

**The Question of Identity in A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S.
Naipaul's *The Mimic Men***



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The Question of Identity in A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I, hereby, declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rezoan', followed by a period. The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

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Dedication

To all the subalterns in the postcolonial world

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Abstract

The question of identity, in the postcolonial context, delves into subalterns' sense of ambivalence while interacting with the postcolonial world which occurs due to the hybridization of their identity. Gleason suggests that an individual's postcolonial identity "decides where he or she stands with respect to the traditional [native] values, beliefs, and institutions that are being called into question, and with respect to the contrasting interpretations being offered" by the west (195). Both A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* depict how subalterns' acceptance and mimicry of Europeanness cause hybridity in their identity from where the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity is impossible. This qualitative study investigates how the subalterns' identity is hybridized with the theoretical support of Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" and Edward K. Brathwaite's concept of creolization. Besides, in this study, Frantz Fanon's concept of national culture, Robert Young's theory of hybridity, and Michael Dash are taken into consideration to examine how the hybridization of subalterns' identities sets a barrier for them to reclaim their pre-colonial identity. This study further implies why the natives find their postcolonial identity absurd.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Identity, Subaltern, Hybridity, Europeanness, Reclamation, Pre-colonial Identity.

Chapter One

Introduction

The question of identity involves the investigation of subalterns' issues with their hybrid identity as depicted in both A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*. Stuart Hall defines identity "as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222). In the process of colonialism and imperialism, the colonizers have produced some 'selves' among the natives who either adopted the European way of life by compromising their native identity or on whom identity is imposed which compels them to sacrifice their pre-colonial identity. If we delve into the background of these 'selves' production, we find that the colonial masters have destroyed all pre-colonial establishments, rewritten the natives' histories, and reshaped their cultural identity by intruding various aspects of European or colonizers' culture into the indigenous culture. Hence, after centuries, the concept of authentic native identity doesn't exist anymore, rather it exists only in the subalterns' consciousness as 'past' memories. Truth be told, these subalterns neither have access to their pre-colonial identity nor they have the power to make a return there. Thus, colonialism has neither let them be European nor African, Caribbean or any other ethnicity. Homi K. Bhabha terms this ambivalence as the state of 'in-betweenness' which causes subalterns absurdness and anxiety in the question of identity. In fact, subalterns are impelled to this state of 'in-betweenness' due to the hybridization of their identities. So, an exploration of the question of identity, at one hand, inspects how this hybridization of identity occurs, on the other hand, it scrutinizes the barriers that the subalterns face while coming out of this 'in-betweenness' state as depicted in A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*.

The essence of the native identity lies in the significant differences between the colonizers' and colonized selves' cultures. When natives accept the colonial imposition or mimic colonizers' culture, they withdraw themselves from the very idea of "what they really are" as natives. In this way, the concept of authentic native identity becomes a myth that only stays in subalterns' memories as a 'past'. So, the acceptance or adaptation of Europeanness or any other foreign culture occurs at the sacrifice of native identity. Besides, the routes for the subalterns' going back to their pre-colonial identity are destroyed by the colonial masters in the course of colonialism. French postcolonial theorist, Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) claims in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* that "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content...[rather]... it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (168). In this way, the natives' pre-colonial identity, their colonial experiences, and their resistant power to colonialism are buried. So, the keynote of subalterns' absurdness in the question of identity lies in the fact that the subalterns have no clear idea of what they have become in the process of colonization. Besides, the transition from 'what they were' before the colonial period to 'what they are now' in the postcolonial world doesn't create any meaning to their conscious system; as a result, they find their present identities absurd. Apparently, their urge to reclaim pre-colonial identity also gets blurred.

Paradise (1994), by Tanzanian-born British Nobel laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah (born. 1948), sets in twentieth-century East Africa – a colonial domain encountered by two colonial powers, the Arabs followed by the Germans. In this novel, Gurnah sketches the subalterns' anxiety in the question of identity when their 'native' identity is taken away. While portraying

the effects of colonialism in Kawa, German East Africa (now Tanzania), he brings the issues of slave trading, economic imperialism, and the ‘unspeakable’ sexual relationship between the colonized ‘selves’ and the colonizers into the light. All six sections of this novel are centered on Yusuf’s growing up as a slave, his traumatic colonial experience, Uncle Aziz’s colonial expedition to the interior of Africa, and the German intervention. One of the most noticeable facts Gurnah illustrates in *Paradise* is that before the arrival of European colonizers, there existed another colonial domain set up by another colonial power, the Middle East. The pattern of every colonization process is quite the same, just the titles are different.

In *Paradise*, when Yusuf, the central character of the novel, proposes to the other slaves of the *Seyyid* (Khalil, Hamdani, Amina, and others) to escape from slavery and settle in a new place with a new identity, all of them deny such freedom claiming that they have nowhere to go and the world is limited for them without the slave identity. Besides, a long period of enslavement has made Hamdani so dependable on his colonial master that when he is offered freedom, he finds nowhere to go since the world is limited for him. His history, his belongingness to his native land and native people, and his colonial experience in the early years — all are erased from his memory. So, he wants to remain the ‘old gardener’ for his colonial master for the rest of his life. Identity determines “the survival of the person in mass society” (Stein and Vidich 21). All the colonized selves portrayed in Gurnah’s *Paradise* have lost the power to stand alone or survive in the mass society because *Seyyid* Aziz’s colonial treatment has made them “rootless and isolated in a swarming, anonymous throng” (Gleason 194). Along with their identity, they have lost their power of resistance. So, in the question of identity, their feelings are absurd.

The Mimic Men (1967), written by Trinidadian-born British Nobel laureate Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (1932 – 2018), sets in an imperial domain, the island of Isabella representing any Caribbean island in its postcolonial phase. In this novel, Naipaul sketches subalterns' "in-betweenness" in the question of identity when they adapt or mimic the colonizers sacrificing native identity. Colonialism is aimed at producing some 'selves' who are black [native] in appearance but mentally more white [European] than the whites. If we delve into the subaltern characters (Ralph Singh, Cecil, Browne, Deschampsneufs, and others) portrayed in *The Mimic Men*, we find them to possess high aspirations of living a European life in their early years of growing up, especially while pursuing education at Isabella Imperial High School administered by the colonizers. They are so hegemonized by the superiority of Europeans that they change their native names to European ones. They announce proudly that they "mimic men of the New World " of which they want to be a part (Naipaul 175). Even, surprisingly, their magazine, *The Socialist*, through which they intend to put an end to the West's colonial and imperial expedition in Isabella, is run by the narratives of the West (e.g. Left Wing, Right Wing, Liberals, etc.) How hegemonized can a group of subalterns be to think that they can put an end to European colonialism with the narrative offered by the West? Later, when Ralph Singh is sent to London to make a deal with the ex-colonizers, he thinks that he will be cordially accepted because of his European way of life. But, there, he is unwelcomed, treated like a child, and 'otherized'. Similarly, after failing in London, when he returns to Isabella, the natives send him to exile. The presence of Europeanness in his personality makes him unreliable to the natives; hence he is 'otherized' in his own land by his own people also. In the third part of the novel, when each of his friends and colleagues tries to retrieve their native identity, they struggle and

fail terribly in the end. Through this, Naipaul brings the issue of the subalterns' inability to reclaim their pre-colonial identity into the light.

Jamaican-British cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1932 – 2014) in his “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” mentions that the presence of Africanness and Europeanness in Subalterns' personalities causes hybridity in their identities which is the root of their anxiety and absurdness in the question of identity. He considers hybridity very problematic as it sets barriers for the subalterns' to reclaim the 'authentic' pre-colonial identity. He implies that the colonial masters have success in their process of imperialism due to their success in leveling up all the subalterns in the world as 'one people' with “the common historical and colonial experience” especially those who iconize the West (Hall 435). However, in this study, Hall's elaboration of the three 'presences' in subalterns' identities will help to understand subalterns' personalities in the postcolonial world. It will also help to find out the reason for subalterns' absurd feelings on the question of identity as well as what sets a barrier for them to reclaim their pre-colonial identity.

Thus, the question of identity in A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* dissect subalterns' personalities in the postcolonial world. Using Stuart Hall's “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” as a theoretical lens, this study investigates how subalterns' identity is hybridized and why they can't reclaim their pre-colonial identity. Through the theoretical support of Frantz Fanon's concept of national culture, Robert Young's theory of hybridity, and Michael Dash's “In the Search of Lost Body”, this study further explores the barriers to the subalterns' coming out of their state of 'in-betweenness' as well as the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity. Additionally, the nature of subalterns' identity formation process, i.e. whether identity is imposed or adopted, will be explored throughout this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The question of identity is of paramount importance in any postcolonial discussion. It attributes to subalterns' identity construction or formation process, their sense of nativism and struggles with hybrid identity, and their inability to reclaim pre-colonial identity as depicted in Gurnah's *Paradise* and Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*. Most of the published papers and book chapters on these two novels are focused on identity crisis issues, narratological study, postcolonial mimicry, and resistance. When it comes to Gurnah's *Paradise*, the researchers prioritize the aspects of Swahili history and individuals' urge for new spaces. In the case of *The Mimic Men*, the effect of colonialism and imperialism on the natives, the subalterns' adaptation of European identity through mimicry, and the novelist's autobiographical elements in the novel, and the issues of cultural hybridity are mostly celebrated. None of the researchers have yet explored the question of identity focusing on how hybridization of identity occurs and the barriers for the subalterns' to reclaim their pre-colonial identity as depicted in these two novels.

In the late 19th century, the East-African society's culture, economy, and social structure were controlled by the Middle East under the tag of Islamic civilization till the arrival of German colonizers. The Indians also incorporated with the Arabs in establishing middle-eastern colonial rule in Africa. The structure of such a colonial rule is totally different from the British colonial expedition in the East. The Arabs and Omanis' expedition to East Africa involves the slave trade, ivory trading, enforced plantation of clove and cotton farming, etc. In their expedition, they are neither brutal nor terror; it is more like a socio-economic expedition. The Arabs and the Indians

enter Africa with a narrative of economic investment, but they end up replacing the existing culture with an Islamic one. In the course of time, they capture the social, economic, and cultural spaces of East Africa conditioning the natives' sense of agency as well as all other aspects of their native identity. The distinction between Middle-eastern colonialism and German colonialism lies in the fact that the Arabs enslaved the African natives for agriculture and domestic purposes by lending their parents money whereas the Germans forcefully enslaved the natives for military purposes. Nina Berman in her paper mentions that Gurnah's *Paradise* successfully sketches the contemporary social relations that "are structured by economic interactions, by trade, ownership of people, and varying degrees of control over the economic agency" (56). She explores how the mechanism of colonial rule structures the natives' sense of agency in late 19th-century East Africa. But, in her study, she neither comments on the natives' absurdness in the question of identity nor sheds light on the slaves' [natives] inability to reclaim their authentic pre-colonial identity; rather her study highlights the natives' condition of existence when the colonizers capture their social spaces.

During the Arabs' expedition to Africa, people around the globe perceive the indentured African slaves as Arabs. So, before the Germans' colonial encounter in East Africa, the natives' identity has already shifted from African to Arab or Omanis. When the Africans are taken away as 'indentured' slaves following the culture of 'pawning', the Arabs change their name to an Islamic one, teach them Quran, and habituate them with the Islamic way of life. But, at the sacrifice of native identity, what do these slaves get? — Nothing but the identity of slaves [*rehani*] who are obliged to follow their masters' orders. They celebrate 'no right' to negotiate or disagree with their masters; all they have to do is: 'listen and obey'. Gareth Griffiths in his book

chapter claims that Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* presents a "simplified model of Tanzanian society in which Arab slavers brutally attack and enslave innocent Africans" for a lifetime (310). Throughout the chapter, he emphasizes how "slaves were frequently converted to Islam, married, and integrated into the Arab/Islamic community" (Griffiths 310). Hence, this particular chapter focuses on how the natives become the subjects to the practice of 'pawning', but it disregards the indentured slaves' struggle to reclaim their authentic pre-colonial identity.

The multilayered colonial establishment in East Africa (by the Arabs and the Germans respectively) has compelled the natives to enter a complex ethnic and cultural identification zone. By replacing the existing superstructure, the colonial intervention has distorted the natives' identity and all the paradigms of the existing culture. The consequences are so deep-rooted that even after the end of a colonial regime, the ethnic identification system introduced by the colonial masters continues for which the natives suffer generation after generation. David Callahan highlights in his paper that Gurnah's focus in *Paradise* is "on the ingenious injuries of authority, the corrosion occasioned in human relationships by power, and the imperatives of exchange" (65). In this paper, the discourse of race and ethnicity is used to examine the subalterns' feelings of alienation in a mixed-ethnic society. The significance of this paper lies in the fact it helps this current study to analyze how the subalterns' identity is hybridized, distorted, and reconstructed by the colonizers.

The mechanism of all colonial establishments attributes to the colonizers' construction of natives' inferiority through the construction of their superiority. In this process, the colonizers do something they are expert at — which the natives struggle to do and find very fascinating and 'exotic'. For instance, the Arabs are experts at trading, and the Germans are at military power. In

Paradise, due to Aziz's unmatched brain for trading, he is referred to as 'jinn'. Besides, the supernatural stories and myths about the colonizers play a dominant role in constructing their superiority in the natives' consciousness. Elizabeth Maslen in her essay comments that "the construction of the self through constructing Otherness within the community is everywhere present within *Paradise*" (55). In this narratological study, she particularly explores the role of stories and myths in the colonial establishment but forgoes the notion of subalterns' identity formation process, i.e. whether identity is imposed or adopted.

The mechanism of every colonial encounter in one sentence is to grasp the land first, then their identity. When the colonizers or imperialists capture the sociocultural spaces of the colonized land, the natives struggle for a sense of belongingness, place, and identity. In *Paradise*, the protagonist, Yusuf's struggle for individual identity and his failure in reclaiming the place he belongs are noticeable. In this regard, Eleanor argues that Gurnah's *Paradise* brings to the foreground the enslaved selves' "search for new spaces within a diverse and contradicting cultural setting" (115). Using a postmodern perspective and gender discourse as a theoretical lens, she examines the natives' urge for new spaces when they are colonized. Her study helps this ongoing study to look into the subalterns' perception of self in a colonial domain.

In an active colonial domain, if a native [slave] accepts his master's supremacy, he receives a pet-like treatment from him. In the course of time, his consciousness is conditioned to such an extent that he forgets the strength of his native identity and loses the power of resistance. In the collision between his culture and the colonizer's culture, the latter wins; and, his identity becomes hybridized. Mehmet Gunes claims in his article that *Paradise* depicts "the identity crises experienced by the individuals who are seen as the other because of the colonial mind and

the social problems based on the racial, religious, and economic discriminations in African societies” (145). In that article, he exhibits how individuals are otherized in a colonial domain like East Africa.

Whereas A. Gurnah’s *Paradise* sets in East Africa in a colonial domain with the intervention of two colonial powers consecutively, V. S. Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men* is set in an imperial domain where the ex-colonizers control the economy and politics of the ex-colonized island, Isabella. Geographically, the island of Isabella signifies one of the isolated islands belonging to the Caribbean countries. After capturing the geopolitical spaces of Isabella, the British colonizers evacuate all the Caribbeanness from their native identity and impose the colonial metropolis on the social spaces of that Island. In this process, the colonizers succeed in producing some ‘mimic men’ who are physically Caribbeans but morally British. This hybridized and cross-cultural identity causes psychic trauma in those individuals’ consciousness. Kumar and Bajiya claim in their paper that the protagonist of *Paradise*, Ralph, “accepts the cultural parameters that have been imposed, accepted, reproduced, and taken as facts in the colonized Isabella” (40). Throughout the paper, their justification of subalterns’ search for individual space and identity from a postcolonial perspective is very important to this ongoing study.

Subalterns’ intimacy with the colonial power is a self-violation of the essence of native identity. Theoretically, after the end of colonialism, the process of decolonization starts. To be decolonized, firstly, the ex-colonized selves must reject all the colonial metropolis which are imposed generation after generation in the process of colonization, and secondly, they must retrieve their pre-colonial culture, identity, and social spaces which the colonizers have already

destroyed, distorted, and buried. So, this retrieval is practically impossible. In Gurnah's *Paradise*, "Ralph, as a representative of the Caribbean peoples, feels he doesn't have a history, a background, a past, a pedigree, a character, and authenticity on which he can base himself" (Culhaoglu 91). In this situation, to survive in the postcolonial world with respect to traditional culture, he himself constructs a new identity. His identity becomes an amalgamate of nativism and Europeanness. This amalgamation proves that there is no way left for the ex-colonized subjects to get rid of Europeanness. Tahsin Culhaoglu demonstrates how *The Mimic Men* fails to "posit a way of constructing an authentic and dignified identity for a post-colonial world through the decolonization of the mind" (88).

In an imperial domain like the island of Isabella, the colonized subjects are deprived of the root, belongingness, or any acknowledged identity. In fact, the colonizers have left no option for the natives, except to accept cultural hybridity. As a result, transculturation occurs, and a polyglossic society is constructed in the colonized land. Dr. Manisha Sarkar claims that *The Mimic Men* "encapsulates this profound sense of socio-cultural loss and the subalterns' notion of a stable home" (163). Using Homi K. Bhabha's notion of cultural hybridity, she examines how creolization occurs due to the mimicry of the West. In Bhabha's words, a multicultural society "is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative, and its articulation as repetition and difference" (107). In her study, Sarkar remains more focused on subalterns' ambivalence in the postcolonial world and how mimicry brings expulsion to the subalterns.

From colonialism to imperialism, the subalterns' identity shifts from indigenous to expatriate. If we examine the algorithm of subalterns' loss of native identity, we find that it starts with their leaving of native land by mimicking the footsteps of the colonizers. Ultimately,

mimicry alienates one from his own cultural setting. Besides, the subalterns mimic the colonizers so that they can be a part of the supreme colonial empire. But, mimicry doesn't make them equal to the colonizers rather subordinates them to their colonial masters. Dizayi claims that "Naipaul's protagonist [Ralph] has failed to become a part of London, and more precisely, the colonial empire. His failure to do so has turned him into a deracinated individual with an uprooted identity" (924). In this textual analysis-based study, Dizayi explores how mimicry led an individual to slavery in an imperial domain like Isabella island. In this process, the subalterns lose their native identity.

The diasporic society, we see in today's world, is a creation of colonialism. The colonizers' migration to the colonized land or the subalterns' migration to the West, in both cases, the indigenous culture and indigenous identity get fractured. To simplify, at first, the colonizers destroy the natives' authentic existence, and then, they rebuild them imposing the narrative of the west. Grewal and Manuel draw a conclusion that *The Mimic Men* depicts [natives'] "preoccupation that the colonial society has nothing original, and the assumption that natives aren't real or not real men unless they follow or blindly imitate the so-called superior people, the colonizers, to be considered civilized" (1974). Throughout the study, Grewal and Manuel explore the subalterns' alienated state due to identity crisis in a postcolonial diasporic society.

The discourse of hybridity and heterogeneity is rooted in a cross-cultural atmosphere. In this contact zone, the supremacy of colonizers results in the natives' abandonment of their native identity. Besides, in the processes of colonization, the colonizers have successfully created a hegemonized society that considers the West a land of order, great civilization, and peace. From

the natives' perspective, London is an embodiment of paradise on earth. The aspiration to be an inhabitant of that paradise let the subalterns mimic the West. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin mention in their book chapter that Naipaul "is consigned to a world of mimicry and imitation since he is forced to write about the material which lies at one remove from the significant experiences of the post-colonial world" (87). Throughout the chapter, they show the imperatives of mimicry in a postcolonial condition. Nevertheless, the art of mimicry destroys one's authenticity in identity. So, living in a diasporic community or society, is it really possible for the subalterns to return to their authentic native identity? This is the burning question in this postcolonial world.

In every adaptation or imitation, there lies some hidden imposition from external power for which an individual is compelled to mimic or adapt. That is why the discourse of colonial hegemony comes into the foreground. The natives' consent is manufactured in such a way that they borrow every identical and cultural element from various European cultures across the world that they consider supreme. They think that borrowing various aspects of so-called supreme culture will dissolve every problem they experience in an imperial domain. Asangaeneng and Udoette opine in their scholarly article that "Naipaul's insistence [in *The Mimic Men*] on determining the identity of the individual is preconditioned to be able to continue the quest for political identity and solve the rest of colonial problems" (63). However, Asangaeneng and Udoette's exploration of the influence of colonialism and imperialism on subalterns' identity provides strong support to this ongoing study in examining subalterns' identity formation process in a colonial or imperial domain.

To conclude, the exploration of the question of identity is rare in the case of Gurnah's *Paradise* and Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*. Most of the published papers, journal articles, and book chapters haven't focused much on this topic. Few researchers explore mimicry, cultural hybridity, and the identity adaptation process in *The Mimic Men*; therefore how subalterns' identities are hybridized in *The Mimic Men* won't be discussed in this study. In contrast, almost no research has been conducted on *Paradise* regarding colonized subjects' identity formation process. When it comes to *Paradise*, critics are more likely to focus on Swahili history and culture. However, there exist some scholarly articles that depict individuals' struggles with their identity in a colonial or imperial domain; but, none of the critics mentioned above have talked about the barriers to subalterns' reclamation of their pre-colonial identity as depicted in Gurnah's *Paradise* and Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

To conduct this study, a qualitative method with an emphasis on textual analysis will be followed. This section scrutinizes the key components of the theoretical framework chosen for this study to explore subalterns' identity formation process, their anxiety in the question of identity, how hybridization of identity occurs, and investigate the barriers to their reclamation of pre-colonial identity. To explore all these issues, Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" is taken to delve into subalterns' personalities in the postcolonial world, and examine their identity formation process and what causes anxiety among them regarding their postcolonial identity. In this regard, Robert Young's notion of hybridity is important in this study to look into how heterogeneous identities are formed in a colonial or imperial domain. Besides, Edward K. Brathwaite has been noted to further inspect the colonizers' identity imposition process on the subalterns. Lastly, Michael Dash and Frantz Fanon are also taken for this ongoing study to understand why the reclamation of pre-colonial identity isn't possible.

Jamaican-British cultural theorist Stuart Hall in his "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" unveils the colonized subjects' struggles in the question of identity when their cultural identity is reshaped due to the colonizers' infliction of Europeanness on their indigenous culture. To accomplish the 'one experience, one identity' project, the colonizers have transformed all the subalterns to "a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall 435). The identity of these "imposed selves" always undergoes constant

transformation and representation. So, their identification system is not a fixed one. However, in this transformation process, the essence of Blackness [Caribbeanness or Africanness] in the natives' identity is repressed step by step. The more the blackness in natives' identity is repressed, the more empty spaces Europeanness occupies in their identity. When this repression of Blackness goes on generation after generation, at one point, the natives' history, colonial experience, and belongingness become blurred and erased in the end. As a result, tracking and reclaiming the natives' past or pre-colonial identity sounds impossible.

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Hall also examines subalterns' personalities in the postcolonial world and theorizes three 'presences' in their identities. Among those three presences, "*Presence Africaine*" and "*Presence Europeenne*" are the sites that dissect the cross-cultural aspects existing in the subalterns' identity in a colonial and imperial domain. "*Presence Africaine*" is the site referring to the repressed Africans or Caribbeans who are silenced, enslaved, and treated inhumanely in the course of colonialism. It signifies the old Africa on which "a 'new' Africa of the New World [is] grounded" (Hall 437). If any subaltern of Caribbean or African origin tends to return original African or Caribbean culture, he will fail since it doesn't exist anymore. On the other hand, "*Presence Europeenne*" attributes the issue of power and resistance between the colonizers and the colonized "to the lines of force and consent, to the role of the dominant in the Caribbean or African culture" (Hall 437). Africanness in natives' identity is the template on which Europeanness is embedded. So, it is "*Presence Africaine*" in subalterns' identity which invokes them to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity whereas "*Presence Europeenne*" resists that reclamation and makes it far from happening. Hall's theorization of "*Presence Africaine*" and "*Presence Europeenne*" helps this

study to dissect various aspects of subaltern's identity in the postcolonial world and looks into the barriers to the reclamation of pre-colonial identity.

Robert Young (Born. 1950) brings up the issue of the hybridization of identity due to a fusion between the White Europeans and the dark-skinned Africans through interracial sex. When the Europeans encounter the natives for the first time, they find them exotic. The same sort of exoticness the Africans also feel when they confront the colonizers. Their feelings of exoticness toward each other lead to the “fascination of having sex — interminable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex” (Young 161). The descendants of mixed-race unions suffer from rootlessness and belonginglessness to any particular culture. Pramod K. Nayar claims that “this multiplicity results in an identity that is extremely fluid and even can induce a sense of anxiety among the subalterns” (205). As a result, the subalterns with mixed-race identities are more likely to adopt or accept the colonizers' imposition of Europeaness. In “The Cultural Politics of Hybridity”, Young emphasizes that “culture in its colonial operation becomes hybridized [...] through the production of polymorphously perverse people who are, in Bhabha's phrase, ‘white, but not quite’” (160). However, we also find Edward Kamau Brathwaite to complement Young and discuss how the colonizers produce ‘mimic men’ who imitate them (the colonizers) blindly.

Edward K. Brathwaite (1930 –2020) brings up the issue of the enslaved subjects' identity formation process through creolization into the light. He defines that “creolization begins with ‘seasoning’, a period of one to three years, when the slaves are branded, given a new name, and put under apprenticeship to creolized slaves” (Brathwaite 152). The natives don't lose their authentic identity when they are enslaved, but rather when they are renamed and are forced to be accustomed to the colonizers' culture. By ensuring their active presence in the colonizers'

festivals and recreational programs, their consents are engineered. Consequently, all of their past memories connected to the native land are erased. At that moment, their personalities become hollow, and they are used as templates for the colonizers to cultivate their culture as well as their carbon copies in Africa. All the slaves are forced to imitate their masters pursuing them either “with the fear of punishment...[or]...with the bribe of gift, or complement or the offer of a better position” (Brathwaite 152). It isn’t merely a case of mimicry or adaptation of identity but rather a case of identity imposition process.

Michael Dash postulates how the exiled colonized subjects can integrate into their pre-colonial culture and reclaim their pre-colonial identity. To be integrated into pre-colonial Africa, the colonized selves must redefine the existing narrative of power, beauty, and space in such a way that contrasts the West’s narratives of those aspects. For this reason, Dash suggests that “the ego-centered attitude of savior or reformer must yield to a humble realization that the discourse of the island-body is more powerful” than the West’s (295). According to him, the reclamation of pre-colonial identity is only possible if the colonized subjects feel strongly connected to the native land where all of their past exist though those faded over the course of time. Using Dash’s notion in “In Search of the Lost Body”, on one hand, we can examine how Gurnah and Naipaul try to integrate into their native identity by writing *Paradise* and *The Mimic Men* respectively, on the other hand, we can analysis subalterns’ barrier to the reclamation of pre-colonial identity as implied in these two novels.

Frantz Fanon (1925 – 1961) understands the subalterns’ anxieties in the question of identity, and therefore he delves into barriers to the reclamation of their pre-colonial way of life. He defines their struggle for the pre-colonial identity as “a passionate search for a national

culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped” (Fanon 119). He suggests that subalterns must glorify and celebrate their past Africa, declining all the colonial narratives against it. But, fighting for pre-colonial Africa won’t succeed due to “the intellectual laziness of the national middle class...which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime” (Fanon 121). This group of people doesn’t have the intellectual power to rebuild Africa the way it existed in the pre-colonial era. In Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men*, the narrator accepts that they run Isabella following the narratives offered by the West. As a result, instead of being the real Africa, it turns into a microcosm of European culture. Fanon remarks that “the psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry” (122). Through the lens of Fanon’s concept of national culture, it can be examined why the subalterns of *The Mimic Men* fail to decolonize Isabella and reclaim their pre-colonial identity.

Stuart Hall’s “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” serves this study as a theoretical frame to examine how hybridity in identity occurs. Robert Young’s notion of hybridity and Edward Brathwaite’s conceptualization of creolization help this study to inspect subalterns’ identity formation process. Besides, by combining Frantz Fanon and Michael Dash, if we delve into *Paradise* and *The Mimic Men*, all the barriers to subalterns’ reclamation of their pre-colonial identity come into the foreground.

Chapter Four

Hybridization of Identity in A. Gurnah's *Paradise*

The hybridization of identity occurs in a colonial or imperial domain as a result of cultural collisions between the colonized subjects and the colonizers. After taking control of the land, to stabilize the process of colonization, the colonizers focus on the socio-political spaces of the colonized subjects. For this reason, they suppress various aspects of the culture on the indigenous people; as a result, the authenticity of indigenous culture is destroyed. Their cultural suppression creates acculturation among the natives; apparently, the natives' identity is distorted, reshaped, and hybridized. In A. Gurnah's *Paradise*, hybridity in identity occurs when the Arabs and Osmanis merchants "dispossess indigenous people and force them to assimilate to the new social pattern" (Ashcroft et al. 137). In this case, Islamic culture and identity are imposed on the Africans. The Arabs occupy East Africa and take economic control of it, and indirectly oblige the indigenous people to adopt their supreme culture. Besides, the descendants of mixed race unions are born with their identity hybridized. If we delve into *Paradise*, we find Yusuf, Amina, and Khalil to have their identities hybridized before they are born due to their parents' dissimilar racial, cultural, and in some cases religious identities. As a result, their conscious systems are dominated parallelly by their parents' dissimilar belongingness. However, their birthplaces impart them with a culture that shapes their identities. Hence, hybridity in identities occurs through the colonizers' direct imposition of their culture and various aspects of their identity on the indigenous people, and later through the native's adaptation of the colonizers' culture and identity in the fear of being marginalized and otherized.

Novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah sets *Paradise* (1994) in twentieth-century East Africa where the Arabs and Osmanis continue their economic expedition in a structure that matches the structure of European colonialism, except for the fact that they never show any terror or violence. Taking the advantage of the African natives' poverty, the Arab traders have introduced the pawned system in Africa. In this pawned system, if the natives fail to repay the money in due time, the Arabs are allowed to take their children as 'indentured slaves' till their parents pay back the total amount. In most cases, poor Africans fail to repay. As a result, their children are enslaved for a lifetime. In *Paradise*, Yusuf, Khalil, and Amina are such "indentured slaves" who are used for domestic, agricultural, or business purposes. In the opening chapter of this novel, as soon as Yusuf is taken to *Seyyid* Aziz's house as an indentured slave, he is sent under the apprenticeship of Khalil (another indentured slave to *Seyyid* Aziz) so that he learns the dos and don'ts as a slave. In his early childhood, when Yusuf meets Aziz for the first time, he is advised to address Aziz as his uncle. The very first thing that Yusuf is forced to learn and accept under the apprenticeship of Khalil is that he is a slave, and there exists no kinship between Aziz and him. Khalil says to Yusuf sharply that

"He [Aziz] doesn't like little beggars like you calling him Uncle, Uncle, Uncle. He likes you to kiss his hand and call him *Seyyid*. And in case you don't know what that means, it means master. [...] *Seyyid*, you call him that, *Seyyid*!" (Gurnah 25)

In order to establish a master-slave relationship, Aziz needs to reconstruct Yusuf's identity. Since Uncle Aziz holds a respective position in Yusuf's heart, a direct imposition may result in losing that respectable place. Besides, he wants to enslave Yusuf by his consent. For this reason, he follows the same mechanism that the European colonizers introduce in Jamaica.

Edward Kamau Brathwaite unveils the mechanism of subalterns' identity formation through creolization in his "Creolization in Jamaica". According to him, the whole process starts with renaming the subject, then rebranding his identity by changing his belongingness, structures of feelings, and sense of perception. After that, the colonized subject is forced to socialize with the colonizers by ensuring his "participation with others through the gang system and through communal recreational activities" (Brathwaite 152). Automatically, the colonized subject himself creates a new social periphery in which he wants to hold a central position of attraction. In the case of Gurnah's *Paradise*, hybridity in identity occurs when the subalterns accept their new identity offered by the colonizers.

If we delve into Yusuf's new identity formation process in Aziz's house, we find how Aziz rebrands Yusuf by keeping him under the apprenticeship of Khalil and Hamid respectively. In the beginning days, Khalil never addresses Yusuf by his own name, rather addresses him as Zuma, Kipumbu (meaning 'dumb'), Kifa Uranga (meaning living death), maloon, and 'little testicle'. However, Yusuf isn't renamed since he has already a Muslim name, and Aziz approves it. But, Khalil's attitude towards Yusuf makes him realize how inferior he is in Aziz's society. Next, Khalil inserts the urgency of learning Arabic into Yusuf's consciousness. He provokes Yusuf by saying, "You must learn Arabic, then he [*Seyyid*] will like you more" (Gurnah 25). Learning the colonizers' language signifies the beginning of the acceptance of colonial imposition. However, Yusuf's grooming in Arabic happens at Hamid's house where is sent for further schooling. It is the first phase of identity formation.

Aziz is well-aware of the fact that no one will mimic a foreign culture and adopt or accept the identity offered by that culture until its superiority is established. So, to establish the

superiority of Arab culture and identity, he needs to show how inferior the natives of East Africa are. When Yusuf is taken to Waungwana as an indentured slave, he finds the existing narratives of good versus evil, beauty versus ugliness, prosperity versus hardship, and savage versus civilized redefined. In the first expedition, when the train stops at Kawa in mid-afternoon, Mohammad Abdalla announces that,

“We’re in the country of the savages. They’re not made of the same cowardly mud as you. They’ll steal anything, including your manhood. If you don’t keep your clothes well tied around you. Haya, Haya! They are waiting for us.” (Gurnah 59)

Following Abdalla’s announcement, Khalil says to Yusuf that “You’re a part of that savage country up there” (Gurnah 52). It is important to note that Khalil being a slave considers himself more civilized than Yusuf, even though both of them celebrate equal rights and liberties under the domination of Aziz. Later, Abdallah also comments that the natives of Kawa are “made out of sin ...[and they are] worth ten of any of you” (Gurnah 52). Hamid is also found to comment on Harbans Singh’s (AKA. Kalasinga) ethnicity. He says that,

“You’re all Indians, all banyans and cheats and liars. [...] I hear that Kalasingas (Sikhs and Indians in general) have long hair growing out of their arses. I heard a story of a Kalasinga who plucked one of those out and tied up someone who was annoying him.” (Gurnah 61)

When it comes to the natives’ religious beliefs and the celebration of rituals and festivals, Abdalla shares his perception that “They’re just ignorant savages who believe their own childish nightmare” (Gurnah 148). He also thinks of Europeans as dog-like creatures. If we delve deeper into all the narratives about other ethnicities, we find that the Arabs are constructing the

inferiority of others in order to establish their superiority. All of these narratives provoke Yusuf to accept the Arabs' cultural imposition on him. When Yusuf is convinced of their superiority, he is towards losing his native identity.

According to Robert Young, the subalterns with mixed-race identities are more likely to adopt or accept the colonizers' imposition of new identities. In *Paradise*, Yusuf is a descendant of interracial unions wherein his father is an Arab and his mother an African Swahili. Apparently, his parents' dissimilar identities dominate his conscious system proportionately more or less. But, his birthplace, Kawa has already entitled him to a native culture that shapes his identity. Instead of glorifying his native identity, Yusuf's father inserts the supremacy of Arab identity into his consciousness at the early stage of his growing up. The "*Presence Africaine*" in Yusuf's identity wants him to play Kipande with the native child. But, due to dissimilar religious and ethnic identities, his father demonizes them to Yusuf saying, "We are surrounded by savages. Washenzi, who have no faith in God and who worship spirits and demons which live in trees and rocks" (Gurnah 6). On the same logical ground, he should have forbidden his son to play with the sons of an Indian shopkeeper. Surprisingly, he allows that. Hence, Yusuf hasn't been alienated from the natives due to dissimilar identities, rather his father's colonial mindset forces him to maintain distance from the natives. It should be noted that the Indians incorporated with the Arabs in their economic expedition in Africa. The whole aspect seems as if Yusuf's father is awaiting Yusuf for accepting the Arabs' imposition of Islamic identity on him.

Later on, Yusuf is sent to Hamid's house for further schooling. When Hamid comes to know that Yusuf doesn't know how to read the Quran, he becomes shocked. He reacts in a catastrophic tone that "Poor boy! Poor boy! What tragedy have you brought to our house?"

(Gurnah 99). As if Yusuf's knowledge of the Quran would have brought prosperity to his house. Hamid's reaction makes Yusuf realize how powerless he is in such a colonial domain. If he doesn't accept their colonial imposition, he will be marginalized forever. So, the fear of marginalization makes him accept the Arabs' imposition of culture, and his identity gets hybridized. After that, Maimuna proposes that "Let him go to the Koran school with the children" (Gurnah 100). Consequently, Yusuf learns Arabic and finally adopts the Islamic way of life which Khalil inclines long ago. While criticizing the colonial imitation, Edward K Brathwaite remarks in "Creolization in Jamaica" that "this imitation went on, naturally, most easily among those in closest and most intimate contact with Europeans" (Brathwaite). There is no doubt that Yusuf's identity formation process goes on naturally due to intimate relationships with his colonial masters. Apart from him, Amina's identity also gets hybridized when she is married to Seyyid after the enslavement. But, being a wife of Aziz, she doesn't own the same rights and liberties that Zulekha celebrates; rather she works and is perceived as an attendant to her mistress Zulekha. Ultimately, Amina's identity is hybridized, perhaps shifts to an Arab from African MaSwahili, due to the colonizers sexual fascination to their slaves. However, After the German invasion of Africa, all of the natives get a new identity when they are forcibly joined as Askaris led by the German Army. The more colonial powers encountered Africa the more the natives' identities got hybridized. Hence, Gurnah has successfully painted an image of Africa where multilayered colonial encounter has hybridized the natives' identities with or without their consent.

Chapter Five

Barriers to Reclamation of Pre-colonial Identity

Since hybridity in identity impels the subalterns to the state of “in-betweenness”, the reclamation of pre-colonial identity is a must for them to have one fixed identity. This section of this study explores the barriers the subalterns face while reclaiming their pre-colonial identities as depicted in Gurnah’s *Paradise* and Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men*. Gurnah exemplifies the natives’ barriers to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity when they are in an active colonial domain. All the enslaved subjects of *Paradise*, Yusuf, Khalil, Mzee Hamdani, and Amina, fail to access their pre-enslaved identity since their histories, memories of their birthplace, and belongingness are faded and erased. On the other hand, V. S. Naipaul epitomizes the subalterns’ barriers to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity when they are in an imperial domain. The central characters of *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh, Browne, Deschampsneufs, Hok, and Cecil, neither want to glorify their Caribbean identity nor do they have that much intellect to lead Isabella towards its’ real past which the colonizers repressed, distorted, and destroyed. However, in this chapter, through the theoretical support from Frantz Fanon, Michael Dash, and Stuart Hall, we can bring all the barriers to the subalterns’ reclamation of their pre-colonial identity in both colonial and imperial domains into the foreground.

In a colonial or imperial domain, “*Presence Africaine*” and “*Presence Europeenne*” exist side by side where one represses the other. The more the subalterns adopt Europeanness in their identities, the more their Africanness or Caribbeanness are repressed. But the question of identity arises when the presence of Europeanness in their identity impels them into the state of “in-betweenness”. In “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Stuart Hall implies that subalterns must

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delve into that repressed “*Presence Africaine*” to get out of this “in-betweenness”. It is “*Presence Africaine*” in subalterns’ identities that invokes them to reclaim their pre-colonial identity whereas “*Presence Europeenne*” resists them. Hall further mentions that the colonizers have rewritten the natives’ histories, erased their traumatic colonial experience, and blurred their belongingness. So, tracking those aspects of native identity (African or Caribbean) is quite impossible; this is the primary barrier to their reclamation of pre-colonial identity. Later on, we find Frantz Fanon and Michael Dash to discuss multilayered barriers to such reclamation in “National Culture” and “In Search of the Lost Body” respectively. Fanon points his finger at the national bourgeois “who took over power at the end of colonial regime” and sees their intellectual laziness and business mind psychology as the barrier to natives’ reclamation of pre-colonial identity (121). In contrast, Michael Dash is of the opinion that subalterns’ obsequiousness “who they really are” and their reluctance to glorify and dignify their past or Africanness set the barrier to their identity reclamation process in an imperial domain.

In *Paradise*, A. Gurnah emphasizes the necessity of individuals’ fixed identities to survive in mass society by constraining Yusuf, Mzee Hamdaani, and Khalil in a state of abandonment. When Yusuf is enslaved as a *rehani* for his father’s debt, his identity is reshaped in the same way the Europeans creolized the Jamaican. As a result, Yusuf becomes physically a MaSwahili, but morally an Arab. Due to continuous representation and transformation, Yusuf’s identity is hybridized in such a way that he can’t stand without his existing ‘slave’ identity in this small world. When Yusuf proposes to Seyyid Aziz’s second wife, Amina, she rejects him since he doesn’t have that much superiority to defend her in the future. The narrator clarifies that,

“The Seyyid could travel deep into strange lands in a cloud of perfume, armed only with bags of trinkets and a sure knowledge of his superiority. The white man in the forest feared nothing as he sat under his flag, ringed by armed soldiers. But Yusuf had neither a flag nor righteous knowledge with which to claim superior honor, and he thought he understood that the small world he knew was the only one available to him.” (Gurnah 237)

The German intervention disrupts *Seyyid* Aziz’s economic expedition to East Africa. They are capturing every young native on their way and recruiting them to wage war on other superpowers. In the meantime, Aziz’s wife Zulekha falsely accuses Yusuf of sexual assault. Though everyone understands how much of a character he is, none of them supports him. Consequently, Aziz’s door becomes closed for him. Hence, Yusuf’s hybrid identity only makes him a perfect slave and more inferior to the Africans whom the Arabs consider savage and inferior to all nations. Now, in order to survive, he has two options left: either he will accept the enslavement of bigger colonial power the Germans or he will reclaim his pre-enslaved identity which Kawa bestows him after birth.

According to Stuart Hall, if Yusuf wants to reclaim his pre-colonial identity, he has to delve into the repressed “*Present Africaine*” in his identity. In his case, “*Present Africaine*” refers to the Swahili language, his belongingness to Kawa, its culture and its society, and finally, his kinships with whom he has been disconnected for decades. Thus, for the reclamation of African identity, he needs to embrace all of these aspects and rebrand himself. However, in the final chapter of *Paradise*, “A Clot of Blood”, after returning from Kawa, Aziz informs Yusuf that “I visited your old town while [...] I found out that your father has passed on...and your

mother no longer lives there and no one could tell me where she has gone” (Gurnah 241). After hearing all of these, Yusuf feels “no sense of loss, but a sudden sadness that his mother is now abandoned too” (Gurnah 241). By all accounts, the death of his father and his mother’s leaving of Kawa ultimately signify that there is no reason left for him to return there. Later, when Aziz inquires about his mother’s hometown, Yusuf simply replies that he doesn’t know. So, Yusuf has no history or belongingness left in his consciousness—which is the primary barrier to his identity reclamation process.

Yusuf’s relationships with Kawa, its society, and Swahili culture are as absurd as those can be. Due to his father’s colonial mindset, he is unable to play with the natives' children in their neighborhoods. If he mixes with them and plays Kipande, his father scolds him. He (his father) says repeatedly, “We are surrounded by savages. Washenzi, who have no faith in God and who worship spirits and demons which live in trees and rocks” (Gurnah 6). So, no belongingness has been developed between him and society. In the middle of the novel, when Aziz sends Yusuf to Hamid’s family for further socialization, he is forced to learn Arabic and adopt Islamic culture. As a result, his relationship with the Swahili language is also interrupted. Thus, Yusuf neither possesses any sort of belongingness to Kawa and its society nor is he an active user of its language. In fact, in no way, he is connected to Africa except in the fact that he was born in Kawa. Indefinitely, the “*Presence Africaine*” in his identity is so repressed and faded that he has nothing to reclaim from there.

In *Paradise*, the oldest of all slaves, Mzee Hamdani is given freedom long ago. When he is inquired about the reason for living in Aziz’s house instead of going somewhere and settling, he remains silent. Later we find Amina to unfold his history:

“...his mother was a slave woman who had him late in her life. She called him Hamdani in gratitude for his birth. When the mother died, her father [Zulekha’s] bought Hamdani from the family which owned him.” (Gurnah 222)

So, Hamdani is a rootless and belongingnessless slave who has no history except for the fact that his mother is a slave. There is nothing left in his history from which the question of reclamation of his pre-enslaved identity can be drawn.

After returning from the last expedition, Yusuf proposes to the other slaves to escape and build their own paradise. He has seen a place near Caspian Lake which is the embodiment of paradise. Hearing such a proposal, Khalil mocks Yusuf and says, “We can all run away to live on the mountain...[this will be the violation] of the agreement, and this is what honor requires” (Gurnah 232). Michael Dash emphasizes in his “In Search of the Lost Body” that “he or she [the colonized subjects] must radically redefine the notion of time, space, beauty, and power before a return becomes possible” (295). Khalil doesn’t find it offensive when the Arabs have enslaved them for a lifetime in the justification of ‘pawned’ system, rather he finds it disgraceful when Yusuf tends to break the chain of slavery. Khalil’s consent is engineered in such a way that he finds maintaining the slavery agreement a matter of honor. Hence, the inability of redefining the narratives of the colonizers is a major barrier to the subalterns’ reclamation of native identity that Gurnah reflects in his *Paradise*.

In *The Mimic Men*, V. S. Naipaul underscores subalterns’ barriers to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity when they are in an imperial domain where “*Presence Africaine*” and “*Presence Europeenne*” exist side by side unequally without any repression from outside of the territory. The central characters of this novel, Ralph Singh, Deschampsneufs, Browne, Hok, and

Cecil, consider the Europeans to have a “pure world” and proudly announce that they mimic the “men of the new world” (Naipaul 175). In Isabella, they introduce *The Socialist*, a magazine to create a revolution on the island so that the West’s colonial and imperial expedition comes to an end there. Instead of writing about the island and its people, their focus remains on what is happening in London or America. Their concern for the violence in America is more than the violence happening in Isabella. When they try to create public discourse regarding any issue, they label it following the narratives offered by the West (e.g. Left Wing, Right Wing, Liberals, etc.). Browne finds the necessity for “a ‘nationalist’ publishing house in the region,” since the media gives the authority to construct and reconstruct reality. The act of constructing reality by demolishing another truth is the West’s narrative of power — which the “mimic men” follow blindly. In pre-colonial Isabella, there was no such factionalism as Left Wing, Right Wing, Liberals, Socialist, and so on. Apparently, these mimic men are incapable of redefining the West’s narrative of power.

When Ralph Singh comes into the power of Isabella replacing the Europeans, he becomes obsessed with naming everything that can be labeled. In his memoirs, he admits that “so I went on, naming, naming; and, later, I required everything – every government building, every road, every agricultural scheme– to be labeled” (Naipaul 152). He is so hegemonized by the Western narrative of power and honor that he even renames himself. From Ranjit Kripalsingh, he becomes Ranjit Ralph Singh. According to Edward Kamau Brathwaite, the West’s discourse of power lies in the politics of ‘renaming’ and ‘rebranding’ the colonized. Following the same mechanism, Ralph dreams to be the supreme leader. The acts of naming the things give him a “sense of ownership.” Instead of redefining the West’s notion of beauty, he accepts it as a

reference frame. He makes a house following Roman architectural models and named it “Roman house” since Roman architecture is the European definition of beauty. Nevertheless, when Sandra’s attire matches the West’s concept of ‘seductress’, he marries her. After being exiled, while staying in London, when he sees snowfall for the first time, he expresses his contingency of happiness by uttering, “Snow: At last; my element” (Naipaul 9). If we dig deeper into Ralph’s definitions of ‘beauty’, ‘power’, and ‘space’, we reach the conclusion that he is articulating the European notion of those aspects. Even, living in an imperial domain he fails to redefine the notion of beauty, power, and space in the context of his Caribbean culture. In all the spheres of his life, he prioritizes “*Presence Europeenne*” over “*Presence Africaine*”; as a result, he is ‘otherized’ from both sides. Hence, the failure of redefining the West’s narratives of ‘beauty’, ‘time’, ‘space’, and ‘power’ is a barrier for the subalterns to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity.

The new generation which is in the power of Isabella is the descendants of mixed-race unions. Hok is a negro of Chinese, Ralph a mestizo or chino and of Indian origin, and Deschampsneufs a Creole of French origin. Among them, Hok suffers from an inferiority complex due to his mother’s identity as negro. One of their classmates shouts in front of the class that “Sir, Hok moved past his mother barely now and he didn’t talk to her at all” (Naipaul 14). The whole class searches for his mother and finds it out that “she [is] certainly a shock, a Negro woman of the persons, short and stocky, quite unexceptional” (Naipaul 14). Hok avoids seeing his mother in the school considering that it may harm his social status and he may be treated differently if his negro identity gets exposed. For the sake of so-called social gratification, he denies “that individual environment where rested his real life” (Naipaul 104). But, secretly he

explores China in the books kept in the school library as if he is treasure hunting. Ralph mentions that “China was the subject of Hok’s secret reading” (Naipaul 112). The way Hok belongs to China is the same way Ralph belongs to India. He (Ralph) reads “Rajputs and Aryans, stories of knights, horsemen and wanderer [...] and explores the homeland of the Asiatic and Persian Aryans, which some put as far away as the North Pole” (Naipaul 112). Like Hok, he also hides his Hindu identity. When it comes to his “calling identity”, he admits that his “true name is the covert name but it must not be employed in public” (Naipaul 100). He understands neither the essence of Sikh identity nor Hinduism. When his father sacrifices Deschampsneufs’ horse Tamango to observe ‘Aswamedha’, he becomes shocked and shameful. According to him, it is “outrageous and obscene to every person on the sport-crazed isle” (Naipaul 168). He considers his father a permanent shame for a lifetime. However, both Ralph and Hok want to integrate into their native identity, but none of them wants to glorify their past. They fear publicizing it. In this regard, Frantz Fanon remarks that to reclaim pre-colonial identity, the subalterns must accept the fact that “there [is] nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory, and solemnity” (120). We can debate over Ralph’s father’s sacrifice of Tamango. But, the way Ralph and Hok put their histories, belongingness, and past out of sight is the violation and self-violation of their native identities. Being an Indian, Ralph perceives the Indians as a “short-visioned” type. He can criticize his father’s observance of ‘Aswamedha’ since he did it without the acknowledgment of Tamango’s owner, Deschampsneufs, but in no way, he can consider it a matter of shame. He could have glorified it by publicizing the significance of ‘Aswamedha’ — a ritual for prosperity and fertility. Neither Hok nor Ralph try to dignify their originality by making it public. They must have the guts to accept their racial, religious, social, and ethnic identity without any inferior

feelings. Hence, their failure in glorifying and dignifying their histories, past, and belongingness is the utmost barrier to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity.

In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul not only epitomizes the individual's barrier to the reclamation of his pre-colonial identity but also the nation's barrier to retrieving its authentic past and rebranding itself. In the postcolonial Isabella, the middle-class bourgeoisie like Browne, Ralph, and their companions come into power. Instead of thinking about rebranding Isabella, they focus on their personal gain. They suggest 'drama' to construct reality which is absurd to the natives but not to them. They are intellectually so handicapped that they forget to rewrite the history of Isabella changing the West's narratives. They neither build any superstructure to decolonize Isabella nor do they replace the "*Presence Europeenne*" with "*Presence Africaine*", rather they imitate the same superstructure through which the West continues their colonial and imperial domination. Ralph reveals their psychology that "the politician is more than a man with a cause, even when this cause is no more than self-advancement" (Naipaul 37). After grasping the power of Isabella, in the narrative of aggrandizing the economy, they make a decision to nationalize the sugarcane estates owned by the British. Instead of focusing on the other spheres of the economy, they focus on the profitable business and approach the sugarcane estate owners. When Ralph is sent to make the deal, just like businessmen do, he fails to convince Lord Stockwell. Living in England, Stockwell wants to control the economy of Isabella. Hence, the narrative of imperialism comes into the foreground. The politician could have introduced new policies and patronized the production of other agricultural products so that Isabella gains economic emancipation. Fanon claims, "the psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain" (122). Ultimately, the Isabellian politicians' intellectual

laziness and their opaqueness are responsible for the imperialization of Isabella. For this reason, Fanon remarks that the middle-class bourgeoisie's business-minded psychology and intellectual laziness are the barriers to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity as well as the nation's barrier to retrieving its authentic past and rebranding itself.

Considering the above discussion, we must be at one with Michael Dash that the subalterns have no clear idea about "who they really are". When they lack the idea of themselves, there is nothing to reclaim from their pre-colonial identity. In both of the novels, the characters fail to decode the essence of their native identity. In *Paradise*, Yusuf's memory of the past, his history, and his belongings are blurred and erased. He fails to track all of these in the repressed "*Presence Africaine*" in his identity. Similarly, Hamdani's belongingness to his native land is buried with the death of his mother. The colonizers' destruction of the colonized subjects' histories and colonial experience are the key barrier to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity. On the other hand, in *The Mimic Men*, all the subalterns fail to redefine the West's narrative of power, beauty, space, and time. According to Michael Dash, the colonized subjects must realize that "the discourse of the island-body is more powerful" than the West's (295). Apparently, Browne, Deschampneufs, and Ralph's failure in redefining the West's narratives is the ultimate barrier to the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity living in an imperial domain. None of the characters glorifies his past, rather he feels shame for it and therefore hides it. As a result, they fail to integrate their pre-colonial culture. The final barrier to the reclamation of pre-colonial identity is, as Fanon mentions, the intellectual laziness of the middle-class bourgeoisie who replace the colonizers and come into power. Due to their opaqueness, not only

do they fail to reclaim their pre-colonial identity, but also the nation fails to retrieve its authentic past.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

By focusing on the subalterns' state of "in-betweenness", the question of identity in A. Gurnah's *Paradise* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, on one hand, inspects how hybridity in identity occurs due to the colonizers' direct imposition of identity, on the other hand, it unfolds the barriers for the subalterns to come out of this state of 'in-betweenness.' In order to come out of this "in-betweenness" state of identity, either they have to be absorbed in the conquering race or they have to return to their pre-colonial identity. But, due to the subalterns' racial inclination, absorbing into the conquering race is not possible. Ultimately, the reclamation of their pre-colonial identity is the utmost solution.

The hybridity in identity restricts the natives from having one fixed identity; they always undergo continuous transformations and representations. Due to the existence of "*Presence Africaine*" and "*Presence Europeenne*" in subalterns' personalities, they neither remain native nor European. In Bhabha's words, they figuratively live in an "in-between" space where they carry the burden of an alien culture (i.e. the colonizers' culture) while trying to decode the truest essence of native culture or vice versa. In Gurnah's *Paradise*, when Yusuf accepts the identity of an Arab at the sacrifice of his native identity, Hamid entitled him '*waungwana*' which means "people of honor" (Gurnah 100). But, when Seyyid's wife Zulekha falsely accuses Yusuf of sexual assault, no one stands in favor of him though everyone knows how much of a character he is. In spite of adopting the whole Islamic way of life, he is "otherized" due to his slave identity and his belongingness to Kawa which the Arabs perceive as the land of the savages. Ultimately, after adopting the Arab identity, neither he becomes an Arab nor remains an African. Yet, he has

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to carry the burden of Arab identity for the rest of his life while failing continuously to decode the essence of his native identity that Kawa imparts to him after birth.

Similarly, in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh, Browne, and Deschampsneufs consider the Europeans to have a "pure world" and proudly announce that they mimic the "men of the new world" (Naipaul 175). Ralph replaces everything of his Caribbean identity with Europeanness except his skin color. In the end, when he visits London as a delegate of Isabella to nationalize the sugar estate, he is humiliated at Lord Stockwell's house due to his Caribbean identity. After returning to Isabella, the natives send him to exile accusing him unreliable for the country since he is physically the Caribbean but morally a European. Thus, he is "otherized" from both sides. In spite of adopting the colonizers' culture wholly, both Yusuf and Ralph neither remain native nor Arab or European. This "in-betweenness" state causes them anxiety and absurdness in the question of identity. However, hybridity in identity "tends to resist ideas of a pure culture of either the post-nor pre-colonial they have not found universal assent" (Ashcroft et al 137).

Frantz Fanon in his "National Culture" clarifies that "a passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason" when the subalterns experience anxiety in the question of identity (119). So, the reclamation of pre-colonial identity is a must for all the subalterns since hybridity in identities has made them "rootless and isolated in a swarming, anonymous throng" (Gleason 194). For this reclamation, the subalterns must go back to their native land. No one can claim his African identity while staying in London or any other places outside of Africa. The subalterns only feel ashamed of their native identity and culture if they see it through the lens of the colonizers' culture, i.e. the European culture in the

context of Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* and the Arabian or Islamic culture in the context of Gurnah's *Paradise*. So, using the European narrative as a reference must be stopped to be integrated into pre-colonial Africa. For this reason, the West's narrative of beauty, power, honor, and space must be redefined in the context of African or Caribbean culture. But, all of these are only possible, if the subalterns have the idea of "who they really are" and can track their histories, memories, and traumatic colonial experience. In *Paradise*, Gurnah epitomizes that the colonized subjects' histories, memories, traumatic colonial experiences, and belongingness are erased and blurred in the process of colonialism. So, "to this Africa, which is a necessary part of the Caribbean imaginary, we can't literally go home again" (Hall 437).

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