. 157)

The "displacement" and sense of "homelessness" that colonisation has brought to Indar, makes him adopt a similar attitude to Singh's in *The Mimic Men*: he tries to escape the sense of homelessness by clinging to individualism and to the "centre of empire". In appearance, this seems like a preference for the home of the coloniser; but in essence, this preference indicates that colonised people like Indar and Singh choose the "civilisation" and "centre of the empire" because the turmoil and "displacement" that colonisation has brought to their societies, leaves them no other choice. The confusion, "rootlessness", and "homelessness" caused by the "effects of colonisation" pushes them to the "imperial centre".

Another person influenced by the effects of European colonialism is, of course, Salim, who has been lured to come and live in the town at the bend in the river by the “wonderful stories” (p. 145) Nazruddin used to tell about his life in the town. The significance of Nazruddin’s effect on Salim comes from the fact that Nazruddin, in turn, has been influenced by the European coloniser’s culture. Salim’s description of Nazruddin proves this:

Nazruddin was an exotic in our community. He was a man of my father’s age, but he looked much younger and was altogether more a man of the world. He played tennis, drank wine, spoke French, wore dark glasses and suits (...). He was known among us (and slightly mocked behind his back) for his European manners, which he had picked up not from Europe (he had never been there), but from a town in the centre of Africa where he lived and had his business. (p. 26)

This passage also contains signs for the admiration that Salim feels for Nazruddin and the “European culture” that he imitates. That this is his major motive to move to the town at the river, Salim clearly asserts: “... and I knew that the life Nazruddin had described had come to an end. But I drove through Africa to Nazruddin’s town as to a place where this life might be recreated for me.” (pp. 30-31) Thus, it can be said that Salim’s suffering thereafter has been indirectly caused by the coloniser, who “intruded” into the African bush.

The account of Salim’s new life in the town of central Africa, to where he has been lured by the promise of a European way of life, generally shows Salim as a man who is “lost”, “trapped”, “rootless”, and “homeless”. At first, during the early period, Salim still believes in the promise of fulfilment: “I was waiting for some illumination to come to me, to guide me to the good place and the ‘life’ I was still waiting for.” (pp. 102-103) Then, he starts to feel a stranger: “I grew to detest the physical feel of the place. (...) Always there, never really mine, reminding me now only of the passing of time.” (pp. 110-111) Soon, Salim feels homesick, and this makes him realise that he is a “homeless” man now: “I was homesick, had been homesick for months. But home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost.” (p. 114) The way he concludes his contemplation about his situation of being homeless implies that Salim is not the only “victim” of

the effects of European colonisation: “And in that I was like the ragged Africans who were so abject in the town we serviced.” (p. 114)

Similar to Singh in *The Mimic Men*, Salim seems to find some kind of fulfilment in a European setting. In the Domain that the President has built on the former European suburb, during a party given by a European couple, Salim believes he has found the “kind of life” he wanted, that “by some piece of luck” he has “stumbled on the equivalent of what years before Nazruddin had found right here.” (p. 136) Listening to the voice of Joan Baez, Salim feels that “the part that knew loss, homesickness, grief, and longed for love” is “awakening.” (p. 134) However, like Singh, Salim seems to know that this fulfilment is not real. Like the anaesthetising peace that the hotel-life in the London suburb offered to Singh, this “piece of luck” in the Domain is “make-believe:”

I never doubted that. You couldn’t listen to sweet songs about injustice unless you expected justice and received it much of the time. You couldn’t sing songs about the end of the world unless – like the other people in that room, so beautiful with such simple things: African mats on the floor and African hangings on the wall and spears and masks – you felt that the world was going on and you were safe in it. How easy it was, in that room, to make those assumptions! (p. 135)

Similarly to Singh, Salim allows himself to be betrayed deliberately, in order to escape the “sense of homelessness”: “It was better to pretend, as I could pretend now. It was better to share the companionship of that pretence, to feel that in that room we all lived beautifully and bravely with injustice and imminent death and consoled ourselves with love.” (p. 136)

As was the case with Singh, Salim too experiences a sort of fulfilment in his relationship with a European woman. In Salim’s case it is Yvette, the Belgian hostess of the party in the Domain. At the beginning of their relationship he feels “blessed and remade.” (p. 182) But when Salim finds out that Yvette is as desperate as himself, his elated mood sinks very quickly, revealing that he is still the “victim” of post-colonial “displacement” and “isolation”: “My wish for an adventure with Yvette was a wish to be taken up into the skies, to be removed from the life I had – the

dullness, the pointless tension, ‘the situation of the country’. It wasn’t a wish to be involved with people as trapped as myself.” (p. 191) Salim’s relationship with Yvette, which might be interpreted as the admiration of a colonial for a woman from the “coloniser’s society”, in fact all the more emphasises the “homelessness” of Salim. Hence, he realises that “the absence of a community, the isolation” in which they both live makes their relationship possible: “In no other place would it be just like this; and perhaps in no other place would our relationship be possible.” (p. 210)

All the realisations that Salim has, serve to convey his “sense of pain”, which comes from his “homelessness”. Thus he asserts to have the illumination that, “men were born only to grow old, to live out their span, to acquire experience. (...) pleasure and pain – and, above all, pain – had no meaning; ..., I remembered that I had had it, that knowledge about the illusion of pain.” (p. 229) In another instance of insight, Salim rejects the idea of “home,” but while doing this, a strong sense of suffering is conveyed at the same time: “That idea of going home, of leaving, the idea of the other place – I had lived with it in various forms for many years. (...) It was a deception. I saw now that it comforted only to destroy.” (p. 252) While he concludes this chain of thought, seemingly arriving at an insight that relieves him of his pain, the suffering caused by the “sense of homelessness” is even more evident: “There could be no going back; there was nothing to go back to. (...) Trample on the past, (...). Get rid of the idea of the past; make the dreamlike scenes of loss ordinary.” (p. 252) Salim’s desire to make “scenes” of “loss”, “pain”, and “homelessness” ordinary only underline the dimension of the suffering that these cause in him.

The end of the novel seems to be emphasising again the extent of suffering that “colonialism” brings to individuals. The final scene once more restates and stresses Salim’s “isolation” and “homelessness”. He has boarded the steamer at night to flee the town, which has once more fallen into turmoil. The steamer is attacked by gun-men: “The searchlight was turned off; the barge was no longer to be seen. The steamer started up again and moved without lights down the river, away from the area of battle. (...)” (p. 287) The imagery of Salim in the steamer moving in the dark

river finishes the narrative with a note of an individual in a post-colonial society, floating towards a dark future of “homelessness”, for which the unnamed responsible is the “colonising power”.

CONCLUSION

Having studied the four novels *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), *The Mimic Men* (1967), and *A Bend in the River* (1979) in the preceding four chapters, it will now be evaluated how the “ambivalent approach” in Naipaul’s narrators has developed throughout this study.

It can be observed that the “ambivalent approaches” of the narrators in the four novels that have been studied broaden from the individual to the family, and finally to the society as a whole. In the *The Mystic Masseur*, for instance, The narrator’s “ambivalent approach” is applied mainly on Ganesh, the protagonist. Ganesh’s career from school teacher, to Masseur, to Mystic Masseur, and finally to the “colonial pro-imperial politician” is portrayed through the “ambivalent vision” of the narrator. In this “ambivalent” light, Ganesh has seemed sometimes like a hero, and sometimes like a charlatan.

The major difference between the “ambivalent approaches” of the narrators in *The Mystic Masseur* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* has been that while in the former Ganesh has been the main object of “ambivalence”, in the latter the major “ambivalence” has been observed in the relationship between Mr. Biswas and the Tulsi family. This means that the “ambivalent vision” has broadened from one Hindu individual to an individual and his relationship to an extended family of the Hindu community. The result of this has been that a larger part of the Hindu Indian community in Trinidad has been depicted. The similar themes of ignorance, belief in superstitions, dishonesty, and corruption have been dealt with on a larger scale of the Hindu community. A parallel development has also been seen in the “location” of the stories. In the former, the “location” has mostly been rural Trinidad, while in the latter, in the second half of the novel, the location shifted to urban Trinidad, which is an indicator of the social change in the way of life of the Hindu community in Trinidad. In both novels, however, the “location” is important in terms of what it indicates about the Hindu community’s being “displaced” by the “coloniser” as indentured labourers. This condition has produced “limitations” and “deprivations”

for the Hindu community, and the deficiencies in the colonised people that are criticised in both novels are a result of these circumstances.

The tendency of broadening in the scope of “ambivalence” and “location” can also be seen in the study of *The Mimic Men*. While in the former two novels “ambivalence” has been observed in Ganesh, and then in the relationship between Mr. Biswas and the Tulsi family, in this novel a colonial individual, Ralph Singh, maintains an “ambivalent attitude” towards the “colonial society”, the island of Isabella, on the one hand, and towards the “centre of empire”, London, on the other. The “location”, compared to the former two novels, has also broadened. The island of Isabella is almost identical with Trinidad in its general features, but there is a new “location” added in this novel: London. The implication of these changes in the scope of “ambivalence” and “location” in these three novels is that it shows the development of the Hindu community in the Caribbean region. The route of development goes from the individualism of Ganesh to the family relationship of Mr. Biswas and the Tulsis, to the relationship between Singh, Isabella, and London. While the early two protagonists have little chances to leave the island, Singh enjoys a higher education in London. However, even if Singh has better opportunities than Ganesh and Mr. Biswas, he is not happier than them. The condition of being “displaced” by the “coloniser” on a tropical island, which has been “constructed” by the colonisers, and where he never can feel at home because it is “man-made”, an “island of shipwreck”, a “slave island”, produces in him the “ambivalent attitude” towards Isabella and London. Nowhere can he really feel at home. The relationship between Singh’s “ambivalent attitude” and “location” is far more evident in this novel than in the former two ones, and therefore emphasises rather more the suffering that the “coloniser” has caused in the Hindu Indians by “displacing” them onto this “colonial” island.

The tendency of expansion in the scope of the protagonist’s “ambivalent attitude” and the “location” is also evident in *A Bend in the River*. Singh’s “ambivalent attitude” had expanded to the whole society of the “colonised” as well as the “coloniser”. Salim’s “ambivalent attitude” is not only directed towards his own

community, but to another “colonised” community, the native Africans, as well as to the “European coloniser”. The broadening of the area on which the protagonist’s “ambivalent attitude” is applied results in that it gives a larger view of the scope of suffering that the “coloniser” has inflicted on the people of the world. In the first two novels, only the suffering of the Hindu Indian community was depicted. In the third one, the tendency to widen the scope of attention to other races could be seen in Browne, the negro, and Singh’s school-friend of mixed racial background who had a negro mother. In all three novels it has been observed that the scope of the depicted social area increased gradually. In the fourth novel, the narrator / protagonist’s “ambivalent attitude” widened even more to include the native Africans, the Indian immigrants in Africa, and the European colonisers. The depiction of the interaction between the Africans, the Indians, and the European colonisers has brought the result that the “coloniser” has become a direct object of criticism in this novel.

In the Introduction it has been stated that the proposed aim of this study is to study the before-mentioned four novels of V. S. Naipaul to reveal that the criticism that the writer obviously applies through his narrators and characters on the colonial individuals and society is in fact characterised by an “ambivalent attitude”, which indicates that this criticism is also directed at the coloniser himself. Whether this proposed aim of this study has been accomplished will now be examined by looking at what has been written in the previous chapters, in a more detailed way.

The study of *The Mystic Masseur* has shown that the “ambivalent attitude” in the narrator’s criticism towards the protagonist Ganesh is an indicator of the narrator’s, and thus Naipaul’s, sympathy for the colonial, and a criticism of the coloniser. A closer look at the chapter will reveal this.

The tale of Ganesh, the “Mystic Masseur,” starts and ends with criticism of this Indian Trinidadian character; however, it is always possible to find a “double-vision” in this criticism. Right at the beginning, the reader witnesses that Ganesh, by the practice of his quack-healing, causes the narrator character to lose his leg. But surprisingly, the narrator asserts that he holds “no ill will towards him,” which is an

indicator of sympathy for Ganesh. In the next instance, Ganesh plays a trick on his future father-in-law, by first promising to ask for only a small dowry during the kedgerree ceremony, but then, breaking his promise during the ceremony and asking for a considerable dowry. However, Ganesh behaves in this way only to protect his rights against Ramlogan, his unscrupulous father-in-law. After a rather negative view of Ganesh as someone who is seen by the village people as a person who is “doing a lot of thinking,” but in reality thinks about “simple things, concerned with simple trifles,” he is shown again as a clever trickster who outwits his angry father-in-law by playing another trick on him. Every concerned party is in fact criticised here. Ramlogan and Leela are criticised for their ignorance to believe that Ganesh will work magic on them. Ganesh is criticised for being dishonest to his father-in-law and the public about the “Hindu Cultural Institute.” However, the sympathetic vision of Naipaul’s narrator emerges in the aspect that Ganesh in fact has no other choice; he has to protect himself from Ramlogan. Naipaul’s “ambivalent attitude” to Ganesh through his narrator continues as Ganesh cures a black boy, who has psychological problems and believes that a black cloud is following him. Ganesh cures him, but he does this by using his imagination and the knowledge he has obtained from his books, and not as someone who is entitled to do it. Furthermore, he accepts payment from the boy’s parents. However, even while doing this, he attracts sympathy because he does not ask for too much. The “double-perception” of Ganesh continues in the next incidents of the taxi-service and the exploitation of the people who come to the village to be “treated” by the Mystic Masseur. On the one hand, he seems to be aware of the corruption around him, and on the other, he seems naïve enough to believe that he and his followers are honestly providing the best service to clients. “The ambivalence” of the writer’s presentation of Ganesh can further be seen in the following instances: the village of Fuente Grove prospers as a result of Ganesh’s business; however, Ganesh and his friends prosper even more. As a response to his rival Narayan, he, ridiculously, writes a tourist guide to Trinidad, but later it turns out to be a genial act, because thousands of American soldiers pour into Fuente Grove and bring more wealth to the village. This is followed by his genuinely ridiculous publications of *What God Told* and *Profitable Evacuation*, which establish the

narrator's "double-vision" of Ganesh as a clever trickster-hero on the one side, and a fake-writer, charlatan, and mock-hero on the other.

The study of this part of the novel has shown the minor "ambivalences" in the narrator's perception of Ganesh. The following part of the study exposes a major "ambivalence" in the presentation of Ganesh by Naipaul's narrator, because there appears the striking contrast between the "anglicised", "mimic" G. Ramsey Muir, who emerges at the end of the novel, and the "hero of the people" Ganesh, who defends the rights of the Hindu people. In his struggle against Narayan, he ensures the unity of the Hindu community, while defeating his rival. To India he sends a message supporting the struggle against the "colonising power". He goes up as a candidate for the elections with the slogan, "A Vote for Ganesh, is a Vote for God." When he is invited to Government House, after being elected M.L.C., he appears with traditional Hindu clothes and rejects to imitate the eating habits of the "coloniser". He never goes to cocktail parties and dinners at Government House. He is tagged as an "irresponsible agitator" by the Colonial Office, because he is always ready to lead aggrieved taxi-drivers, scavengers, or fish-vendors to the red house.

Then the incident that triggers Ganesh's transformation into the pro-imperial colonial politician takes place. It is remarkable in that it shows that as soon as Ganesh breaks his ties with the "colonised people", he finds himself on the side of the "coloniser". As the narrator has been quoted to note, "He forgot that he was talking to a crowd of impatient strikers as a man of good and god;" instead, he talks as if he was addressing the easygoing crowd in the Legislative Council. After this incident, Ganesh announces that "Providence" has "opened his eyes to the errors of his ways." Suddenly, once his tie with the colonised people has broken, Ganesh embraces the "ways of the coloniser": he quits his acts of protest, he goes to cocktail parties at the coloniser's Government House, drinks lemonade, and wears a dinner-jacket.

It is an instance of criticism towards the coloniser that the narrator notes at this point that the Colonial Office report now announces that Ganesh is an important

political leader. The narrator further adds that the Government of Trinidad, realising that Ganesh has no chance anymore to win in the coming elections, arranges for him a seat in the Executive Council. These facts indicate that Ganesh has, in fact, adopted the ways of the coloniser to secure his career and future, because he has no proper profession that he can resort to, if he leaves politics. At this point, there is not much room left to doubt that Ganesh is a villain of opportunism. Throughout the novel, he has been portrayed by the narrator through the use of an “ambivalent” sort of criticism. It has always been possible, in each incident, to feel sympathy for this character who has been observed to be well-intentioned in essence, but whom circumstances manipulate to act opportunistically. These circumstances have been shaped by Trinidad, a colony of the British coloniser, where Indians have been brought from colonial India, as indentured labourers. Thus, these Indians have been “doubly colonised”. To this has to be added, that they have also been “displaced” onto a foreign slave-island. So, these circumstances mean “displacement” in addition to “double colonisation” for Ganesh’s community. These circumstances have produced an opportunistic trickster like Ganesh. This final stage in Ganesh’s trickery, where he is transformed into the “anglicised”, “mimic” colonial politician, in fact, is a criticism of the coloniser. As has been noted above, it shows the unethical ways by which the coloniser manipulates the colonial subject, who does not have many alternatives. It shows that the real trickster is the coloniser. Moreover, the “anglicised” G. Ramsay Muir is exactly like one of Macaulay’s “class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.” However, the coloniser’s endeavour to assimilate the colonial politician turns back to him as “menace”, because, as Bhabha argues, the result is a “mimic man”, raised through the English school, “who is the effect of a flawed mimesis, in which to be anglicised is emphatically not to be English.” The very image of this “mimic man”, who has turned his back to his community and apparently “embraced the coloniser”, seen through Bhabha’s analysis, embodies a serious critique of the “coloniser’s intrusion” and existence in a culture he does not belong to.

The major difference between *The Mystic Masseur* and *A House for Mr Biswas* has been observed to be that the “ambivalent attitude” of the narrator in his

criticism has been directed towards the immediate society, rather than the protagonist, in *A House for Mr Biswas*. For the larger part of the second Chapter of this study, the narrator's "ambivalent attitude" in this criticism has been studied. It has been observed, for instance, that Naipaul's narrator severely criticised Mr. Biswas's society for its belief in superstitions. In *The Mystic Masseur*, the narrator-character lost his foot because of his mother's belief in the quack-healer. Here, Mr. Biswas's parents suffer from superstitious rituals like the "unlucky" sneeze, and his father's death in the pond has partly to do with their belief in the superstitions.

The study of another instance of Naipaul's narrator's criticism of Hindu Indians has shown that the narrator's "criticism of colonials" can at the same time indicate the "criticism of the coloniser". The teacher Lal, who is a converted Christian, resembles Grant's and Macaulay's "reformed Indians". However, he is so unfavourably represented by Naipaul's narrator, that this example can be regarded as a criticism of the "coloniser's manners" and "values", rather than the ones of a colonial individual. In a second example of a similar "ambivalent approach" by the narrator, Bibti and Tara are criticised by Ghany for their bad manner of speaking Hindi as a secret language in public places. But this instance is also an indirect "criticism of the coloniser", because it conveys the "sense of displacement" that these Hindu Indians of Trinidad must be experiencing as a result of their being brought to this foreign colonial island.

The episode in which Mr. Biswas is taken out of school by his aunt Tara also contains criticism of both the "coloniser" and the "colonised". On the one hand, colonial subjects are taught subjects at school that are completely irrelevant to their lives. On the other hand, colonials like Tara, Pundit Jairam, and Bhandat are criticised for "victimising" Mr. Biswas. However, even this "victimisation" of Mr. Biswas by his fellow colonials has also once again pointed to the fact that the circumstances that allowed Mr. Biswas to be "victimised" are the ones prepared by the "coloniser", who brought the Indians as indentured labourers to Trinidad and caused an orphan like Mr. Biswas to be without protection by his larger family in India.

Mr. Biswas's entrance into and "victimisation" by the Tulsi family is also closely linked to the circumstance of being "displaced" in Trinidad by the "coloniser", and is hence again an indirect criticism of the coloniser. Seth ironically beats down Mr. Biswas's price for his labour three times because he is an Indian, a Hindu, and a Brahmin. However, Seth's attitude is "ambivalent" because it still implies a strong sense of solidarity among Hindu Indians of Trinidad. In fact, the whole relationship of Mr. Biswas and the Tulsi family is marked by this "ambivalent attitude" and thus, by being so, softens the criticism of the Tulsis, to imply that in fact both the Tulsis and Mr Biswas are "victims of colonisation". Thus it has been observed that Mr. Biswas felt utter regret as well as elation and status, when he entered the Tulsi family. Hanuman House, and the Tulsi family are centres of both, "darkness", "decay", "regret" on the one side, and "warmth", "protection", "elation", and "status" on the other. For instance, Mr. Biswas's pride is hurt to become a "Tulsi son-in-law" without getting a wedding and a dowry. But the good side of this is that he receives shelter and food in return for this. The circumstance that forces both sides to form this opportunistic alliance is again the condition of being a "displaced colonial people".

The fact that the reader can sympathise with both sides, Mr. Biswas and the Tulsis, indicates that both are actually "victims" of the coloniser's "displacing of colonised people". For example, one can understand Mr. Biswas when he revolts against the hierarchy of the Tulsi family, which is humiliating to Hindu pride. But Seth also appears right to accuse Mr. Biswas with ingratitude. When Mr. Biswas uses the "Aryan movement" in his campaign against his in-law family, the movement appears to be flawed and is thus not effective against the Tulsis. Mr. Biswas achieves victory when he insults Mrs. Tulsi and her son, but the situation is presented in such a way that it is not possible to miss the plea for sympathy for Mrs. Tulsi in the text. All these examples reinforce the argument that the narrator's criticism directed towards the Tulsis cannot be dismissed as a criticism of colonials, but that it contains an "ambivalent attitude" which produces sympathy for both Mr. Biswas and the Tulsis, implying that they are ultimately all "victims of colonisation".

Hanuman House draws even more sympathy from the reader, as Mr. Biswas and Shama move to the Tulsi Store. The situation makes the reader realise that Hanuman house has been great material as well as mental support to Mr. Biswas, as he suddenly has to spend the money he has been able to save only because he lived in Hanuman House. In addition to this, he yearns for the “warm and noisy” atmosphere of Hanuman House. The instance of the “house-blessing” ceremony again attracts sympathy to Mr. Biswas, but when Shama is about to give birth to their first child, it is Hanuman House that serves as a hospital and source of help. Though Hanuman House continues to be a source of antagonism to Mr. Biswas, information such as Mrs. Tulsi’s close attention to Savi draws again sympathy to Hanuman House. The plea for sympathy for Hanuman House culminates as Mr. Biswas is stated to see it as a sanctuary where he could “become lost in the crowd,” pointing again to the fact that Mr. Biswas is a “victim” of “colonial displacement” in a foreign world where he needs the sanctuary of Hanuman House. The “victimisation” caused by the colonial act of “displacement” can also be observed in the old Indians who gather in the evenings in the arcade of Hanuman House. They continually talk of their homeland India, but when they have an opportunity to go back, they refuse. They are now “people-in-between”, just as Mr. Biswas is a person between Hanuman House and his individuality.

This “double vision” in Mr. Biswas’s relationship with the Tulsi family, which draws sympathy for both parties as “victims” of the “effects of colonialism”, continues right through the rest of the novel. At Green Vale, Mr. Biswas benefits from the advantage of being a Tulsi son-in-law; but at the same time, he suffers because of the bad conditions and his loneliness there. At Christmas he buys an expensive doll-house for Savi, but the Tulsis understandably object to this, because it brings inequality to the communal life in Hanuman House. Shama brakes the doll-house into pieces, and Mr. Biswas is enraged at this. This situation is also one that attracts sympathy to both parties. In the scene where Mr. Biswas visits his aunt Tara, the comparison between Tara’s house and Hanuman House also contains a “double vision”. On the one hand, Hanuman House is criticised for being “dingy”,

“crowded”, and “uncomfortable”, as opposed to Tara’s clean, “uncrowded”, and “comfortable” house. Tara’s family is “modern”, while the Tulsi family is “traditional”. However, Naipaul’s narrator soon criticises Tara’s husband’s “modern materialism” too, with the incident of the old gardener. In addition to this, the study of the novel has shown that although Hanuman House is not “modern”, there is always a place to sleep, and food for unexpected visitors. Considering that the notion of “modernity” comes from the “culture of the coloniser”, then the “ambivalent approach” of the narrator here indicates that there is not only a criticism of the traditional Hindu Tulsis, but also of the “materialistic culture of the coloniser”, which some of the colonials seem to have adopted.

There is again a “double vision” in the scene when Mr. Biswas makes his first attempt at building his own house and has a nervous breakdown. His new house is less comfortable than even his barrack room, which can be considered as an extension of Hanuman House. When Mr. Biswas experiences his breakdown, the Tulsi family compassionately takes care of him, which is again an indication of solidarity among “colonial subjects”.

After Mr. Biswas moves to Port of Spain, his “ambivalent relationship” to the Tulsi family continues. When the whole family gathers in Mrs. Tulsi’s flat in Port of Spain, Mr. Biswas is outraged. But he enjoys the company of the former “little gods.” So much that, while seeing off Owad, who is going to study in England, his legs shake and tears rush into his eyes.

Another example of “ambivalence” in the point of view of Naipaul’s narrator can be seen in the account about Shekhar’s wife Dorothy. This instance bears similarity to the one about Tara’s family and the Tulsis in that it is about the clash of “tradition” and “modernity”. Dorothy, who is a convert to Christianity, represents “modernity”; and the sisters stand for “tradition”. However, the “ambivalence” here is that the narrator approaches the matter in such a way that it is not possible to judge which view he favours. While Dorothy is ridiculed by descriptions such as “her dresses hung from her high, shelf-like hips as from a hoop,” the sisters are shown to

be defeated by Dorothy's superior skills in traditional subjects such as housekeeping and childbearing. The importance of this example lies in the fact that Dorothy is a converted Christian and thus is an Indian who has adopted the religion of the coloniser. However, the fact that the narrator describes her in a ridiculous way, is indirectly also a ridicule of the "coloniser's culture". But, significantly, the superior attributes of Dorothy are those that belong to tradition, and thus to the "culture of the colonised". This example thus establishes again the argument that the criticism of the "colonised" in Naipaul's work contains an "ambivalent attitude" that criticises the "coloniser" as well.

Mr. Biswas's "ambivalent relationship" to the Tulsi family continues until the novel ends with his doubtful fulfilment of buying his own house. He tells his son Anand that they depend on nobody for a job because they can go back to Hanuman House any time they want. When they move to Short Hills, Mr. Biswas finds a unique opportunity to save all his income because once again, as before in Hanuman House, he does not have to pay for rent and food. He even succeeds in building a perfect country house on free Tulsi land with free timber from the estate. Meanwhile, the Tulsi family is described as a destructive force on the new property. The Short Hill adventure, however, is only of a short duration. Back in the flat in Port of Spain, Mr. Biswas again becomes the "victim" of Tulsi expansion, as the flat is shared by other "in-laws", and the widows of the family send their children as boarders to the house. Within all this harassment of Mr. Biswas, it has been observed that the Tulsi Family serves here an important social function by giving the widows' children an opportunity to go to school in Port of Spain. This is an important point because it marks a period of change in the Hindu Indian community, which realises the importance of education as the traditional structure of the greater family is starting to dissolve. During this period, Mr. Biswas experiences much distress because of his housing conditions, which leads to the result that he makes the purchase of his own house.

Until this point, it has been observed that the criticism of colonials by Naipaul's narrator is in fact marked by an "ambivalent attitude" which contains also

a criticism of the coloniser. Another important point that has been made is that the situations in which some of the “colonised” “victimise” another member of their community, such as has been seen in the Tulsi family – Mr. Biswas relationship, are also presented through an “ambivalent attitude” which indicates that they are actually both victims of the effects of colonisation, and that they are forced to act in this way because of their condition of being “displaced” on a foreign colonial island. Mr. Biswas’s acquisition of a house that has innumerable flaws and is far too expensive is also closely related to the Tulsis’ and his own condition of being “displaced victims” of colonisation. It is the “effect of colonisation” that has caused the Tulsi family to reverse Hindu tradition and take in sons-in-law, and Mr. Biswas has become a “victim” of this condition.

In *The Mimic Men*, it has been observed that, as in the novels studied in the previous chapters, the characters as well as situations in *The Mimic Men* are dealt with by an “ambivalent approach”. The larger emphasis, however, has been seen to be laid on Singh’s attitude which creates “ambivalence” by emphasising his vacillating relationship to Isabella and London.

For instance, in the attic scene, Singh has been observed to vacillate between the “magic” and the “forlornness” of “the city,” which is London, the “heart of Empire”. Then, in the flash-forward scene, Singh on the one hand criticises his colonial island for being a “transitional” and “makeshift” society that “lacks order,” and on the other hand, he describes London as “the greater disorder” and the “final emptiness.” While Singh finds the natural elements of London, such as the snow and the “light of dusk” enchanting, he detests London’s dullness and lack of colour. Soon after Singh has left Isabella with the intention never to return, he states that London has “gone sour” on him and that he longs for the “certainties” of his island, although this is the place from where he once wanted to escape. These early scenes, then, which pass during Singh’s stay as a student in London, tell about Singh’s disillusionment with London, to where he has come, “fleeing disorder,” and “to find the beginning of order.”

In a second flash-forward, however, as Singh arrives at Isabella, he calls his journey to and from London a “double journey” and a “double failure.” This “ambivalent situation” indicates that Singh is nowhere at home, and it is an indirect criticism towards the “coloniser”, who can be said to be the original cause of Singh’s “rootlessness”, because he has “displaced” colonial people like Singh. This argument is reinforced by an example given by Singh, where, to write his biography, he prefers the dull suburb hotel of London to the idyllic cocoa estate on Isabella. Singh calls his return to Isabella a mistake, but he believes that the cause of his mistake has been the “injury inflicted” on him by London, where he can never feel himself as anything but “disintegrating, pointless, and fluid.” This is another example that shows to what extent Singh has been affected by the coloniser’s practice of “displacing” people. As opposed to what has just been said about Singh’s sentiments towards London, Isabella makes Singh believe that he lives there with a feeling of “imminent extinction,” because his small community is an “intermediate race” that is “capable of disappearing in two generations”, which again is the result of the colonial practice of “displacing” colonised peoples.

As the narrative makes a flash-back and returns to Singh’s school-years, Singh, displays more “ambivalent attitudes” that have to do with his condition of being “displaced”. For instance, Singh imitates at school Deschampsneufs, who has got five names other than his last name, and changes his original name, which is Ranjit Kripalsingh, to Ralph Ranjit Kripal Singh, which shortened sounds like a Western name: Ralph Singh. Another example for distress caused by colonial “displacement”, is that Hok, who is a mixture of Chinese, Syrian, and African, is embarrassed to have to talk to his mother, who is a Negro, in front of his class. Also Singh suffers from being a “displaced” colonial on a “manmade” colonial island, which can be observed in his dreams about foreign landscapes with mountains and snow. He often sets the pictures of “beaches and coconut trees” and “mountains and snow” next to one another, which emphasises his feeling of being “displaced”. This is also why he calls Isabella his “island of shipwreck.” It is during this period that he resolves for the first time to leave the “shipwrecked” island. Another important insight that Singh has during this episode, is that there are some events that “sharpen

his desire to get away,” yet at the same time “root him more firmly to the locality where accident has placed him.” This is the point in Singh’s narrative that signals that from now on he will vacillate between his desire to escape, and the feeling that some experiences attach him to the island. During Singh’s long period of vacillation, he at one time aspires to the foreign countries his teachers have lived in, then he states that his “longing to escape has turned sour on him” and that the island “has become his past,” which is an important statement, because it indicates the importance of past experience in a certain “location”. Then, Singh’s vacillating attitude continues in different scenes. At the sea-side he thinks: “The sea. Not my element.” But in the same line as a continuing thought he reflects: “Yet it entered so many of my memories of the island.” In another scene at Deschampsneufs’s home he thinks: “It was possible to believe in the link between our island and the great world. My own dreams were rendered absurd,” because he has been told that an ancestor of Deschampsneufs has personally known the famous writer Stendhal. However, quite soon after this scene, as Singh has made a visit to his father’s camp outside the town, he vacillates again and says to himself: “Fresh air! Escape! ... Good-bye to this encircling, tainted sea!” Yet, on the ship heading towards England, he vacillates once more: “... all my notions of shipwreck were false, telling me against my will, I had created my past.” However, as the ship leaves the tropical zone behind, Singh changes his mind again: “No more foolish fears: I was never to return.” Before the narrative flashes forward again, to the part where the first section of the novel had left off, Singh retells the scene of the attic where the “greater disorder, the greater shipwreck” has come to him “already,” to emphasise the extent of vacillation that he is going through.

In the final section of the novel, where Singh and his Negro former school-mate Browne start a political movement and win the elections, several “ambivalent” situations have been examined. First, Browne has been observed to have an “ambivalent attitude” towards his own race. For example, he supports the employment of Negroes in the firm “Cable and Wireless,” but he is against their employment in banks, because he has the idea that: “If I thought black people were handling my few cents I wouldn’t sleep too well.” Browne’s “ambivalent attitude”

indicates that his “displacement” to Isabella by the colonisers is the real reason for this attitude. In addition, his discriminatory idea must originally belong to the “coloniser”, who brought the Africans to Isabella as slaves. The second “ambivalent attitude” has been observed in the issue of the English expatriates, who could not be removed because the “coloniser” has taken his precautions so that his colony cannot attain full independence so easily. In this scene, the satire is apparently directed at the colonised people’s attitude, but in fact it reveals how the “coloniser”, through his sinister strategies, keeps on controlling the colonies. In a final example for the colonial’s “ambivalent attitude”, Browne cannot help an old Negro who is employed in an English contractor firm, where he has been subjected to discriminatory practices by the firm. This incident has shown that the real power lies in the “imperial centre”, that the “coloniser” brings corruption to the colony, and that he is the source of “discriminatory practices” among the colonised peoples. All the above mentioned studies of “ambivalent attitudes” have shown that Naipaul satirises through his narrator and character Singh not only the “colonised” but the “coloniser” as well.

Towards the end of his political career, Singh seems to criticise his colonial “homeland” but, in fact, by implication he criticises the colonisers, who are the real source of the “chaotic colonial society”. The colonial island is “fragmented”, “inorganic”, offering no link between man and landscape, and lacking common interests because it is a colonial land, where “displaced” people have been brought together by force. It is artificial because it has been created by the colonisers and depends therefore on them. Singh’s longing for escape gradually revives because he cannot feel at home on the “slave-island,” which has been created by the coloniser who has “displaced” and made Singh an “intruder” on the island. A crisis about the nationalisation of the sugar estates that are owned by the English Lord Stockwell, which is an incident that again shows to what extent the “imperial centre” is affecting the social and political stability of its colony, gives Singh the excuse to leave Isabella.

Leaving Isabella, Singh feels relief. But as he arrives in London Singh feels he is “bleeding.” For the second time he senses the “forlornness” of “the city” on which he has twice “fixed so important a hope.” Twice he has come to the “centre of Empire” to find order, but twice he has been disillusioned. However, unexpectedly Singh states that he has found comfort and fulfilment in Lord Stockwell’s and his daughter Stella’s attitude to himself. Yet, Singh’s “ambivalent” statements reveal that he actually uses Lord Stockwell’s and Stella’s attitudes as excuses in order to get rid of his “sense of homelessness”. For instance in the situation with Lord Stockwell he thinks: “This balm I sorely needed. I was foolishly grateful.” In the case with Stella, he says: “Perhaps I was deceived by Stella’s manner and skills, which might have been the manner and skills of her class. But I was willingly deceived.” This evidence implies that Singh interprets these experiences as moments of fulfilment because, as a “homeless”, “displaced”, exiled colonial, he is desperately in need of it.

There is more evidence that tells that Singh’s choice to live in London, the “home of the coloniser”, is not really a fulfilment for him. For instance, about the hotel in the suburb of London he says that it has an “anaesthetizing order of life,” which implies that it does not cure Singh’s distress but only covers it up. Moreover, Singh asserts that he “relishes the constriction and order of hotel life.” Both these examples seem to imply that Singh uses the “order” of the hotel as an excuse to have an attachment to some “place”, just as he admits that he has been “willingly deceived” by Stella, and “foolishly grateful” to Lord Stockwell. Nevertheless, it is highly significant that Singh seeks his final fulfilment in the culture of his own civilisation, rather than in the one of the “coloniser”, when he expresses his satisfaction to have fulfilled the “fourfold division of life prescribed by his Aryan ancestors.”

To summarise what has been argued above, Singh is disillusioned about both Isabella and London, because he is a member of a colonised people that has been “displaced” on a colonial “slave-island,” with a racially and culturally mixed population. In the period before Singh comes to London, he vacillates between his longing to escape from the island, where he feels “displaced” and “rootless”, and the

feeling that experience past on the colonial island nevertheless attaches him somehow to it. During Singh's political career, the "ambivalent attitudes" in Singh and Browne have shown that, while they seem to criticise the "colonised" and the colony, their "ambivalent attitude" actually indicates that the real source of the faults criticised in individuals and the society is to be found with the "coloniser". Finally, Singh escapes from his "artificial home" to the "imperial centre" and claims to have found fulfilment there, but his "ambivalent attitude" again shows that these are not real fulfilments, but only excuses used by Singh to find a "sense of attachment" in a certain "location" of the earth. However, even during this seeming compromise, Singh makes his important statement that finally attaches him to his own culture and not to the one of the "coloniser".

In *A Bend in the River*, the criticism of the "colonised" and, at the same, time of the "coloniser" by the use of an "ambivalent approach" of the narrator has again been observed. Thus, while Salim criticises the Africans as a corrupt people who cannot run themselves without the guidance of the colonisers, he feels sympathy for the once enslaved Africans and describes the African forest as a place that provides protection and security for the African villager. Significantly, any foreigner who enters the forest is threatened by it and described as an "intruder," this being an important implication about regarding the European colonisers as "intruders."

In the section where Salim compares the two "intruders" of Africa, his community and the "European coloniser", the "ambivalent point" of view is again apparent. His people, Salim regards as a backward community who do morosely what they have seen in their ancestors. The Europeans, on the other hand, have provided Salim with all the knowledge he has about his community's history. Salim admits that his ancestors have made great achievements in the past, but he only knows about this because the Europeans have explored its history. However, in the comparison of the styles of slavery of the two antagonistic civilisations the Europeans are seen in a clearly more critical way. The slaves of the Europeans were shipped off to work on plantations, while the slaves of the Orient went to Arabian homes as domestic servants, some of whom even became members of the family.

The coloniser is additionally criticised when Salim tells about “black men assuming the lies of white men,” while expressing his fears about the threat to come from the new native rulers. The important point here is that the native African becomes worse than the “white man” when he adopts his “lies.”

The Europeans, Salim criticises for “introducing the lie.” However, his people are not honest because they are virtuous, but because they are simple people who do not assess their present situation. Yet, this is soon followed by criticism of the Europeans: they are hypocritical because “they could do one thing and say something quite different.” They want both “the slaves and the statues.” This study of Salim’s “ambivalent attitude” has shown that his people are an innocent kind of “intruder”, while the European is a contrived one, and it has also indicated that this attitude involves a criticism of the coloniser’s “contrivance”, “hypocrisy”, and “passion for material gain”.

The study of the chapter *The Second Rebellion* has shown that Salim’s criticism of Africans always contains an “ambivalent” point of view that reveals that the real source of the problem is the “European coloniser”. Salim mentions, for instance, Mahesh’s view that African women in the town sleep with men whenever they are asked. But Mahesh is also reported to say that this “sexual casualness” is part of the “chaos” and “corruption” of the place, which means that African women behave in this way because of the conditions that the coloniser’s town has prepared. In another example, Mahesh is cited to maintain that the local Africans are *malins*, which comes close in meaning to the “colonial stereotype” “savage.” However, Mahesh’s idea about local Africans can also be interpreted to mean that whoever does not behave according to the nature of the Africans, should not be surprised at the consequences. The criticism of Africans continues as Salim reports the “unnerving depth of the African rage, the wish to destroy, regardless of the consequences.” (p. 32) However, the antithesis is contained in the same passage: “The wish had only been to get rid of the old, to wipe out the memory of the intruder.” (p. 32) This statement clearly indicates that the real source of the “misbehaviour” of Africans is the “intruder”, in other words, the European coloniser.

Salim openly opposes the European colonisers when he criticises the Europeans' "twisting" of two-thousand-year-old words to celebrate the anniversary of the steamer service. The significance of the "ambivalent attitude" of Salim in his criticism of Africans lies in the fact that it reveals the idea that the Africans cannot be blamed for the "chaos" they live in. What has pushed them into "chaos" and "corruption" is the way of life the European colonisers have brought and imposed on the Africans. By intruding into the African forest, the European coloniser has violated the "almost universal African law;" the miraculous peace is a result of this. But when the coloniser retreats, far worse conditions are to follow, for which actually he is to blame. If, in this chapter, Salim has criticised the Africans and shown them as "inferior" at certain instances, then it is because of the corruption brought about by their contact with the "coloniser" and his "culture".

The above made argument that the Africans are corrupted when they get into contact with the European coloniser or his culture is reinforced by Salim's statement that the development of the town after the rebellion has made the Africans "ordinary, squalid, poor," while before, when they had less access to the "blessings" of Western civilisation, they were "the inspired ones," protected by the spirits of the forest. Moreover, Salim's assertion that, "Without effort, we had become, in a real way, the masters, with the gifts and skills they needed," (p. 104) and Mahatma Gandhi's question of, "Why do you forget that our adoption of their civilisation makes their presence in India at all possible? Your hatred against them ought to be transferred to their civilisation," (Gandhi, 1938: p. 66) confirm that the Africans become "inferior" when they get into contact with the "coloniser's civilisation". For this to happen the "coloniser" does not have to be there physically anymore, for, his rule returns through his civilisation, which is imported by the new native ruler of the country. If these arguments are added to Salim's sometimes harsh criticism of Africans, the "ambivalent vision" that emerges indicates that the loss of the Africans' dignity and their fall to this "inferior" state of existence has been caused by the arrival of Western civilisation in the town. The real cause for the suffering of the Africans is the "coloniser" and his culture and civilisation. Thus, after a long time of development and economical boom in the town, when violence returns to the region,

the native Africans have nowhere to hide anymore. Paradoxically, the “conveniences” of modern Western civilisation, such as airfields and education, have removed the safety of the villages. Nowhere is safe now; the means of civilisation serve in Africa to destroy lives.

In *A Bend in the River*, there are, besides the native Africans, other “victims” of colonialism that are depicted. Two of them are Indar and Salim, who suffer from the sense of “homelessness” and “restlessness” as a result of the colonisation of the countries they live in. Indar argues that for colonised people “the past can only cause pain” because colonialism has “displaced” and “uprooted” their lives. He feels the pain of the “sense of homelessness”, when in England he observes that “English jobs” are meant for “English boys;” Africa belongs to Africans, and India sees him as an Indian with “divided loyalties.”

In his search for “identity” and a “home”, Indar applies for a job in the Indian Embassy in London. But here, he is told they cannot have a man of divided loyalties because he has stated in his letter that he is from Africa. The result is that Indar feels a complete lack of belonging and, like Singh in *The Mimic Men*, clings to individualism and the “centre of empire”: “... I belonged to myself alone. (...) For someone like me there was only one civilisation and one place – London, or a place like it.” (p. 157) The importance of this point is that it indicates that “colonised people” like Indar and Singh choose the “civilisation” and the “centre of empire” not because they consciously prefer it, but because the “turmoil” and “displacement” that “colonisation” has brought to their societies, leaves them no other choice. The “confusion”, “rootlessness”, and “homelessness” caused by the effects of colonisation pushes them to the “imperial centre”.

Salim too, suffers from a sense of being “trapped”, “rootless”, and “homeless”, after he leaves his home on the African coast. How desperate he is about this subject shows his assertion: “I was homesick, had been homesick for months. But home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost.” (p. 114) Singh in *The Mimic Men* believed that he found

fulfilment in Stella and London. Likewise, Salim seems to find fulfilment in a European setting. During a party given by a European couple, listening to Joan Baez, he believes he has finally found the “Europe in Africa” Nazruddin told him about. However, like Singh, he knows that this is “make-believe,” but, like Singh, he deliberately allows himself to be betrayed, in order to escape the “sense of homelessness”: “It was better to pretend, as I could pretend now. (...)” (p. 136) Similar to Singh, Salim believes that he has found fulfilment in a European woman, the Belgian Yvette. However, his relationship with Yvette emphasises all the more his “sense of homelessness”, because he realises that Yvette is as “trapped” as himself. His condition of being “homeless”, “the absence of a community, the isolation,” are the very reasons for this relationship to be at all possible. Finally, Salim believes he has an illumination that helps him to remove his pain caused by the “sense of homelessness”: pain is just an “illusion”; it has no meaning. The idea of “going home” is a “deception” which comforts only to destroy. “Trample on the past” and get rid of the idea of it, to “make the dreamlike scenes of loss ordinary.” The “ambivalent” aspect in Salim’s illumination is that his desire to make “scenes” of “loss”, “pain”, and “homelessness” ordinary only emphasise the depth of suffering that these cause in him.

The end of the novel is in tune with the theme of “homelessness” and “suffering”. The imagery of Salim on the steamer, which was introduced to the jungle by the European coloniser himself, floating on the river in complete darkness, to escape the “post-colonial chaos” of the town, is a strong indicator of the importance of this theme for Salim, and many “post-colonial” individuals like him.

In the Introduction to this study, it has been stated that what makes V. S. Naipaul particularly useful for this study is that he is a controversial writer. George Lamming has been quoted to say, among other things, that he is “a colonial, ashamed of his cultural background and striving like mad to prove himself through promotion to the peaks of a ‘superior’ culture (...)” This study has indeed shown that the narrators and characters in his novels that have been studied, criticise the colonised or the colonial society at times severely, or are themselves criticised. But the

achievement of this study is to have shown that it would not be right to dismiss Naipaul's fiction as simply "pro-imperial" and "anti-colonial", because his characters and situations are depicted through an "ambivalent point" of view which, to use Bhabha's term, "disrupts" the "critical discourse" applied on the "colonised" and their society and turns the criticism towards the "coloniser".

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