From Elitist to Plebeian: Cosmopolitanism in V. S. Naipaul's Fiction

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Abstract

This thesis examines how V. S. Naipaul alters his elitist stance and consciously reorients his understanding of cosmopolitanism toward a plebeian direction represented in his fiction. It relies on new theories, critiques and empirical analyses of cosmopolitanism that have emerged and developed in cultural studies, sociology and anthropology in the past fifteen years or so. The most prominent feature of the new cosmopolitanism is its response to diversity in the increasingly hybridised global context in a counter-elitist trend. This thesis argues that the contemporary re-conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism in the cultural dimension necessitates a rereading of Naipaul's works. It seeks to challenge the simplistic generalisation of Naipaul's cosmopolitanism as an elitist mode of being and his advocacy of a homogenising drive toward universality, and rejects both those readings of his fiction that adopt a universalist cosmopolitan lens and those that look at them from a purely postcolonial perspective. It divides Naipaul's fiction writing into four phases, and eight of his novels—*Miguel Street*, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, *The Mimic Men*, *In a Free State*, *A Bend in the River*, *The Enigma of Arrival*, *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*—are examined in the chronological order. In doing so, this thesis shows how Naipaul's textualisation of cosmopolitanism has evolved from the elitist to plebeian slant in changing historical conditions. By exploring the plebeian transnational's homelessness or rootlessness as a consequence of the (post)colonial experience, Naipaul questions the feasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism, and finally embraces plebeian cosmopolitanism. The continual, long process of his conscious correction responsive to contemporary cultural, economic, political and social changes exemplifies a kind of new cosmopolitanism. This thesis highlights that Naipaul's incorporation of the tension between particularism and universalism existing in the real world into his thought and outlook extends the theoretical premises of cosmopolitan discourses.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

V. S. Naipaul, one of the most highly regarded literary figures alive in our time, is called "a double exile, a deracinated colonial" (138) by his authorised biographer Patrick French. Indeed, Naipaul has no loyalty to his home country or ethnicity; his life is a continuing journey of exile and never-ending search for home and identity. His concerns, for the most part, remain constant as he has matured in both craft and vision. His overarching themes—man's rootlessness, lack of acceptance, and sense of alienation and insecurity—are revealed in his treatment of the ravages of colonialism as they manifest themselves in both the First and the Third World.

This thesis examines the development and change of Naipaul's critical understanding of cosmopolitanism represented in his fiction. I will argue that Naipaul's early novels reveal a longing for an elitist cosmopolitan mode of being, in the sense that Naipaul privileges his metropolitan, intellectual subjects. *In a Free State*, however, marks an important turning point. Naipaul consolidates his thematic focus on the post-Second World War migratory patterns from the Third World to the First World. He begins to rethink and reinvestigate the tragedy of the plebeian transnationals (especially those without legitimate educational or occupational background) who suffer from their supposed cosmopolitanism. In his later fiction, he recognises and praises their capabilities of developing new cosmopolitan identities and subjectivities in multiple, available ways. Naipaul does not arrive at such a realistic, pragmatic understanding of cosmopolitanism suddenly; he has continually made conscious correction in his observation of contemporary cultural, economic, political and social changes. Naipaul's concern with the negative side effects of or threats to cosmopolitanism helps us to translate abstract cosmopolitan ideals into concrete social realities.

The first part of this critical introduction to the thesis discusses some of the key debates on cosmopolitanism in history. A new cosmopolitanism that has emerged and developed in several disciplines in the past fifteen years or so will be identified. Next, why the

new cosmopolitanism in the cultural rather than moral or political dimension necessitates a rereading of Naipaul is explained. I then sketch why I choose to study Naipaul's fiction, and how its realist representation extends the theoretical premises of the new cosmopolitanism. The last part of the introduction illustrates the structure of the whole thesis and the argument in each chapter.

According to its European genealogy, the term "cosmopolitan" derives from the Greek words "*cosmos*" (the entirety of the natural world) and "*polis*" (city, people, citizenry), meaning "a citizen of the world". Cosmopolitanism belongs to a conceptual history beginning with Diogenes of Sinope's self-designation as a *kosmopolites*, a citizen of the world and so by implication not (or not only) a citizen of any particular city-state. Diogenes was a native of Sinope in Asia Minor, whence he had come in exile to Athens; however, "asked where he came from, he said, 'I am a citizen of the world'" (Diogenes Laertius 65). The sentiment expressed would have been primarily antinationalist, that is, in contrast to the typical Greek man of his time, Diogenes would have been pointedly refusing to identify himself in terms of allegiance to his place of birth or to political or group affiliations. Moses Hadas suggests that it was "a rebellious reaction against every kind of coercion imposed by the community upon the individual…Diogenes' cosmopolitanism, then, was the proud assertion of a ragged exile's consciousness of his own worth in the face of a bourgeois society which scorned him" (108).

Diogenes' general ideas were passed on to the Cynics, who then influenced Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy. The Stoics more fully developed the image of the world citizen, arguing that each of us dwelt in effect in two communities—the local community of our birth and the community of human argument and aspiration. The second community, in Seneca's words, is "the one, which is great and truly common, embracing gods and men, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our state by the sun" (Long and Sedley 431). The Stoics believed that "human beings are naturally social, all with the potential to be members of one shared cosmopolitan

community" (Sellars 133). They held that this community was the source of our most fundamental moral and social obligations. As Plutarch summarises:

> The much admired *Republic* of Zeno…is aimed at this one main point, that our household arrangements should not be based on cities or parishes, each one marked out by its own legal system, but we should regard all men as our fellow-citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law.
> (Long and Sedley 429)

The Stoics developed cosmopolitanism as a consequence of their moral philosophy, which was an attempt to create a morality based on virtue. Internal virtue should prevail over all external circumstances, and virtue could be related to a law of nature. They insisted on a certain way of perceiving our standing in the moral and social world, to establish a humanist brotherhood of all mankind and to maintain a social ethic that can be universally applied. Hierocles, for instance, took self-perception and the relation of self to others as the grounding of cosmopolitanism:

> Each one of us is as it were entirely encompassed by many circles…The first and closest circle is the one which a person has drawn as though around a centre, his own mind…The outermost and largest circle, which encompasses all the rest, is that of the whole human race…it is the task of a well tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the centre, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones. (Long and Sedley 349)

In general, Stoic cosmopolitanism advocates that "we should view ourselves as fundamentally and deeply linked to the human kind as a whole, and take thought in our deliberations, both personal and political, for the good of the whole species" (Nussbaum, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism" 6). It is a moral stance rooted in a belief in the equal worth of humanity in

all persons. This is accompanied, or reinforced, by an affective attitude of universal love and responsibility for humanity as a whole, regardless of communities of a particular city-state of which one claims membership. In the Roman world, Stoic cosmopolitanism directed moral as well as political thought. The directly political side of cosmopolitanism could come into its own in a very practical way, as Roman Stoic philosophers had a major influence on politics.[1]

The ancient expressions of cosmopolitanism were relatively marginal and not connected with mainstream trends. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, cosmopolitanism took on a distinctive political and cultural identity, and its spirit spread throughout Europe. Modern European thought on cosmopolitanism achieved significant articulation during the Enlightenment in political philosophy, most famously in the writings of Immanuel Kant. Kant drew heavily on the ethical and moral underpinnings of Greek and Roman Stoicism to develop his utopian vision of a universal community, global democracy and world peace extending beyond the relatively limited modern republic. In the 1784 essay "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose", Kant proposed as feasible the philosophical project of attempting "to work out a universal history of the world in accordance with a plan of nature aimed at a perfect civil union of mankind" (51). However, Kant began to alter his assessment of cosmopolitanism in his 1793 essay "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice'". After briefly setting forth the idea of a world republic bound by "a cosmopolitan constitution", he suggested as more feasible the idea of "a lawful federation under a commonly accepted international right" (90). In the 1795 essay "Perpetual Peace", Kant revised his argument that "the positive idea of a world republic cannot be created" (105).[2] He granted the legitimacy of the state, which he described as "a society of men, which no-one other than itself can command or dispose of. Like a tree, it has its own roots, and to graft it on to another state as if it were a shoot is to terminate its existence as a moral personality and make it into a commodity" (94). The idea of cosmopolitanism was subordinated to the political aim of

achieving peace. Kant did not speak about propagating a uniform international law to which all must submit superior to national law. On the contrary, he theorised that the only way to achieve permanent world peace was through the formation of a "pacific federation" of nations, a "general agreement" to "preserve and secure the freedom of each state in itself, along with that of the other confederated states, although this does not mean that they need to submit to public laws and to a coercive power which enforces them, as do men in a state of nature" (104). Such a federation was organised around "cosmopolitan right" that rests on the condition of "universal hospitality", namely "the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory" (105). The right to hospitality in Kant is a right that can be asserted against the state, and the state is obliged to recognise and protect individuals on the basis of their rights. This is a radical idea, especially in its application to the international order. The core tenet of modern cosmopolitanism is established with Kant's famous claim: "The peoples of the earth have thus entered into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of rights in one part is felt everywhere. The idea of a cosmopolitan right…is a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and international right, transforming it into a universal right of humanity." (107-8)

The historical context of Kant's work drew attention to the individualistic and culturally oriented cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment based on science, literature and travel. According to Thomas J. Schlereth, European cosmopolitanism in its Enlightenment version "has its origins in the international class which had been developing since, as Voltaire liked to put it, 'the great revival of letters in the Renaissance'" (Schlereth xv). In the eighteenth century, the cosmopolitan ideal arose among artists, intellectuals and scholars who saw themselves as living in the transnational "republic of letters", and common to its various streams was the belief that knowledge and above all science could offer a common basis for humanity to build a positive future. A vast community of intellectuals (particularly philosophers) declared their allegiance to humanity as opposed to a specific country, and

participated in enlightened debates as readers, writers and commentators. Gottfried Wilhelm

Leibniz, who was highly versatile linguistically and culturally, believed in the necessity for a

political unity of humankind. Voltaire proclaimed: "He who should wish his fatherland might

never be greater, smaller, richer, poorer, would be the citizen of the world." (Woolf 132) This

notion was used by many of the eighteenth-century European philosophers (such as David

Hume). Enlightenment cosmopolitanism was a product of the philosophical concern with

universalism that was a feature of the age. It was a state of mind, largely symbolic. To some

extent, it was a doctrine that only a rationalist intellectual could embrace. It lacked appeal to

ordinary people. The intellectual and aesthetic orientation in the European context has ever

since associated with cosmopolitanism.

The beginning of global travel and travel writing in the eighteenth century—

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, for

example—contributed to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and its concern with knowledge,

including knowledge of other cultures. Many of the major philosophers of the eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries who travelled extensively in Europe (such as Leibniz) or visited the

United States (such as Jacques Pierre Brissot) evoked the image of a world citizen, and

popularised cosmopolitanism as an ideal of cultural sophistication, physical mobility and high

social status. Discussing the Grand Tour and the cosmopolitan ideal in Europe, Melissa

Calaresu points out: "Travel, as well as the reading of travel accounts, by the European elite,

are often seen as having made an important contribution to the founding principles of

enlightened thought, in particular, toleration, by having extended not only the perimeters of

human knowledge but also by testing the moral certainties of an expanding world." (140) The

intellectual, aesthetic language and ideal of Enlightenment culture placed increasing

importance on the value of travel as an educational tool: physical mobility provided the

cultural capital for developing cosmopolitanism. This was derived from the concern with

universal humanity and the desire to extend the horizons of the European world of classical

cosmopolitanism.[3] Schlereth thus defines Enlightenment cosmopolitanism as follows:

> First, it was an attitude of mind that attempted to transcend chauvinistic
> national loyalties or parochial prejudices in its intellectual interests and pursuits.
> In the ideal, the "cosmopolite", or "citizen of the world", sought to be
> identified by an interest in, a familiarity with, or appreciation of many parts
> and peoples of the world; he wished to be distinguished by a readiness to
> borrow from other lands or civilizations in the formation of his intellectual,
> cultural, and artistic patterns. Therefore, the typical Enlightenment cosmopolite
> aspired to be…eclectic in his philosophical and scientific outlook, synergistic
> in his religious perspective, and international in his economic and political
> thought. (xi-xii)

On a theoretical plane, the Enlightenment cosmopolitan outlook enabled its believers to transcend the limits and limitations of the specific place and time that they inhabited. In stark contrast to the national subject who was presumably static, parochial and perhaps a little bored, the cosmopolitan subject lived in a state of delightful detachment. To be cosmopolitan was to be worldly-wise or to know about the world as a whole. A cosmopolitan was identified as a relatively privileged social actor, distinguished by a command of resources (for example, higher educational level and income) that could enhance his/her transnational mobility. Cosmopolitanism became a conscious, voluntary choice of the upper and middle classes, a manifestation of the mentality of the mobile elite.

Even in contemporary discourses, the Enlightenment remains the main point of reference used to define cosmopolitanism. Discussions about cosmopolitanism are often slanted toward elitism. In his seminal essay "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture", Ulf Hannerz proposes a set of useful distinctions between cosmopolitans, locals, transnationals and frequent travellers (usually occupational), while lumping together the formative makers of diasporas (migrant-settlers, exiles and refugees) with tourists.

Cosmopolitanism as "an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences" (239) is understood as the property of upper- and middle-class individuals, who possess sufficient occupational and experiential competencies that enable them to appreciate varied cultures and to manoeuvre within new meaning systems. Hannerz's motif of the cosmopolitan as privileged, capital-laden and globally mobile has a great influence on cosmopolitan studies. As Bruce Robbins insightfully points out, "the word cosmopolitan immediately evokes the image of a privileged person: someone who can claim to be a 'citizen of the world' by virtue of independent means, high-tech tastes, and globe-trotting mobility" ("Comparative Cosmopolitanism" 171). Discussions about cosmopolitanism in the 1990s disproportionately appealed to the deterritorialised and trans-local experiences of the elite strata of society where cosmopolitan travellers were generally implicitly thought of as dwelling.[4]

The contemporary resurrection of theorising about cosmopolitanism owes much to the debate sparked by Martha C. Nussbaum's critical and controversial piece "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" published in *The Boston Review* in 1994.[5] Nussbaum roots her idea of cosmopolitanism in Stoic thought, especially Diogenes Laertius and other wandering Stoics of the late Roman Empire. She retains the classical sense of the cosmopolitan as a citizen of the world, and reconceptualises the term as "a kind of exile—from the comfort of local truths, from the warm, nestling feeling of patriotism, from the absorbing drama of pride in oneself and one's own" (15). She presents the cosmopolitan not only as a deracinated individual breaking free from the restrictions of social norms, but as one who must appropriately develop and demonstrate a personal strength to achieve this kind of virtuoso performance of freedom. This is in accordance with Hannerz's elitist definition of the cosmopolitan. Nussbaum advocates what she calls "cosmopolitan education", essential for students in the United States to cultivate a common humanity (learning more about the rest of the world and

respecting the human rights of other nations). Elaborating the Stoic agenda of education in "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism", she emphasises again:

> The hatred of members of other races and religions can be effectively addressed by forms of early education that address the cognitive roots of those passions—that get children to view these people in the Stoic cosmopolitan way, as similarly human, as bearers of an equal moral dignity, as members of a single body and a single set of purposes, as no longer impossibly alien or threatening. (22)

Later, in *Frontiers of Justice*, Nussbaum urges us to "devote sustained attention to the moral sentiments and their cultivation—in child development, in public education, in public rhetoric, in the arts" (414).

Since the late twentieth century, there has been a veritable explosion of new thought on cosmopolitanism. The noticeable trend, however, is more and more criticism on the Stoic and Kantian roots of the contemporary strands of cosmopolitanism in the Euro-American world for being hierarchical and imperialistic. In "Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism" published in *Constellations*,[6] Anthony Pagden conducts a wide-ranging genealogical analysis of cosmopolitan ideas, stretching from the Stoics to seventeenth-century natural rights theorists. He astutely observes: "The Stoics, indeed, far from embracing all peoples, seem to have looked only upon those they held to be wise as worthy of consideration." (5) From the outset, he claims, the Stoics sought less to affirm the plurality of fundamentally equal peoples than to assimilate others to their own "civilised" standards. He argues that "Stoicism was, in origin, a philosophy particularly well suited to the spread of empire" (6), and thus moral justifications of European cosmopolitanism have always been linked to imperialism. In Pagden's view, attempts to revive cosmopolitanism today are likely to be coloured and vitiated by the cumulative weight of such imperialistic associations.

Pagden also points out that Kant's vision shared the same foundational assumptions that had sustained both the Roman and the early modern European conceptions of civilisation. In "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis", Walter D. Mignolo persuasively demonstrates the racist underpinnings of Kant's cosmopolitan ideals. He contends: "Kant's cosmopolitanism presupposes that it could only be thought out from one particular geopolitical location: that of the heart of Europe, of the most civilized nations…we must not forget that it plagued the inception of national ideology with racial prejudgment." (735-6) He further reminds us that cosmopolitanism will remain a hierarchical view with its Renaissance and Enlightenment prejudices surrounding the concepts of race and manhood. It should be reconceived in terms of coloniality. Mignolo calls for a critical cosmopolitanism that clears up the encumbrances of the past and points toward the future.

As Nussbaum opts for the Eurocentric Stoic and Kantian cosmopolitanism, her cosmopolitan theory is also criticised. Ananta Kumar Giri warns us that Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism does not sufficiently embody the pain or suffering of humanity subjected to colonial violence. He interrogates what Nussbaum calls "passional enlightenment" [7], which does not ask whether the foundations of contemporary cosmopolitanism are "primarily epistemic, ethnocentric, anthropocentric and imperial" (1278). Giri suggests that the dominant discourse of cosmopolitanism requires a multiverse of transformations to redeem its elitist connotations. Joan Cocks comments on Nussbaum's unrepentant reassertion of the putative universality of Western justice: "Nussbaum is naive in assuming the incontestable content of moral goodness and in depicting the 'citizen of the world' as a self abstracted from the world's particulars for the sake of universal right and reason." (46) Samuel Scheffler calls Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism "extreme cosmopolitanism". Extreme cosmopolitans take world citizenship as fundamental, clearly and always morally superior to more local bonds (such as ethnic and national solidarities), which are good when they serve the universal good and tolerable only when they do not conflict with world citizenship. Craig Calhoun sees that

Nussbaum's cosmopolitan theory replaces politics with ethics, resulting in demands for individuals to recognise obligations for analysis of institutional conditions that join them in solidarities and oppositions. He argues:

> At most, Nussbaum's view would seem to imply toleration for diversity so long as it did not interfere with a primary commitment to equality. Equally, Nussbaum does not seriously confront the possibility that cultural diversity involves necessary and deep differences in understandings of the good, or human rights, which make the imposition of one vision of the good problematic. ("'Belonging' in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary" 540)

Calhoun contends that Nussbaum universalises the other who is supposed to be an embodiment of distinctive culture and belonging. Finding a streak of top-down universalism in Nussbaum, Fred Dallmayr writes: "Nussbaum makes allowance for some human diversity; however by defining reason as the universal human 'essence' her account renders differences non-essential and marginal." (98) In short, Nussbaum's insistence on "a single, classical cosmopolitanism" that equates to "the worldwide community of human beings" rather than "hybrid, locally negotiated cosmopolitanisms" (Donald 300) is under attack. Just as Calhoun stresses that all the possible ways in which any individual understands the Other should be valued, Dallmayr proposes an alternative cosmopolitanism embodying varieties of learning across cultures and dialogues between civilisations.

In short, cosmopolitanism of the West carries the connotations of a perfect well-ordered society born out of chaos by the use of the concept. Its bias may well disturb and marginalise non-Western experiences, representations and visions, because under the cosmopolitan identity invariably lurks the recognisable citizen of a more democratic, liberal and advanced national state. A new cosmopolitanism is generated in the response to the pitfalls of blindly adopting the traditional, elitist images of cosmopolitanism deeply embedded in long-lasting European discourses (such as Stoicism and the Enlightenment), or to put my

point more sharply here, the old cosmopolitanism. We can note the emergence of the new

cosmopolitanism from within different disciplines (especially cultural studies, sociology and

anthropology) in the last fifteen years or so. The new cosmopolitanism tries to break with the

Eurocentric trajectory of privilege and the elitist model of the old cosmopolitanism, and to

recuperate the term for novel critical uses, mainly as a way to describe the increasingly

globalised reality in which we now live. What makes it new is its determination to fashion

tools for understanding a variety of voices and acting upon problems of global scale. In a

counter-elitist trend, the new cosmopolitanism sufficiently considers and responds to diversity

in an increasingly hybridised global context.

Before I unpack the new cosmopolitanism in the following discussion, it is necessary

to first clarify that I confine my focus on the new cosmopolitanism mainly (if not solely) to

the cultural dimension in this thesis. In a sociological approach, Gerard Delanty summarises

much of cosmopolitan thought under three headings: moral, political and cultural

cosmopolitanism. The most common type—moral cosmopolitanism—strongly emphasises the

universalism of cosmopolitan ethics. Its most well-known versions are Stoicism in ancient

times and Nussbaum as a contemporary example. Nevertheless, moral cosmopolitanism is

more and more criticised for failing to see cosmopolitanism as "situated" or "rooted", as it

assumes a too strong universalistic sense of universal humanity and morality and lacks a

nuanced sociological dimension. It has suffered from a major drawback so far. Political

cosmopolitanism, focusing on institutions, laws, negotiations and policies transcending

national jurisdictions for the protection of human rights and ways of life, suggests an

alternative to the individualism underlying moral cosmopolitanism. In recent times, it is

mostly related to democracy and citizenship. This can be seen as a Kantian revival.

In current cosmopolitan theory, cultural cosmopolitanism "takes a largely strong form,

in contrast to earlier forms of cultural cosmopolitanism which could be related to

Enlightenment notions of the 'citizen of the world' whose cosmopolitanism consisted in

travel" (Delanty 31). Its key is the notion of societal pluralisation. It highlights new cultural and social configurations emblematic of the increased intermingling of peoples, customs and practices in many parts of the modern world. It sees alternative readings of history and the recognition of plurality rather than the creation of a universal order as the goal. Such a post-universalistic feature makes it critical and dialogic. It enables us to see how different cosmopolitan projects by which the local and the global are combined in diverse ways exist despite Westernisation. In this sense, cultural cosmopolitanism is mostly exemplified in the transnational modes of belonging (such as diaspora).

Cultural cosmopolitanism expresses "resistances to the culture of the metropolitan centres and manifest in creative appropriations and new cultural imaginaries which, unlike earlier cosmopolitan projects, are more present in popular cultures than in high culture" (Delanty 35). This has much to do with the contribution of postcolonial critique of the dominant centre from the margin, particularly the critique of Eurocentric universalism as the cultural basis of imperialism. James Clifford first proposes that the differential, often violent, displacements that impel the locals to travel create what he calls "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" (108). Clifford's notion that there are many different cosmopolitan practices co-existing in late modernity has lead to an exploration of cultural cosmopolitanism from marginal perspectives. Uneasy with Nussbaum's moral cosmopolitanism, Homi K. Bhabha proposes a "cosmopolitan community envisaged in *marginality*" (42) in "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism".[8] He defines what he calls "vernacular cosmopolitanism" based upon three points. First, it stops short of the transcendent human universal and provides an ethical entitlement to the sense of community. Second, it is conscious of the insufficiency of the self and the imperative of openness to the needs of others. Third, it finds in the victims of progress the best promise for ethical regeneration. Vernacular cosmopolitanism is "not simply *to be* in a dialogic relation with the native or the domestic", but "to be on the border, *in between*, introducing the global-cosmopolitan 'action at a

distance' into the very grounds—now displaced—of the domestic" (48). Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism is a way of articulating a concern for others without couching itself in universalistic or paternalistic terms; it challenges any form of sovereignty. From Clifford and Bhabha, we can see that postcolonial theory provides a new framework or vocabulary for cosmopolitanism to pay attention to the concrete, historically-defined postcolonial experience in the cultural dimension. Forms of minoritisation derived from the experience of the exilic, diasporic people who have formed the hallmark of a global community are taken into special consideration. Therefore, cosmopolitanism in the cultural—rather than moral or political— dimension positively diverges from the Western, liberal worldviews, and foregrounds a certain type of identification stemming from the (post)colonial experience and central in contemporary globalisation.

Now I turn to the prominent features of the new cosmopolitanism. The major reorientation of cosmopolitan theory toward the new direction was initiated by *Cosmopolitics*, edited by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins. This cultural politics book is inspired by postcolonial theory, including Clifford's discrepant cosmopolitanisms and Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism. The approaches used by most of its contributors are characterised by a pronounced antinationalism in favour of radical cosmopolitanism whose reference points are hybrid cultures. In place of the unitary feature of the old cosmopolitanism is a concern with the multiple forms of cosmopolitanism as multiple attachments and attachments at a distance. These contributions mark a move away from Nussbaum's moral universalism. At the end of the volume, Rob Wilson announces:

> A new cosmopolitanism is in the air, heady with postmodern fusions of
>
> cultures and cuisines, mobile with dynamics of capital and consumption,
>
> situated within the very public heart of transnational capitalism, and…all too
>
> eagerly embracing the post of *postnational* as promissory of some egress from

xenophobias of nationalism and traumas of identity politics that have wrought

havoc within the twentieth century. (351)

In Wilson's view, transnational practices call out for a renewed cosmopolitan framework free

from the legacies of imperialism and delusions of free-floating irony, to understand sharper

local and global terms.

Pnina Werbner further argues for the need to recognise the class dimension of cultural

transnationalism and cosmopolitanism emergently determined by labour migration in her

seminal work "Global Pathways. Working Class Cosmopolitans and the Creation of

Transnational Ethnic Worlds".[9] She disputes the conventionally elitist assumption of "a

homology between class position and transnational subjectivity", that is, "cosmopolitanism is

the claimed prerogative of elites within the newly evolving global ecumene" (18). To her, a

hidden Eurocentric and class bias can be found implicit in Hannerz's separation of

professional-occupational transnational cultures from migrant or refugee transnational

culture.[10] However, Hannerz's conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism as "an orientation, a

willingness to engage with the Other" ("Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture" 239)

has a crucial influence on Werbner. Studying South Asian global pathways, Werbner proves

that the British Pakistani community is a transnational community engaging in a cosmopolitan

"traffic in objects-persons-places-sentiments which is one of the most significant bridges of

distance spanning global diasporic communities and transnational families" (26). She argues

that even working class labour migrants may become cosmopolitans who develop

"knowledge of and openness to other cultures" like elite cosmopolitans in "the same

processual *forms* of hybridisation and creolisation" but with different results of "cultural

hybrids" (23). She terms this as "working-class cosmopolitanism". It "does not necessarily

imply an absence of belonging but the possibility of belonging to more than one ethnic and

cultural localism simultaneously" (34). Such a view on cosmopolitanism as multiple

attachments is in accordance with that of *Cosmopolitics*. Working-class cosmopolitanism

directly challenges the theoretical links among transnational mobility, class and

cosmopolitanism. In Werbner's counter-elitist inclination lies her major contribution to the

development of the new cosmopolitanism.[11]

Werbner's counter-elitist position toward cosmopolitanism in social anthropology was

consolidated in transnational cultural studies in 2000, when *Public Culture* devoted its third

issue of that year to cosmopolitanism.[12] The special issue ranges across language and literary

history, critical intellectual history, political philosophy, ethnography, urban studies,

architectural history and art history, to explore cosmopolitanism as infinite ways of being

rather than universal or singular belonging. The essays not only radically rewrite the

Eurocentric history of cosmopolitanism, but also generate the manifold range of practices that

allow for new and alternative theorisation. The most influential piece is "Cosmopolitanisms",

written by Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

They argue that nationalism, multiculturalism and globalisation in the late twentieth century

have created a historical context for reconsidering cosmopolitanism. They famously declare:

> The cosmopolitanism of our times does not spring from the capitalized
>
> "virtues" of Rationality, Universality, and Progress; nor is it embodied in the
>
> myth of the nation writ large in the figure of the citizen of the world.
>
> Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's
>
> upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national
>
> belonging. Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles
>
> represent the spirit of the cosmopolitical community. (582)

Such a postcolonial, counter-elitist angle extends the singular, privileged European thought

and history, and allows the possibility of capturing a wider range of cosmopolitan practices

that have actually existed at the peripheries in history. Cosmopolitanism must object to the

universal discourse and give way to the plurality of pariah modes and histories. Most

prominently, Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge and Chakrabarty suggest that "cosmopolitanism

be considered in the plural, as *cosmopolitanisms*", to "leave open the question of the center and periphery in intellectual debates" and to "avoid the imposition of practices and histories that do not necessarily fit interpretations devised for historical situations elsewhere" (584). Only through such procedures—decentring the conventional locus, adducing new empirical data on the variety of cosmopolitanisms and investigating from a wide range of scholarly perspectives, the new (post-universalist, counter-elitist) cosmopolitanism has the potential to come into being and to develop.

The April issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* of 2002 is responsive to both Werbner's working-class cosmopolitanism and the plural concept of cosmopolitanism proposed by Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge and Chakrabarty. The special issue on cosmopolis attempts to think around the answers to two fundamental questions. First, while cosmopolitanism may well be a Western project and projection, how far have varieties of cosmopolitanism *avant la lettre* been present *outside* the West? Second, what equivalent forms of cosmopolitan experiences, practices, representations and carrier groups have developed there? It contributes to the new cosmopolitanism in its reconsideration of the concept in the context of globalisation. Emphasising the long history of interconnection between Europe, Asia and Africa, it objects to seeing civilisations as separate blocs. As globalisation since the 1990s has allowed more room for border-crossing activities of issue-oriented transnational movements, it offers a particular impetus for new openings for cosmopolitan thinking in both practice and theory. In "The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies" in this volume, Ulrich Beck highlights what he calls "cosmopolitanization", as a methodological concept that provides an alternative image of social life and seeks to comprehend other civilisations and modernities. Cosmopolitanization takes us beyond the limitations of "methodological nationalism" with its exclusion of "the otherness of the other". A cosmopolitan sociology, Beck argues, has to move beyond the nation-state society seen as the power container of social processes and the dualism between the nation-state and the international. For him, many of our normal social

science concepts are becoming empty "zombie" categories, failing to account for the ways in which notions of class, power, democratisation and justice are becoming reformed by globalisation. An epistemological shift to correspond to this ontological shift is urgently needed. The process of cosmopolitanization, whereby national identifications are undermined, means that items making up the fabric of our everyday lives can no longer be located purely locally. It entails new forms of everyday life, identity, sociability, politics, time and space. Beck reminds us: "In the struggles over belonging, the actions of migrants and minorities are major examples of dialogic imaginative ways of life and everyday cosmopolitanism." (30) Accordingly, a cosmopolitan outlook should signify a diagnostic way of seeing the world and an emerging paradigm of cultural, political and social analysis; a "de-territorialized" concept of cosmopolitanism should be defined by "globality, plurality and civility" (36). Later in "Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences",[13] Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider ask for a cosmopolitan turn of the social sciences, to open up new horizons of empirically investigating transnational phenomena. Beck and Sznaider claim:

> At this point the humanities and social sciences need to get ready for a transformation of their own positions and conceptual equipment—that is, to take cosmopolitanism as a research agenda seriously and raise some of the key conceptual, methodological, empirical and normative issues that the cosmopolitanization of reality poses for the social sciences. (2)

This can be interpreted as a realistic call for the re-conceptualisation of cosmopolitan theory.

In 2010, both *Studies in Philosophy and Education* and *Social Anthropology* devoted a special issue to cosmopolitanism, in March and November respectively. This can be seen as an active response to Beck. The authors of the special issue of *Studies in Philosophy and Education* explore cosmopolitanism old and new, cosmopolitanism of the West and of the rest, and cosmopolitanism from above versus from below. In the special issue of *Social Anthropology*, the influences of both Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism and Werbner's

working-class cosmopolitanism can be found. The social anthropologists successfully show

that multiple modalities of cosmopolitan orientations and competences are in fact more

widespread than have been conventionally understood. Cosmopolitanism can occur more or

less in all strata (such as housewives and proletarian street people) and develop more readily

at the peripheries rather than the centres of the global order. We can even see Hannerz's

rethinking of cosmopolitanism from a more counter-elitist stance. In "Afterthoughts: World

Watching" in this volume, Hannerz admits:

> Thus studies accumulated of varieties of 'discrepant', 'vernacular', 'demotic'
>
> or 'banal' cosmopolitanisms—the terms are not entirely synonymous, but lean
>
> in the same direction, toward a recognition of everyday skills, attitudes and
>
> practices in dealing with diversity. Generally this is—in large part, at least—*a*
>
> *more instrumental, pragmatic cosmopolitanism* [my emphasis], acquired
>
> perhaps more or less by any people encountering diversity in their habitat. I am
>
> aware of that not least because some 25 years ago I started out from a narrower
>
> conception of cosmopolitanism as more a matter of appreciation, of actively
>
> and expansively seeking out and embracing diversity (and where I detected
>
> parallels with this in certain then-current interpretations of intellectual activity).
>
> At this stage, I am pleased enough to acknowledge that cosmopolitanism
>
> comes in various kinds, at different levels of intensity—and the protean quality
>
> of the concept, obviously, has much to do with this. We probably ought to
>
> make a habit of using 'cosmopolitanisms' more often in a plural form. (449)

In the ethnography of a vernacular and diverse "cosmopolitan everyday" lies the major

contribution of recent social anthropology to the making of the new cosmopolitanism.

To sum up, the new cosmopolitanism avoids the elitist stance on the one hand, and

stresses the need to recognise multiple modalities of cosmopolitanism (especially the

marginal ones) on the other hand. Reconceptualised in a multicultural light, it is highly aware

of the complexity and diversity of forms of human life, so it interrupts and dislocates the absolute claims of the local and the enforced unity of the "superior" European culture. It should be best understood as a possibility substantially undercut by a range of available cultural outlooks that any individual can selectively deploy to deal with new possibilities and problems associated with globalisation. The major examples of such dialogic, imaginative ways of everyday cosmopolitanism are the actions of ordinary migrants and minorities, instead of the mobile elite whose identification is largely with Western ideals. In short, what the new cosmopolitanism calls for is, in Sheldon Pollock's words, "action rather than idea", "something people do rather than something they declare", or "practice rather than proposition (least of all, philosophical proposition)" (593).

The re-conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism in the cultural dimension necessitates a rereading of Naipaul. Today's critics and readers agree that Naipaul is an important author of substance writing in the English language of our time. Despite this, he is spoken and written about as a writer from many perspectives: a Trinidadian or West Indian writer, a writer of the Indian/Asian diaspora, a British writer, a postcolonial writer, or a Third World writer. This is largely because of his exceptional heritages. A Trinidadian-born East Indian, Naipaul has made his home in England for more than sixty years. A frequent traveller, he has revisited his native West Indies, and travelled in not only his ancestral India but also Europe, the United States, Africa, South America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East for over fifty years now. Peculiarly perceptive of the complex forces affecting contemporary civilisation, he has advanced from the comparative simplicity of Trinidad to the complexity of the whole world in his later, more mature works. But Naipaul's concerns have remained constant as he has matured in both craft and vision. His overarching themes—man's rootlessness and search for home and identity—are revealed in his treatment of the paradoxical "free state" of the geographical and psychological exile, ravages of colonialism (such as political corruption and the failure of social and human contracts) manifest in both the First and Third World, and the

inauthenticity characterising mankind everywhere. This most notable preoccupation can be attributed to his frustrated effort to relate himself satisfactorily to any of the cultures in which he finds himself (Trinidadian by birth, Indian by ancestry and English by education). His life has been a constant moving about in search of, to borrow a phrase used by Naipaul as the title for Part One of *An Area of Darkness*, "a resting-place for the imagination". He writes of Trinidad in *The Middle Passage*: "Modernity in Trinidad, then, turns out to be the extreme susceptibility of people who are unsure of themselves and, having no taste or style of their own, are eager for instruction." (41) He despairs of India, calling it "a wounded old civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead" (*India: A Wounded Civilization* 8). He harshly criticises England as "a country of second rate people—bum politicians, scruffy writers and crooked aristocrats" (qtd. in Atlas 102), and describes the Americans as "people temporarily absent from television" (28) in *In a Free State*. The Swedish Academy rightly remarks in its Nobel citation to Naipaul: "He is to a very high degree a cosmopolitan writer, a fact that he himself considers to stem from his lack of roots: he is unhappy about the cultural and spiritual poverty of Trinidad, he feels alienated from India, and in England he is incapable of relating to and identifying with the traditional values of what was once a colonial power." Naipaul is a spokesman of rootlessness, detachment and non-belongingness. This is generally regarded as a key determinant of his position as a globe-trotting cosmopolitan.

However, Naipaul's detached, unsympathetic and sometimes even brutal assessment of realities in developing countries as well as his revulsion from the tendency to ideological excess and dogmatism wherever these emerge incurs much criticism of the nature of his cosmopolitan life and writing. For example, Robert Hemenway wrote in 1982: "Naipaul today pictures himself a global citizen, unattached, non-aligned, anticolonial, unafraid to view reality and label it absurd. With ethnic credentials, Oxford outlook, and Brahmin aloofness, he drifts through the Third World, labelling the very idea of three worlds a cliché, exposing

the failures of those struggling to escape the colonial legacy." (190) Among critics who deal

extensively with Naipaul's sense of placelessness and his position in the periphery (such as

Selwyn R. Cudjoe and Timothy F. Weiss), Rob Nixon most severely chastises Naipaul, whose

writing, in his view, exhibits unprecedented detachment from places, peoples and

responsibilities. He looks at Naipaul as a writer protected by "the security of a metropolitan

residence and reputation" (28), who comfortably portrays the experiences of an exile by

choice just for "promoting his 'homelessness'" (20). In Nixon's view, Naipaul presents

himself as "the ultimate literary apartride, the most comprehensively uprooted of twentieth-

century writers and most bereft of national affiliations" (17) in order to lay claim to "a secure,

reputable tradition of extratraditionalism" (25). Nixon's influence prevails in the succeeding

criticism of Naipaul. Joan Dayan labels Naipaul "a privileged, much-needed icon of

'civilization': the 'other' who condemns all others in the name of beauty and nobility" (159).

In this sense that Naipaul enjoys the freedom of physical movement and communication but

ignores the poorer, more anonymous diasporic people outside the norms of economic,

linguistic or political power, he is intensely disliked by and denounced from the left

(especially the left-leaning admirers of Edward Said). Glyne A. Griffith declares: "V. S.

Naipaul, as travel writer, generally maintains rather than challenges the stereotypical

representations of non-white, non-Western cultures which orientalism, as a discipline

consolidated." (89) Although Peter van der Veer urges us to re-understand cosmopolitanism

from the postcolonial perspective, he does not think that Naipaul's postcolonial writing

belongs to such a new cosmopolitan paradigm. Instead, he still sees Naipaul as a

representative of Hannerz's description of the cosmopolitan to which he highly objects—an

enlightened intellectual who possesses aesthetic openness to live anywhere. Naipaul's

cosmopolitan drive to be at home in the world, according to van der Veer, rests on a priori

opposition between civilisation and the barbarism of the other: "Naipaul is, of course, one of

the great believers in a universal civilization, rooted in the Enlightenment, and not at all

sympathetic to the persistence of backward cultures, predominantly of what he perceives as an antirational religious kind." ("Cosmopolitan Options" 177) No wonder that Fadwa AbdelRahman more aggressively dubs Naipaul "the white traveler under the dark mask".

The critics mentioned above present Naipaul as some sort of cultural tourist, parasite or voyeur in restless pursuit of aesthetic sensation, experience and novelty, with a snobbish attitude toward cultural others. His travels are accused of being fault-finding: historical and socio-political complexities become mere stimuli to titillate his intellectual curiosity and to provide intellectual adventures. His rootlessness is criticised for being hypocritical and privileged because of his vantage point as a pre-eminently metropolitan writer powerfully ensconced in the Euro-American world of letters. Naipaul's literary cosmopolitanism is understood as merely a pandering to Eurocentric sensibilities and tastes, in the sense that he chooses to assimilate into a unified, homogenising culture that posits itself as superior.

A conspicuous problem arises here: although these critics attack Naipaul's elitist cosmopolitanism, their own theoretical assumption is still framed by the old cosmopolitanism rooted in elitism. This explains why their criticism is confined mainly to two elements— Naipaul's elitist stance as a cosmopolitan and his rootlessness generalised as a demonstration of his cosmopolitanism. His Brahmin ancestry, middle-class background, Oxford education, profession as a writer and transnational mobility are still considered as key determinants of his cosmopolitanism—a manifestation of the mentality of the occupationally and experientially privileged. Naipaul's ability to command cultural, intellectual and social resources and then to dabble rootlessly in a variety of cultures and lifestyles across wide territories is overemphasised, among other constituent elements of cosmopolitanism. If the old cosmopolitanism that sings praise to the mobile elite with intellectual orientations but without lasting attachment to any community is used as the theoretical basis, why is Naipaul's elitist cosmopolitanism so harshly judged? Does this contradiction imply that the cosmopolitan subject is invariably a citizen of the First World countries, not a member of the

elite from the Third World whose identification is largely with Western ideals? Or, is a writer with brown skin not supposed or allowed to unremittingly comment on the Third World?[14]

The leftist accusation that Naipaul's deep-seated prejudices against postcolonial societies remain veiled behind a façade of cosmopolitan disinterestedness brings out the research question of this thesis: should and can we rethink Naipaul's cosmopolitanism within the framework of the new cosmopolitanism? This thesis seeks to challenge the simplistic generalisation of Naipaul's cosmopolitanism as the elitist mode of being and advocacy of a homogenising drive toward universality. Both these readings of his novels that adopt a universalist cosmopolitan lens and those that look at them from a purely postcolonial perspective are rejected. The new cosmopolitanism is used as the theoretical foundation to address postcolonial paradoxes. Framed in this conceptual matrix and confined to the cultural dimension, my use of the concept "cosmopolitanism" refers to a subjective attitude or outlook toward self, others and the world, associated with a conscious, reflective openness to difference. To be cosmopolitan is not an identity as much as it is a way of *seeing* the world. This thesis attempts to identify how Naipaul's critical understanding of cosmopolitanism represented in his fiction has developed and matured toward a plebeian slant. After a long, continual process of conscious reflection and self-reflexive correction, Naipaul finally becomes a writer with a realist cosmopolitan vision, who can observe the reality knowing very well what an ideology theoretically means but standing outside it, not becoming part of it. This is the emphasis of the thesis.

The greatest inspiration for me comes from Dagmar Barnouw's *Naipaul's Strangers*, which praises Naipaul's mobile, non-aligned and inquiline movement between civilisations by demonstrating his "growing attentiveness to a multitude of other voices" (1). Unlike Barnouw who pays much attention to Naipaul's travelogues, I study Naipaul's fiction in this thesis. As John L. Brown has commented, "remarkable as Naipaul's travel books may be, he is essentially a novelist, and it is as a novelist that his achievement must be evaluated" (224).

For me, Naipaul's stance as a realist novelist should be taken into account specially. Fiction for Naipaul, though an autonomous discipline, involves far-reaching conclusions about many aspects of society. It is the duty of the writer to see that such details are conveyed in a literary, elliptical fashion, not in the form of a thinly disguised treatise on the social sciences. He insists that the novel concerns itself with the condition of men and must respond to the here and now. In the 1964 essay "Critics and Criticism", Naipaul emphasises that what is important in the modern novelist is "his analysis of human relationships, the depth of his insight, and whether his work is in some way illuminating of certain…aspects of human predicament" (75). Oddly enough, he maintains in "Conrad's Darkness and Mine" that there no longer exists a tradition of the novel as a means of examining society. He writes:

> The great societies that produced the great novels of the past have cracked. Writing has become more private and more privately glamorous. The novel as a form no longer carries conviction. Experimentation, not aimed at *the real difficulties* [my emphasis], has corrupted response; and there is a great confusion in the minds of readers and writers about the purpose of the novel. The novelist, like the painter, no longer recognizes his *interpretive function* [my emphasis]; he seeks to go beyond it; and his audience diminishes. And so the world we inhabit, which is always new, goes by unexamined, made ordinary by the camera, unmeditated on; and there is no one to awaken the sense of true wonder. That is perhaps a fair definition of the novelist's purpose, in all ages. (180)

Naipaul's concern over the death of the novel can be read as an oblique lament over the diminished influence of realist fiction in the late twentieth century. The truly "great novels of the past" that Naipaul looks to are those of the nineteenth century, those within the realist mode that understand themselves as creating a new world (instead of, say, deconstructing it).

In the sense that Naipaul's realist impulse is his most abiding artistic motive, his

fiction can be regarded as realistically-grounded accounts of what Robbins calls "actually existing cosmopolitanism" in *Cosmopolitics*. This in turn validates my utilisation of the new cosmopolitanism as this thesis' theoretical foundation, because to bring the abstraction of cosmopolitan ideals back down to earth is exactly what the new cosmopolitanism has attempted to achieve. To quote Beck and Sznaider: "What cosmopolitanism *is* cannot ultimately be separated from what cosmopolitanism *should be*." (4)

It should be also kept in mind that Naipaul stresses the need for writing to go beyond sympathy and to awaken a sense of urgency so that it can pave the way for "an action which is not based on self-deception" by "the most brutal sort of analysis" (Rowe-Evans 59). To be serious is to notice and to remember the ambiguities, contradictions and specifics, and to tell the truth about the world instead of turning, in Naipaul's own words, "living issues into abstractions" ("Two Worlds" 194). This is why his fiction most often presents conflicts, hatred, violence and pessimism that seemingly demonstrate a nihilistic obsession and leave no room for hope, although the coexistence of people of heterogeneous religious, cultural, national or other identity formations is depicted as a reality of growing importance. He does not celebrate impurity, mixture or novelty as Salman Rushdie does. For him, multiculturalism does not lead of its own accord to understanding or openness. Naipaul remains acutely aware of the prevalence of what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls "counter-cosmopolitanism" at every level of culture in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. Yet as Robert Morris remarks, "Naipaul is not optimistic; yet he is, in his curious way, hopeful" (105). The internationalist consciousness but encompassing scepticism of such a realist novelist contributes to extending the theoretical premises of the new cosmopolitanism, which should pay more attention to unintended side-effects of actions intended as "cosmopolitan" in the normative sense.

I examine Naipaul's novels written chronologically in this thesis,[15] to show how his textualisation of cosmopolitanism has evolved from elitist to plebeian slant in changing

historical conditions. I divide his fiction writing into four phases. First, there is the early, comic phase, including four Trinidadian novels—*Miguel Street*, *The Mystic Masseur*, *The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. They address the state of Trinidadian culture, politics and society of the 1930s and 1940s, particularly the marginal lives, strivings and futilities of Trinidadian Indians. Naipaul records what he has known from childhood in a satiric manner, and everything comes across as a dense miniature befitting the scale of the insular world. After writing *A House for Mr Biswas*, Naipaul was given a fellowship by the government of Trinidad to travel in the West Indies in 1960. This travel opens his second phase, a phase of disillusionment, comprising *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, *The Mimic Men* and *A Flag on the Island*. Within broader cultural and historical horizons, he begins to tell contemporary stories of alienation, exile and an absence of a meaningful community of others in a more serious manner. This reveals Naipaul's sense of uprootedness and alienation as a colonial outsider in exile in England. The third phase consisting of *In a Free State*, *Guerrillas* and *A Bend in the River* is a severe one in the political sense. The obvious autobiographical investment in Naipaul's creative and critical preoccupations is gradually exorcised. He consciously extends his cultural critique and historical observations to a more cosmopolitan arena, and focuses on the underprivileged individuals struggling to accept the fact that they will not be fully at home no matter where in the world and thus to learn to be more or less at home anywhere. Naipaul's last phase of fiction writing is characterised by a reflective, regenerative direction. *The Enigma of Arrival*, *A Way in the World*, *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* present his mature reflections on issues that have preoccupied him consistently from his earliest literary efforts. Recognition that the problems of Trinidad, India, England and many other countries are similar and that all life is subject to change is followed by a new mellowness.

Each chapter of this thesis addresses one phase respectively. Chapter I mostly examines *Miguel Street*, which evidences human warmth and sympathy that is rare in

Naipaul's other three Trinidadian novels. In this book, Naipaul constructs a public sphere of "cosmopolitan neighbourliness" characterised by openness to difference and genuine generosity and humaneness. However, he uses a double narrator to mock at, even veto, this Trinidadian example of vernacular cosmopolitanism. I argue that Naipaul's perverse distortion of Miguel Street's cosmopolitan ethos reflects his colonial mentality: an individual cannot prosper without a supporting society; a cosmopolitan identity can only be an ensured reality in a satisfactory culture and society. Greatly influenced by his colonial education, he yearns for the old cosmopolitan mode of being defined by the intellectual orientation and physical mobility. In this first phase, Naipaul highlights education and writing as the only successful mode to escape to the metropolitan centre and to achieve elitist cosmopolitanism.

In Chapter II, I explore Naipaul's disillusionment with his colonial fantasy of metropolitan-centred elitist cosmopolitanism. *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* (Naipaul's only novel set entirely in England) and *The Mimic Men* (a novel shuttling back and forth between the Caribbean and England) are considered. In his observation of the migratory process in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, Naipaul expresses his concern that the opening-up of the political-social space of the metropolis may not necessarily cultivate openness to cultural contacts or exchanges. He criticises the English insularity strangling the curiosity of the upper and middle classes about the world, even though they enjoy the privilege to travel anywhere and to consume other cultures. Elitist cosmopolitanism in this novel is presented as a fraudulent consumer orientation; under it may even lurk xenophobia. In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul further reveals the superficiality of the elitist cosmopolitan taste as a pure consumer preference. It transplants the idealised, imperialistic European cultural forces of authenticity to define the Third World society as a second-rate imitation, without actual interact with the local milieu. Against the indefiniteness of the Third World, it is at risk of turning into pretentious words without actual context or meaning. Naipaul's old fantasy from afar that the "authenticity" of the English metropolitan culture can enable all individuals

to become cosmopolitans, I contend, is severely shattered. He begins to question and reassess the feasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism in dealing with the coexistence of transnational subjects such as immigrants and exiles.

Chapter III and IV are of my central focus in this thesis. Chapter III studies *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River*, whereas the more psychological novel *Guerrillas* is not included. *In a Free State* is the first successful product of Naipaul's reoriented understanding of cosmopolitanism—from the elitist, Western notion to a plebeian mode from below with the mass participation of free-floating cultures, ideas, goods and peoples. He breaks from the arrogant affiliations of elitist cosmopolitanism, but casts his writer's net over a multiplicity of plebeian peoples and poor regions. Focusing on refugees and poor immigrants, he discusses a series of complex issues (such as colonialism, border-crossing and nationalism) in violent collision with and even threatening the elitist cosmopolitan ideal. In this experimental book, he begins to question the social viability of elitist cosmopolitanism. In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul further depicts failures of different models of elitist cosmopolitanism, especially in the xenophobic sphere of nationalism and dictatorship. He strongly criticises elitist cosmopolitanism as imperialism and hegemony under another guise in its civilising attempt to transform the values long associated with European empires. Instead, he starts seeing plebeian cosmopolitanism as a way for the plebeian transnationals to fuse reflective openness to the new with reflective loyalty to the known for survival. Such an idea is free from the old cosmopolitanism in theory that celebrates absolute detachment, but more in accordance with the new cosmopolitanism that suggests (re)attachment and involvement in a pragmatic way. My argument in this chapter is that Naipaul takes a big step of translating and re-configuring the old cosmopolitan ideal into the new, concrete social realities in the two novels.

In Chapter IV, I conduct a comparative reading among *The Enigma of Arrival*, *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*, all of which demonstrate Naipaul's embrace of plebeian cosmopolitanism in the era of globalisation. While *The Enigma of Arrival* suggests that the

very nature of globalisation increasingly calls for cosmopolitan gestures and sensitivities, *Half a Life* exposes the dark side of globalisation. Naipaul is aware that globalisation cannot guarantee the uptake of a cosmopolitan vision. To attain a cosmopolitan identity requires one to cultivate a global consciousness that critically ponders on both the dynamic relation between the local and global and postcolonial paradoxes. While *The Enigma of Arrival* explicitly unravels the damaging effect of elitist cosmopolitanism, *Magic Seeds* demonstrates that one does not need to be a member of the elite to become a cosmopolitan. Naipaul envisions cosmopolitanism as a set of outlooks, dispositions and practices increasingly available to individuals in their everyday life to deal with the challenges and opportunities associated with globalisation. In this last phase of his fiction writing, he proposes that various possible ways of being cosmopolitan should be accommodated and valued. I interpret Naipaul's cosmopolitan vision as endorsing a realistic activism from below. It favours the individual's active contribution in diverse ways to changing, rather than destroying, our world.

This thesis is predominantly a project of literary and cultural studies, but at the same time draws upon several specialisations in the humanities (especially anthropology and sociology). Building my arguments around specific literary texts of Naipaul, I devote as much energy to the latest theories and critiques as to empirical analyses of cosmopolitanism. Hopefully, such a rereading of Naipaul can extend the theoretical premises of cosmopolitanism, which may expand its geo-cultural repertoire to include more variable circumstances and forms actually existing in the globalised world and transform itself into a "true cosmopolitanism from below" more easily available.

Notes

[1] In *Seneca*, Miriam T. Griffin points out that Cicero, following the Middle Stoic Panaetius, applied Stoic precepts to the conduct of public affairs in the Roman Republic, notably in *De Re Publica* and *De Officiis*. Seneca was regent of the emperor under Nero, and Marcus Aurelius was emperor at the height of Roman influence. Both closely connected their philosophical with their political endeavours. On Seneca, see also Griffin's "Philosophy, Politics, and Politicians at Rome" collected in *Philosophia Togata*; on Marcus Aurelius, see R. B. Rutherford's *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. During the Roman period, Stoicism also provided the impetus for some republican anti-imperial movements, such as the conspiracy of Gaius Calpurnius Piso in AD 65 during the reign of Nero.

[2] The last quarter of the 18th century saw its own share of "globalisation"—the American and French revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, the rise of British industry and the international movement to abolish slavery. Kant believed that the world of his day had become integrated to a degree going far beyond past transnational relationships. "Perpetual Peace" was his response to such a sense of the world coming closer together, with a certain pessimism that coalitions of states were gearing up for war.

[3] Such a desire was in much the same way that the Stoics earlier aimed to extend the horizon of the Greek *polis* to the world opened up by the conquests of Alexander the Great.

[4] In *World Class*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter tags cosmopolitans as global business elite who possess "three C's" (concepts, competence and connections) to fit productively with economic transformations engendered by globalisation across cutting-edge, emerging industries. Kanter summarises the key cosmopolitan asset as a unique "mind-set". Also following Hannerz, John Urry outlines in *Consuming Places* a model of "aesthetic cosmopolitanism", which sees the cosmopolitan as a highly mobile, curious, open and reflexive subject who delights in and desires to consume difference.

[5] This essay is recollected in *For Love of Country*, edited by Joshua Cohen.

[6] The March issue of *Constellations* of 2000, guest-edited by Sankar Muthu and Pratap Mehta, mooted the pros and cons of the revival of cosmopolitanism in the wake of accelerating globalisation. It launched a host of initiatives in critical theory on cosmopolitanism.

[7] In "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism", Nussbaum uses "passional enlightenment" to emphasise the Stoic education and enlightenment of the passions for cultivating cosmopolitanism in a sort of patient self-examination and self-criticism.

[8] This essay is originally collected in *Text and Nation*, edited by Laura Garcis Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer. Part of it appears in different context in "Unpacking My Library…Again", collected in *The Postcolonial Question* edited by Ian Chambers.

[9] This article actually was first presented at a seminar on "global families" at London University in October 1993; subsequent presentations were at the European Association of Social Anthropologists biannual meeting in Barcelona in July 1996, at the University of Lund in December 1996, and at Greenwich University in February 1997.

[10] For Hannerz, the diasporic is reluctant to step outside a "surrogate home". In "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture", he writes: "Most ordinary labour migrants do not become cosmopolitans either. For them going away may be, ideally, home plus higher income; often the involvement with another culture is not a fringe benefit but a necessary cost, to be kept as low as possible." (243)

[11] In "Ordinary Cosmopolitanisms", Michele Lamont and Sada Aksartova explore "ordinary cosmopolitanisms" as the strategies used by non-college-educated white and black workers in the United States and white and North African workers in France to bridge racial boundaries. In "Global Citizenship, Anyone? Cosmopolitanism, Privilege and Public Opinion", Peter A. Furia utilises the World Values Survey and the Inter-university Survey on Allegiance to evaluate the claim that cosmopolitanism is elitist. The claim includes three variants: 1) cosmopolitanism appeals to almost no one but the rationalist philosophers who

articulate it; 2) cosmopolitanism is systematically likely to appeal to privileged individuals; and 3) cosmopolitanism is systematically likely to appeal to privileged societies. He finds none of the hypotheses strongly supported by his data.

[12] Except Philippe Rekacewicz's "Mapping Concepts", other essays in this special issue are recollected in *Cosmopolitanism*, edited by Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

[13] The essay appears in the special issue on cosmopolitanism of *The British Journal of Sociology* (the first issue of 2006).

[14] In "London", Naipaul directly responds to this popular assumption: "Consider this comment on my first novel in a weekly paper, now just defunct: 'His whole purpose is to show how funny Trinidad Indians are.' The *Daily Telegraph* says I look down a long Oxford nose at the land of my birth…None of these comments would have been made about a comic French or American novel. They are not literary judgments at all. Imagine a critic in Trinidad writing of *Vile Bodies*: 'Mr Evelyn Waugh's whole purpose is to show how funny English people are. He looks down his nose at the land of his birth. We hope that in future he writes of his native land with warm affection.'" (11)

[15] The chronological orders of Naipaul's novels written and published are not necessarily the same. *Miguel Street* was finished in 1955, but published as his third novel in 1959. In my thesis, I treat it as Naipaul's first book rather than *The Mystic Masseur* published in 1957. *A Flag on the Island* published in 1967 is a collection of short stories written between 1954 and 1965.

Chapter I

Unhealthy Hysteria: The Yearning for Elitist Cosmopolitanism in *Miguel Street*

Naipaul began his career in the 1950s as a comic writer with four novels set in Trinidad—*Miguel Street*, *The Mystic Masseur*, *The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. Written from the viewpoint of a young writer attempting to describe the social circumstances in which he grew up, they are clever, funny and accomplished in their own right, and original in their technique and vision. *Miguel Street*, essentially a memoir of childhood, is a collection of comic sketches and a picture gallery of eccentric characters. *The Mystic Masseur* is an amusing study of the rise of a West Indian politician from humble beginnings in a rural Hindu community. *The Suffrage of Elvira* deals with the farce of the 1950 general election in Trinidad in an isolated, predominantly Hindu community beset by ignorance and superstition. *A House for Mr Biswas*, Naipaul's early masterpiece, is an imaginative reconstruction of his father's life. The richly comic novel tells the moving story of a doomed Indo-Trinidadian man fighting against destiny to attain freedom, security and dignity in the face of a lifetime of calamity.

These early social comedies of Naipaul's, however, are poker-faced, instilled with strong streaks of irony and satire. The comic effects arise not so much from events and incidents as from characters and dialogue, for example, the idiosyncratic way that people behave and speak. There is in Naipaul's amused or satiric manner contempt, even brutality. He consciously presents a situation of absurdity, ignorance, knavery, self-interest and superstition as the farcical reality in the Trinidadian culture, politics and society of the 1930s and 1940s. The point underlying this partial representation is the poverty of Trinidad—its conservatism, narrowness, passivity and lack of authenticity. This authorial implication has been stoutly questioned by, among others, George Lamming. Commenting on Naipaul's first three novels, Lamming states in *The Pleasures of Exile*:

His books can't move beyond a castrated satire; and although satire may be a useful element in fiction, no important work, comparable to Selvon's can rest safely on satire alone. 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. (225)

From Lamming's point of view, satire precludes sympathy, and allows Naipaul to berate Trinidad from a stance of superiority, which can be interpreted as a position of complete detachment. Lamming's charge is that the cultural, moral values and societal norms by which Naipaul measures the "distortions" in the Trinidadian society are basically Eurocentric.

In a 1971 interview with Ian Hamilton, Naipaul describes himself as "a thorough colonial" (14) when he went to England in 1950. He further explains:

To be a colonial is, in a way, to know a total kind of security. It is to have all decisions about major issues taken out of one's hands. It is to feel that one's political status has been settled so finally that there is very little one can do in the world. I think this is the background to a lot of my thinking at that time…This is, I think, the complete colonial attitude. (14)

Naipaul describes the colonial mentality as a kind of existentialist impotence, a condition in which the individual feels powerless to exercise freedom of choice. This concept of the "secure" colonial background provides us with the important basis for forming a comprehensive picture of his early cultural, political orientation well to the right of the Trinidadian norm: it points the way to a very basic conservatism founded on an acceptance of the status quo. A colonial subject at his early beginnings, Naipaul obviously could not fulfil his own conception of the writer's duty: "The artist who, for political or humanitarian reasons, seeks only to record abandons half his responsibility. He becomes a participant; he becomes

anonymous. He does not impose a vision on the world." ("The Documentary Heresy" 24)

Andrew Gurr reads these statements of Naipaul's as his rejection of what he did in his first

four novels (87). In another 1971 interview, Naipaul admits that "in writing my first four or

five books…I was simply recording my reactions to the world; I hadn't come to any

conclusion about it" (Rowe-Evans 56). In his early novels, he mainly engages in

reconstructing his personal experiences in the fictional form in an attempt to come to terms

with his own displacement. Later, in a 1995 interview, Naipaul confesses to Alastair Niven

that "the early comedy was really hysteria, the hysteria of someone who was worried about

his place as a writer and his place in the world. When one is really stressed one makes a lot of

jokes. You can make jokes all the time. That's not healthy. The profounder comedy comes

from greater security" (6). This might be Naipaul's most candid verdict on his early colonial

hangover: he has distorted and mocked at the cultural, political and social scenes in Trinidad

from a Eurocentric or Western perspective.

      What I try to argue in this chapter is that Naipaul's early, unhealthy hysteria reflects

his colonial mentality. In *Miguel Street*, a novel with human warmth, Naipaul presents the

lived experience of cosmopolitanism arising at a micro scale. However, he perversely vetoes

the Trinidadian version of vernacular cosmopolitanism, because he draws on the prerogative

of his elitist colonial education to imagine cosmopolitanism in the Enlightenment intellectual

context. He sees cosmopolitanism only existing in a satisfactory culture and society far away,

rather than in a disappointing colonial one in which the individual's cosmopolitan behaviours,

interactions and lifestyles are meaningless. The satirical edge of the novel, which insists that

only literacy by education can allow one a place in the larger discursive field of an articulated

history, illustrates Naipaul's colonial attitude the best.

      First, one must consider why it is theoretically valid to read *Miguel Street* from the

perspective of vernacular cosmopolitanism. Vernacular cosmopolitanism is, to quote Pnina

Werbner, "an oxymoron that joins contradictory notions of local specificity and universal

enlightenment" ("Vernacular Cosmopolitanism" 496). It poses the question whether the local,

parochial, rooted, culturally demotic and specific may coexist with the trans-local,

transnational, elitist, enlightened, modernist and universalist, that is, whether the boundary-

crossing, demotic migration may be compared to the globetrotting travel, sophisticated

worldview and cultural knowledge of deracinated intellectuals. It attempts to come to terms

with the conjunct elements of postcolonial and pre-colonial forms of cosmopolitanism (such

as travel), while probing the conceptual boundaries of cosmopolitanism and its usefulness as

an analytic concept. The fact that ethnic, vernacular rootedness does not negate openness to

cultural difference highlights the feature of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Much of the work on vernacular cosmopolitanism follows from the early reflections of

James Clifford, who first challenges popular accounts of cosmopolitans to be necessarily

members of the elite. Reflecting on the status of companion servants, guides and migrant

labourers and grounds of equivalence between privileged and unprivileged travellers, he

proposes that "the project of comparing and translating different traveling cultures need not

be class- or ethno-centric" (107). Differential, often violent, displacements that impel the

locals to travel create, he says, "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" (108). Clifford's notion that

there are multiple forms of cosmopolitan practices with their distinctive, expanded

subjectivity possible in late modernity has opened up the terrain for a broader discussion and

exploration of marginal or subaltern cosmopolitanism.

Here, I refer to the compelling term "vernacular cosmopolitanism" coined by Homi

Bhabha. Uneasy with the universal, liberal values privileged above family, ethnic group or

nation, Bhabha presents the by now well known if not necessarily fully understood focus on

the in-between, negotiation, and the ambivalence of cultural translation. In "Unsatisfied:

Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism", Bhabha poses a series of questions that point to the

central problematic of liberal, universalist cosmopolitanism:

But who are our 'fellow city dwellers' in the global sense? The 18 or 19

million refugees who lead their unhomely lives in borrowed and barricaded

dwellings? The 100 million migrants, of whom over half are women, fleeing

poverty and forming part of an invisible, illegal workforce? The 20 million

who have fled health and ecological disasters? Are the Stoic values of a respect

for human dignity and the opportunity for each person to pursue happiness

adequate cosmopolitan proposals for this scale of global economical and

ecological disjuncture? (41)

The notion of a borderless cosmopolitan community seems inadequate in relation to the large

number of immigrants and refugees fleeing poverty and violence. Bhabha suggests that

vernacular cosmopolitanism is "a form of marginal or partial interpellation that opens up a

space occupied by those who seek to establish an ethic of community that is 'many circles

narrower than the human horizon' (Appiah) and ceases to dream of 'the world made whole'

(Sennett)" (43). It is not an all-encompassing project dictated from above, but one,

patchwork-like, emerging from "the ordinariness of the day to day" and "the intimacy of the

indigenous" (44). It is both less universalising and more inclusive, as it rejects a too easy

universalisation but allows for the importance of the local and everyday interactions in small

ways. In "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan", Bhabha asserts that vernacular cosmopolitanism is

"not a cosmopolitanism of the elite variety inspired by universalist patterns of humanist

thought that run gloriously across cultures, establishing an enlightened unity" (139). Instead,

it refers to the routine barely documented cultural encounters of diasporic life, and signals

blurred, undifferentiated elements of contemporary global culture, post-multicultural

transformations which are contingent and hybrid, which suggest cultural mixing and

indeterminacy rather than coexistence and plurality. It replaces the Eurocentric sovereignty of

Western culture (or individual) with the convivial, hybrid culture (or subject) of

postcoloniality. Bhabha's concept of vernacular cosmopolitanism is a helpful way to recover

the spatial diversity often subsumed by the claims to a temporal universality. It becomes possible to consider circumstances not typically considered as cosmopolitan (for instance, rural communities and small cities rather than the metropolis), under which different, often ignored or unnoticed, cosmopolitan sensibilities and worldviews are embodied.[1]

Bhabha's vernacular model focuses on forms of minoritisation derived from the experience of traditionally disempowered, marginalised people. It can be applied to indigenous people, labour migrants, refugees, diasporic and exilic people, who are exposed to cosmopolitan experiences through immigrant networks, and not from original access to centres or groups of power in their communities of origin. In "Speaking of Postcoloniality, in the Continuous Present", Bhabha points out that the Western individual connotes a "self-fulfilling, plenitudinous personhood", whereas the colonial subject is "a kind of split-subject" (21) that inherently accommodates an imperial otherness. He calls this an instance of living-in-difference, for the experience of colonisation coerces its subjects to cultivate social identifications non-identical to their cultural selves, in which the process of cultural negotiation and translation is a necessary mode of survival. This ethic of survival in modernity reflects the spirit of cosmopolitanism for Bhabha. Therefore, the de-centred self, not the sovereign individual, becomes inherently cosmopolitan:

> The "decentering of the self" was the very condition of agency and imagination in these colonial and postcolonial conditions, and it becomes more than a theoretical axiom; it becomes a protean, everyday practice, a way of living with oneself and others while acknowledging the "partiality" of social identification; it becomes part of one's ethical being in the sense that such a "decentering" also informs the agency through which one executes a care of the self and a concern for the "other," in the late Foucauldian sense. (21)

Gaining its momentum from concrete history and material realities, colonial experiences in particular,[2] Bhabha's theory of vernacular cosmopolitanism is a kind of cosmopolitanism

from below. In "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan", Bhabha asserts that "vernacular cosmopolitans are compelled to make a tryst with cultural translation as an act of survival. Their specific and local histories, often threatened and repressed, are inserted 'between the lines' of dominant cultural practices" (139). He defines British minorities as such vernacular cosmopolitans "translating between cultures, renegotiating traditions from a position where 'locality' insists on its own terms, while entering into larger national and societal conversations" (139). The idea of the inclusion of subaltern individuals not only points to broader definitions of cosmopolitan subjects, but also forces us to re-imagine the abstracted relation in actually-existing geographical and human terms. Bhabha also makes the valuable point that immigrants with prior experience of colonial contact zones have always already been cosmopolitan, perhaps giving those in the diaspora a leading edge in these experiences. Bhabha's underlying question of who counts as a cosmopolitan and what kind of movement constitutes cosmopolitan mobility challenges the accepted notion of cosmopolitanism, which insists upon a binary of the cosmopolitan and the local with an implied parallel binary between "progress" and "tradition" attached to attendant, problematic moral values.[3]

Compared with Naipaul's later Trinidadian novels in which the isolation and marginalisation of the Indo-Trinidadian community are addressed and thus the matter of ethnic division or rivalry becomes a central issue, *Miguel Street* presents Trinidad's long-claimed cosmopolitan feature—its racial heterogeneity. As early as in 1922, the Honourable E. F. L. Wood adumbrated Trinidad's mixed population: African, Chinese, East Indian, French Creole and Spanish. "With a population so constituted", Wood wrote, "Trinidad is exceptionally cosmopolitan" (23). Lamming, who worked from 1946 to 1950 in Port of Spain, writes: "Trinidad is the most cosmopolitan of the islands. Chinese, Indians, Negroes, Portuguese—all native to this soil—are involved in constant interplay of local forces." ("A Trinidad Experience" 1657) Aisha Khan points out that Trinidad celebrates itself as a callaloo nation, a metaphor of its heterogeneity and diversity that connotes "democratic political

representation, racial and ethnic tolerance, and a cosmopolitan worldview" (12). In Naipaul's novel, Miguel Street is the epitome of Port of Spain (the narrator finds about six Miguel Streets in the city), and a microcosm of Trinidad. It is peopled with intermixing races and nations (black, brown, white, mulatto, Chinese, Indian, Portuguese and Spanish), and frequented by Americans. They consume multicultural products and services, and interact with people from different backgrounds. They buy groceries at Chinese shops, and patronise the big café owned by a Portuguese. Eddoes, from a low Hindu caste, sweeps the street and takes away people's rubbish; a black calypso singer like B. Wordsworth occasionally knocks on the door; and two Grenadian islanders work as loaders for Bhakcu, a Brahmin. George's brothel primarily entertains American soldiers, and children beg for chewing gum and chocolate from Americans who are "easy people, always ready to give with both hands" (51). In most cases, characters are only referred to by their first name or nickname, under which their ethnicity can hardly be told. Even the boy narrator does not reveal himself as being of Indian descent (he is Bhakcu's nephew) until near the end of the book. As the boy narrator befriends black people like B. Wordsworth and Bolo, Edward favours painting "a brown hand clasping a black one" (141) among all possible subjects. John Thieme describes Naipaul's work up to 1981 as placing black West Indians at the margin, but regards *Miguel Street* as different, because in it "the black man is not excluded from the centre of the stage, nor is he allowed only a cipher-like existence. The life of Trinidad's urban black population is portrayed from the inside and with a fair degree of sympathy" ("Calypso Allusions in Naipaul's *Miguel Street*" 19). *Miguel Street* is unique in Naipaul's oeuvre not only for the shortage of clear racial identifiers, but also for the comparatively positive portrayals of black characters that Thieme detects. Such a benign treatment of colour and race can never be found in Naipaul's works.

Living in the racially heterogeneous and culturally mixed community of Miguel Street, people from different origins show openness to otherness. In "Cosmopolitanism,

Globalisation and Diaspora", Stuart Hall describes the Caribbean as "by definition cosmopolitan", because "everybody who is there came from somewhere else" (351). The really indigenous, distinctive trait of Caribbean culture is "creolisation, the cultural mix of different elements, which is a kind of 'cosmopolitanism at home'" (351). Such a "true diasporic society", according to him, makes the Caribbean individual "sort-of a 'natural' cosmopolitan" (351). Hall's notion, which bears some resemblance to Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism, describes the experience of simultaneously participating in a transnational and indigenous cultural community: participation in specific cultural contexts and traditions that partially incorporate and transcend others (including others who may be more particular) is understood as participation in cosmopolitan relations. The increasingly hybrid, lived transformations as the outcome of diasporic cultural mixing and indeterminacy rather than coexistence and plurality are signalled. In *Miguel Street*, multiple cultural elements coexist and have mutual influences; people's life is thus enriched by their experience of alternate cultures. Trinidad's big fetes include Races, Carnival, Discovery Day and the Indian Centenary. The news at Piarco airport is broadcast in both Spanish and English, while people in Miguel Street speak Creole English but in an American or British accent. They enjoy *wapee*, calypso and carnival immensely on the one hand, and are big fans of cricket (a quintessentially rural English game) and American culture (particularly film and music) on the other hand. A Chinese woman with an Anglicised name "Mary" feeds her children with chop-suey, chow-min, chow-fan and "things with names like that" (82). The vernacular (the local tradition of the small place) and the cosmopolitan (the larger tradition of the broader space) are not contrasted; instead, they constitute each other. This dialectic condition of mixing shapes people's live-and-let-live attitude toward difference and diversity. Different kinds of otherness including eccentricity are accepted and rendered ordinary:

> A stranger could drive through Miguel Street and just say 'Slum!' because he
> could see no more. But we, who lived there, saw our street as a world, where

> everybody was quite different from everybody else. Man-man was mad;
>
> George was stupid; Big Foot was a bully; Hat was an adventurer; Popo was a
>
> philosopher; and Morgan was our comedian. (59)

The variety of individuality and richness of human difference rather than a need to assimilate are respected in Miguel Street. Difference and openness to difference are constructed as normalised aspects of everyday life. This exemplifies Daniel Hiebert's understanding of cosmopolitanism as "a way of living based on an 'openness to all forms of otherness'" (212) adopted by people from different origins to render diversity ordinary.[4]

The cultural outreach that normalises difference in everyday life produces a public sphere of kindness and inclusion in Miguel Street. It is similar to what Ayona Datta calls a "cosmopolitan neighbourliness" (747). Datta suggests that kindness and openness to others (those from different caste, ethnicity, language or religion) become ordinary aspects of everyday life in a Delhi squatter settlement. The qualities of affection, compassion and humanity are never absent in the slum even during the city's moments of crisis, communal violence in particular. Though in a different context, a compassionate and inclusive neighbourhood sphere like a protection for the habitués is constructed in Miguel Street, especially when anyone is involved in difficult conditions. When Popo's wife elopes with another man, all the men in the street "began to gather in Popo's workshop, and they would talk about cricket and football and pictures—everything except women—just to try to cheer Popo up" (10-1); when Eddoes is trapped into raising a baby girl obviously not his own, all the men praise her as "good-looking", "sweet" and "nice" while "all the women, Mrs Morgan, Mrs Bhakcu, Laura, and my mother, helped to look after her" (99); and when Mrs Hereira (a white woman who leaves her almost perfect husband) is beaten by her lover, she always runs to her neighbour (the boy narrator's mother) to seek solace. As A. C. Derrick comments, "as a whole, the series of sketches in this book evidences a human warmth and a vitality that are hardly to be found anywhere else in Naipaul's work" (195). More importantly, generosity,

humaneness and warmth are extended beyond the community[5]—"three beggars called punctually every day at the hospitable houses in Miguel Street. At about ten an Indian came in his dhoti and white jacket, and we poured a tin of rice into the sack he carried on his back. At twelve an old woman smoking a clay pipe came and she got a cent. At two a blind man led by a boy called for his penny" (40). Poor themselves, people in Miguel Street, faced with demands that they think are reasonable, are still willing to show their kindness to strangers and to help the poorer as their capacity allows. The word "we" implies that the boy narrator is not simply an observer, but an active participant.

Indeed, the boy narrator grows up in and is part of the cosmopolitan neighbourliness of Miguel Street. After his father's death, he is picked up from Chaguanas to live with his mother in Miguel Street. For Naipaul who also moved from "the Hindu and Indian countryside" of Chaguanas to "the white-negro-mulatto town" of Port of Spain when he was a boy, such a move is "in the nature of a migration" ("Prologue to an Autobiography" 54). Unlike Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* in his adolescence who feels ill at ease and unhappy in Port of Spain because his Indian country dress and manner are always mocked, the boy narrator never feels out of place in Miguel Street from the very start. He actively interacts with people of different racial or cultural background with curiosity, and the street responds to him with its all-embracing inclusiveness. Popo's wife often takes him into the kitchen of the big house where she works as a cook and gives him a lot of nice things to eat; though he does not buy the poetry that B. Wordsworth tries to sell, B. Wordsworth invites him to eat mangoes and comforts him after he is beaten by his mother; Laura who raises eight children on her own always gives him fruit and dessert whenever she has them; whenever he gives his opinion on mechanical problems, the "mechanical genius" Bhakcu listens; and even the cynic Bolo is willing to cut his hair. For the boy narrator, Miguel Street is like an extended family, in which he seems to love everybody and is loved in return. Treated with generosity and kindness, he learns to develop sympathy to other people at an early age. For instance, the boy narrator

displays a heartfelt concern for the cowardice and plight of the "really big and really black" (49) Big Foot, beaten by a self-boasting "champion" of the Royal Air Force, by withholding his jeering and laughter from those of the crowd, as he realises how deeply Big Foot feels hurt. How the boy narrator looks at Miguel Street reflects Naipaul's real feeling about his childhood street life in Port of Spain. Naipaul reminisces in "Prologue to an Autobiography": "After the shut-in compound life of the house in Chaguanas, I liked living on a city street. I liked looking at other people, other families. *I liked the way things looked* [my emphasis]." (69) This indicates that the boy narrator's later denial of and disengagement from Miguel Street are Naipaul's deliberate, hysterical operations.

It is through the narrator's vision that the cosmopolitan neighbourliness of Miguel Street is revealed on the one hand, and perversely vetoed on the other hand. To understand why there is such a twist, it is necessary to analyse focalisation in the novel. According to Mieke Bal, focalisation, unlike narrative perspective or point of view, makes a distinction "between those who see and those who speak" (143). It is "the relationship between the 'vision,' the agent that sees, and that which is seen" (146). In *Miguel Street*, Naipaul follows the model of the *Bildungsroman* in using a double narrator—a boy as the hero/focaliser and a young man who was once the boy as the storyteller. The novel opens when the narrator is a newcomer in the street as a schoolboy and ends when he leaves for a London university at about eighteen. The young man looks back upon his childhood and recalls every happening, whereas the first-person focalising voice for all the stories is that of the boy. As the narrator himself is a fictional character in the novel, internal focalisation, in which "the focus coincides with a character, who then becomes the fictive 'subject' of all the perceptions, including those that concern himself as object" (Genette 74), is performed. According to William F. Edmiston, internal focalisation is the vantage point from which a first-person narrator presents his/her story:

The narrator can place the focus in his experiencing self, a participant inside the story, and allow the latter to focalize characters and events just as he perceived them at the time of the events. The focalization is delegated to the experiencing self, and the narrating self remains silent, provides no correction, and with-holds all subsequent knowledge ("I believed," "I was convinced," etc.). Spatially, the subject's vision is limited to proximal objects, those found in his immediate environment…We can say that the experiencing self is the focalizer when a narrative statement contains nothing more than what he could have perceived or known at the moment of event. In such cases we follow him through the story as though events were being unfolded before our eyes. (739)

In *Miguel Street*, the boy reports the events with the enthusiasm and naïve involvement of a child living among the characters with whom he shares their environment and aspirations. In the first sketch, the young man returns to his childhood and relates the story with the naïve wonder and forsaken innocence of the boy, to whom the playacting Bogart is a veritable hero, though in fact as the boy is to discover that Bogart is merely a bigamist. Reality is refracted and enlarged through the immature vision of the curious, enthusiastic and innocent boy; it is the way how he observes the world at the moment of event.

The narrative fluctuates now and then between the limited vision of the boy and the mature voice of the young man. Suddenly hearing Mrs Morgan's sharp shout at night, the boy immediately runs to Morgan's house, but it is obviously the young man's voice commenting on his younger self who "never slept in pyjamas" that "I wasn't in that class" (66). The young man's judgement and critique add to the boy's perspective to make comparisons between maturity of manhood and naivety of childhood. The two perspectives become a coherent one in the last sketch, when the insider perspective of the boy turns on itself. When his mother rebukes him for his wild dissolute ways, he enunciates his own view of Trinidad: "Is not my fault really. Is just Trinidad. What else anyone can do here except drink?" (171) The change

of the boy's attitude from wondering relish to disillusionment is complete here; the young man as the *real* narrator now appears. This is an example of what Dorrit Cohn calls "dissonant self-narration"—"a lucid narrator turning back on a past self steeped in ignorance, confusion, and delusion" (145). In *Miguel Street*, the young man is a dissonant narrator who views his younger self retrospectively, distancing himself from the past while providing a great deal of subsequent knowledge. The time of reflection is the present, not the past, so the dominant consciousness belongs to the young man rather than the boy. This echoes Edmiston's statement that "in a first-person narrative, the perceptual point of view is that of the younger self, while the conceptual or ideological point of view belongs to the narrator" (737). At this point, the full extent of first-person retrospection and its function in *Miguel Street* as cultural critique are conveyed: the boy narrator is simply a narratorial device, while the real narrator speaks from beyond the end of the book. The novel becomes a considered and closed cultural judgement that emerges from the retrospection of the invisible real narrator and lies in the future for the ostensible boy narrator.

Seen from the mature perspective of the real narrator, Miguel Street is "entrapment in a condition of cultural vacuum" (Gupta 5). It is peopled with derelicts, drop-outs, petty criminals, prostitutes and rum addicts. Most of them are eccentric, half-crazed and doomed. The men beat their children and wives violently, while promiscuity haunts the women living in a macho man's world. The nearest parallels to such a place of eccentrics are Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg and John Steinbeck's Cannery Row. Naipaul's Miguel Street is an updated Dickensian world in comic energy. But if the early Dickens at least seemed hopeful or optimistic, Naipaul is not. All the stories of the eccentrics in *Miguel Street* are of personal failures such as death, imprisonment, madness or violence. The whole pattern of the book is fleetingly but carefully to reveal the inevitable movement from aspirations to disappointments, from laughter to tears and from freshness to dirt. This is not to say that the street is devoid of individuals with genuine yearnings. However, their yearnings are sadly out of tune with their

environment. Popo, who busies himself with making "the thing without a name", makes nothing and steals the furnishings of his house; Elias, a serious student who aspires to be a doctor, fails to pass most examinations and ends up driving the scavenging-cart; and B. Wordsworth, who claims to be writing "the greatest poem in the world" (45), only manages to write a short line. In Miguel Street, nothing is made, no art work is finished, no business succeeds, no love or marriage lasts. The entrapment is so complete that even the desire to achieve something seems meaningless. No wonder driving the scavenging cart holds unrivalled glamour for the street boys.

But the characters themselves are not responsible. Through the extended character-profiles of individuals, Naipaul presents a microcosm of the colonial world. Miguel Street is a symbol of Trinidad's poverty, blankness, and even hopelessness of acculturation. Man-man's story exemplifies that a character sketch evolves to an indirect sketch of a stultified society with fractured norms and values. Man-man goes up for every city and legislative council election with his posters that only have the word "Vote" and his picture. The absurdity of his campaign parodies Trinidad's politics at that time, when candidates were independent personalities without a party. Yet, Man-man always gets two votes besides his own. Hat, a shrewd observer voicing adult experience and sanity and corrective to the boy narrator's naivety through the majority of the sketches, provides another focus or perspective to explain the mystery: "Perhaps is two jokers. But they is funny sort of jokers if they do the same thing so many times. They must be mad just like he." (32) Regarding his eccentric political life, Man-man is a forerunner of Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* and Harbans in *The Suffrage of Elvira*.

After Man-man barks like a dog in a café and is ejected, he manages to enter it after it is closed and leaves "little blobs of excrement…on the centre of every stool and on top of every table and at regular intervals along the counter" (34). People laugh at the owner of the café for a long time. Humiliation of others is admirable by local values. Man-man trains his

dog to defecate on the clothes left by others to bleach overnight; people then give the soiled clothes to him to sell. Because of this cunning, even rationality, in Man-man's madness, Hat expresses his doubt: "Is things like this that make me wonder whether the man really mad." (35) The boy narrator tells us: "All the people who had suffered from Man-man's dog were anxious to get other people to suffer the same thing. We in Miguel Street became a little proud of him." (35) Man-man becomes a local "hero", similar to the con men and tricksters whom Trinidadians are said to admire in *The Middle Passage*. The story until now illustrates the picaroon society of Trinidad of which Naipaul expresses his horror in *The Middle Passage*—its cynicism, eccentricity, lack of rigid social conventions, and taste for corruption (69-72).

Man-man's dog is not simply his companion. It is his only source of income. So, its death in a car accident provides an explanation of Man-man's change in behaviour:

> Man-man wandered about for days, looking dazed and lost.
>
> He no longer wrote words on the pavement; no longer spoke to me or to any of the other boys in the street. He began talking to himself, clasping his hands and shaking as though he had ague.
>
> Then one day he said he had seen God after having a bath. (35)

Man-man is not whelmed in sorrow; he is busy with designing a new career, which does not require a trained dog. It is the unbearable pressure of reality that brings about fantasy, eccentricity and public drama. Converting to preaching, Man-man walks about in his white robe begging for food during weekdays. On every Saturday night, he preaches under the awning of a Chinese grocery shop, a location very likely to be his deliberate choice for the convenience of collecting food from the audience. Significantly, Naipaul expands the relevance of Man-man's story from Miguel Street to all of Trinidad:

> This didn't surprise many of us. Seeing God was quite common in Port of
> Spain and indeed, in Trinidad at that time. Ganesh Pundit, the mystic masseur

from Fuente Grove, had started it. He had seen God, too, and had published a little booklet called *What God Told Me*. Many rival mystics and not a few masseurs had announced the same thing, and I suppose it was natural that since God was in the area Man-man should see Him. (35-6)

Bhakcu's story in *Miguel Street* is an amalgamation of that of Man-man and Ganesh. Like Man-man, the Bhakcus are faced by an increase in the financial pressure. Both their lorry business and taxi business fail; Mrs Bhakcu cannot earn much money by rearing hens or selling fruit. At last, Bhakcu's Brahmin background and his intoning of the *Ramayana* are utilised. He is turned into a Ganesh-like pundit, who is said to be "making a lot of money these days" (129) without any investment. Here, once again, Naipaul suggests that what Trinidad admires is the exploitative confidence-trickster. The boy narrator ends Bhakcu's story on a sarcastic note: "I was haunted by thoughts of the *dhoti*-clad Pundit Bhakcu, crawling under a car, attending to a crank-shaft, while poor Hindus waited for him to attend to their souls." (129)

Man-man combines politics and religion in his preaching. Its madness, which becomes part of his crucifixion fantasy later, is quite frightening. The boy narrator even has nightmares after hearing Man-man preach. However, "the odd thing was that the more he frightened people the more they came to hear him preach. And when the collection was made they gave him more than ever" (36). Man-man is an example of the Trinidadian politics rooted in personalities and the desire for deliverance and salvation, noticeable in black nationalist leaders (such as Eric Williams) during the 1950s.[6] Man-man's story looks forward to Naipaul's study of Black Power movements (especially the events in Trinidad in the early 1970s) in *Guerrillas*. A leader who provides public drama instead of any clear programme, Man-man becomes popular and successful. Hearing the news that Man-man is going to conduct a self-crucifixion, Errol at first laughs, but soon falls silent when he finds that nobody laughs with him. The community treats the crucifixion with seriousness. The boy narrator

notes that there is "great pride in knowing that Man-man came from Miguel Street" (37). This would only happen in Trinidad, where accepted social standards are missing. Even for Man-man's mock crucifixion, there are Trinidadian sources. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Samuel Selvon tells a story about Brackley, an exhibitionist who asks to be tied to a cross near some wayside preachers but comes down from it when boys throw dangerous missiles at him (151-2). Landeg White refers to a calypso by The Mighty Wonder about a preacher named Nosegay who is angered by an attack on him while he is tied to a cross (50).

So the major thematic concern of *Miguel Street* is not to depict natural eccentrics, but to convey the social reality of Trinidad as an impoverished colonial society without any opportunity for a full life, which forces people to wear the mask of eccentricity. Naipaul defines eccentricity in *The Middle Passage* as "the expression of one's own personality, unhampered by fear of ridicule or the discipline of a class" (74). In *Miguel Street*, eccentricity may be a stylish matter of mystifying the past and imitating a popular movie star like Bogart, publicly displaying an assumed character like Big Foot, showing off the mistaken notion of masculinity like Morgan, or obsessing with cleanliness like Eddoes. No matter what, it is "a way of defending against or escaping from a milieu that does not satisfy their desires for meaningful work and identity" (Weiss, *On the Margins* 28). It is a mask for failure, a way to assert identity and visibility, the underdog's way of being unique. Bhabha would read such "ironic style, tolerance, a refusal to take the eminent at their own estimation" as "the cosmopolitan ethic that emerges from the colonized Trinidadian's embattled existence"; however, Bhabha reminds us in the first place that what he finds intriguing about Naipaul's novels is the way in which they are "capable of being read against the author's intention and ideology" (*The Location of Culture* xii-xiii). In *Miguel Street*, while the boy narrator is touched by the street's natural sophistication and tolerance of the variety of individuality and eccentricity that accommodates everyone, what Naipaul emphasises is the typical aspect of the picaroon society of Trinidad—"tolerance for every human activity and affection for every

demonstration of wit and style" (*The Middle Passage* 74). He intends to show how limiting

the environment in the colonial society can be. In his view, the individual cannot prosper in

such a society, so their struggle (no matter in what form) is meaningless, even ridiculous. This

makes his satire cruel and unsympathetic. In this early phase, the young Naipaul does not

have the awareness of investigating cosmopolitanism in terms of the actions of subaltern

individuals, who operate primarily alone in small ways to struggle against dominance,

exploitation or injustice. Only after *A House for Mr Biswas* does Naipaul begin to present and

re-evaluate the individual's fighting against the colonial social order.

Naipaul's cultural critique of Trinidad makes it possible for him to veto the

cosmopolitan neighbourliness of Miguel Street, the Trinidadian version of vernacular

cosmopolitanism. First, to feel the cosmopolitan neighbourliness in the face of insuperable

frustration, it is necessary to have something in common with other people. In the picaroon

society of Trinidad where the distortion of accepted values becomes the norm, the common

ground means degradation. It is only when Popo, whose wife runs away, stops working,

begins to get drunk and to throw his temper around that he becomes "an accepted member"

(11) of the street. He is fully accepted when he goes to jail for stealing. The verdict of the

street, voiced by Hat, is: "We was wrong about Popo. He is a man, like any of we." (11)

Whereas Popo comes back "as a hero" (14), the boy narrator does not like the changed Popo.

The boy narrator says: "But for me, he had changed. And the change made me sad." (14) It is

an early intimation that the boy narrator judges and measures this degradation, until he finally

rejects the society that would reduce everyone to its own level of amorality.

Second, in *Miguel Street*, Naipaul draws attention to people's insuperable frustration,

rather than their sympathetic response to it. This is exemplified in the nature and complexity

of laughter in the book. Even amidst the boisterous laughter, Naipaul never allows his readers

to lose sight of the central tragedy in people's life, for which the society is largely responsible.

The boy narrator realises that laughter is a mask of bravado that people wear to hide the bitter

reality of their life through Laura, the most vivacious person in the street. Laura's story opens in the usual comic vein—she probably holds a world record by having eight children by seven men! The men in the street make fun of her many pregnancies, but in pleasant terms. Obviously, Laura is not condemned by her society in which illegitimacy and brief common-law marriages are very common. Such a tolerance that Trinidad possesses is, Naipaul says, "an indifference to virtue as well as to vice" (*The Middle Passage* 49). So, not feeling embarrassed, Laura goes along in her happy, nonchalant way—getting lovers, having babies, cursing, and throwing out the lovers. She only lives in the hope that her children will have a better life than her own as she has them educated. She sends her eldest daughter Lorna (a servant) to take typing lessons, explaining: "It have nothing like education in the world. I don't want my children to grow like me." (87) It is only when Lorna announces her pregnancy with her first illegitimate child that Laura's defences completely crumble. The boy narrator says:

> I heard the shriek that Laura gave.
>
> And for the first time I heard Laura crying. It wasn't ordinary crying. She seemed to be crying all the cry she had saved up since she was born; all the cry she had tried to cover up with her laughter…Laura's crying that night was the most terrible thing I had heard. It made me feel that the world was a stupid, sad place, and I almost began crying with Laura.
>
> All the street heard Laura crying. (88)

The word "crying" is repeated until it begins to sound like an echo. But how could Lorna have done any better? With no one to tell her the distinction between right and wrong, who would she emulate but her mother? She has for too long been a witness to Laura's promiscuity to attach censure to it. Boyee, insensitively observing that "I don't see why she [Laura] so mad about that. She does do the same" (88), receives a thorough beating from his annoyed uncle Hat. Understanding Laura's despair, the elder members of Miguel Street feel a pity for her. To

see Lorna starting on the same beaten road wounds Laura deeply. Laura sheds the mask of her sprightly exterior. She abandons her laughter, and her house becomes "a dead, silent house" (88). When Lorna takes her baby home, the boy narrator makes a point of saying that "there were no jokes about it in the street" (88). Whereas the men's laughter and teasing used to be the background of Laura's ribaldry, their silence is now the background of her weeping. Her situation is part of a profound sense of futility that they all may feel, as Hat comments: "Life is a helluva thing. You can see trouble coming and you can't do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just got to sit and watch and wait." (88) In this sense, the cosmopolitan neighbourliness of Miguel Street is nothing more than mutual sympathy between fellow sufferers caught up in the same hopeless environment. As the boy narrator is aware of Laura's pain, Lorna realises the heartbreak that she has caused her mother. Unable to live with her sense of guilt, Lorna drowns herself. The story ends with a piece of news reporting her suicide as "just another week-end tragedy, one of many" (88). Such an understatement reinforces the sense of futility in Trinidad. Informed of Lorna's death, Laura concludes: "It good. It good. It better that way." (89) Her acceptance of the futility of life is as total as her dead daughter's.

Then the question is: what is cosmopolitanism in Trinidad really like in Naipaul's view? Or to put it more sharply, does cosmopolitanism ever exist in Trinidad? The answer can be found in *The Middle Passage*:

> There is no set way in Trinidad of doing anything. Every house can be a folly. There is no set way of dressing or cooking or entertaining. Everyone can live with whoever he can get wherever he can afford. Ostracism is meaningless; the sanctions of any clique can be ignored. It is in this way, and not in the way of the travel brochure, that the Trinidadian is a cosmopolitan. He is adaptable; he is cynical; *having no rigid social conventions of his own* [my emphasis], he is amused by the conventions of others. (74)

Naipaul sees heterogeneity, the cosmopolitan character that Trinidad celebrates, as a lack of any strong indigenous culture. He regards Trinidad as an absurd society, where the people (mainly Africans and Indians) are transplanted by force or persuasion, torn away from their home that stands for traditions and cultural authenticity, and then forced to reinvent themselves on an almost daily basis. There are no ancient heroes, warriors or legends to fall back on for them as there are in Chinua Achebe's African novels.

In *Miguel Street*, Naipaul first develops the connection between an eventless history and the lack of traditions that he later states in more explicit terms in *The Middle Passage*, in which he famously concludes that "history is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies" (20). In the novel, this point is emphatically made with Titus Hoyt's errand to Fort George to demonstrate the boys' lack of collective memory. Titus Hoyt's attempt to impart an historical consciousness is meant to lend importance to undertaking the Miguel Street Literary and Social Youth Club, but all that he gets is "cries of disapproval" (77). Though he continues to explain that "is history, man, your history, and you must learn about things like that" (77), still no one wants to go. At last, he succeeds in luring the boys to go by telling them that they can bathe in a cool and crystal-clear stream there. When Titus Hoyt tells the boys that "this fort was built at a time when the French and them was planning to invade Trinidad", the boy narrator says: "We gasped. We had never realized that anyone considered us so important." (78) However, they only see "a few old rusty guns at the side of the path and heaps of rusty cannon-balls", and "the graveyard where there were a few tombstones of British soldiers dead long ago" (78-9). The juxtaposition of the ruined Fort George and the world of Miguel Street indicates the meditation on the uneven development that lies at the heart of the novel: without the tangible signs of historical events in Trinidad, there can be no cultural tradition to give meaning to the action of the novel's characters. The act of creating a tradition (represented in this instance by the literary club) is also under question.

In Naipaul's early novels, Trinidad's lack of indigenous or national culture makes a culturally chaotic world. The cultural confusion fragments the society, while the fragmentation of the society intensifies the identity crisis at the individual level. Though his characters attempt to form a new, symbolic order, Naipaul sees a homogenous or unitary cultural identity as simply not possible. In Thomas Hylland Eriksen's words, these novels "sharply satirize what the author sees as Trinidadian cultural promiscuity; the 'carnival mentality' which encourages people to mix, in noisy and boisterous ways, cultural stuff one has done nothing to deserve, and then creating an identity which consists of shiny surfaces without the slightest intimation of depth or inner consistency" (226). While *Miguel Street* maintains a relative innocence about Trinidad's heterogeneity, one can briefly look at *The Mystic Masseur* to see Naipaul's distaste for creolisation or hybridisation in the creation of identity in his first phase.

Bruce F. MacDonald points out that in *The Mystic Masseur*, we can see the beginning of "the method of symbolic action" (243) that makes Naipaul's later novels powerful works. The images and symbols, or "specific pictures", as White calls them, "dramatise the confusion of origins and loyalties, customs, and aspirations, which is the setting of Ganesh's success" (65). They serve in a general manner to reinforce the theme of cultural promiscuity or confusion and the disintegration of the East Indian identity in Trinidad. Naipaul brings to the fore the inherent dichotomy, or what Sushanta Goonatilake calls "cultural schizophrenia" (130), in many spheres of the lives of Indo-Trinidadians such as their dress, language and food habits. For example, the dichotomy is evident in their use of language. Most of the time, they use a dialectal version of English characterised by the use of non-conjugated verbs. They only occasionally speak Hindi, which almost becomes a forgotten language. The only person using the language is Ganesh's father, who dies even before the novel has really begun. English even replaces Hindi in rituals that they manage to preserve. Ramlogan attempts to "modernise" Fourways by introducing huge Chinese calendars in his shop, while Beharry

houses his books—*Napoleon's Book of Fate*, a school edition of *Eothen*, three issues of the Booker's Drug Stores *Almanac*, the *Gita*, and the *Ramayana*—in his shop in Fuente Grove. Though the staple is still rice or *roti* and *dal*, Western alternatives are adopted. Yet, certain typically Hindu fastidiousness about food survives. Ganesh's "Hindu instincts" rise high and he feels "nauseated" (30) to bite into a sandwich offered by Mr Stewart, but he obviously has no such hesitation when Ramlogan offers him gifts like an avocado pear, a tin of Canadian salmon or Australian butter. To win Ganesh as a son-in-law, Ramlogan treats Ganesh "with increasing honour" until he thinks of "no higher honour" (32): he feeds Ganesh out of earthenware dishes instead of enamel ones. The symbolic act here, though small, is important, because it preserves the traditional caste structure of the Hindu community—respect for the learned Brahmin.

What Naipaul stresses in this cultural promiscuity is "disjunctions which cannot be repaired when a cultural translation takes place from one political arena to another" (Mustafa 53). He finds in displacement, the mixing of peoples and cultural interfusion only violation—a sense of estrangement from one's origin and a consequent longing for an idealised home. In *The Mystic Masseur*, Ganesh's world is largely controlled by rituals and symbols. India is the symbol of books of learning, ceremonies of the connection with a wider ancestral and social identity, and spirituality. However, Hinduism is "reduced to rites without philosophy" (Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* 80), for it is hardly pure in its evolution from one form of practice to another in Trinidad. This becomes most evident in Ganesh's initiation ceremony, what Naipaul describes as "a pleasing piece of theatre", an "ancient drama, absurdly surviving in a Trinidad yard" (*An Area of Darkness* 29), which he himself refuses to attend. In the initiation ceremony that follows the traditional custom, Ganesh, whose head is shaved, is given a saffron bundle and asked to go to Benares to study. As directed, he begins to walk away from Fourways. In keeping with the custom, Dookhie, a shopkeeper playing the role of a senior member of the family, runs after Ganesh and begs him not to go. The person

undergoing the initiation ceremony is supposed to give in to the plea and to turn back his footsteps, Ganesh, however, keeps on walking away. All the people present cry out in bewilderment: "But what happen to the boy?...He taking this thing really serious." (11) Dookhie bursts out in anger, too: "Cut out this nonsense, man. Stop behaving stupid. You think I have all day to run after you? You think you really going to Benares? That is in India, you know, and this is Trinidad." (11) The target of Naipaul's satire is the misuse of the Hindu tradition's longevity. The Indo-Trinidadian characters' reactions here make it clear that they are under no delusion. They know that a strict adherence to traditional customs and rituals is no longer possible for them. They are well aware of the limitation of the make-believe Indian world that they create for themselves. Yet, they continue to appeal to India for their significance without realising the futility of what they do. Naipaul's concern with the decay of the traditional Hindu community in Trinidad and the incongruity of its existence within a national community of various cultures results in absurdity, comedy and irony.

It is only when Ganesh realises that the people of Trinidad are willing to accept the symbol without testing its reality (as he does with his symbolic journey to Benares) that he begins to succeed. At the opening of the novel, when the boy narrator is taken to Ganesh to get his leg cured, Ganesh is still a struggling masseur. The first thing that the boy narrator notices is Ganesh's dress: "He was dressed in the ordinary way, trousers and vest, and I didn't think he looked particularly holy. He wasn't wearing the dhoti and *koortah* and turban I had expected." (3-4) There is a contradiction between Ganesh's traditional profession as a masseur and his Western-style clothes. It is only later on Beharry's wife's advice that Ganesh takes to wearing dhoti and *koortah*, for wearing a shirt and trousers does not "suit a mystic" (113). Ganesh then greatly impresses Hector's mother, the first client coming to him soon after he dons the traditional attire and almost instinctively knows how to perform actions symbolic of his mystic status:

Her satisfaction turned to respect when the car stopped outside Ganesh's house

and she saw the GANESH, *Mystic* sign on the mango tree and the book-display

in the shed.

…

The woman looked sideways at him and nodded towards the sign…

Leela came running out, but with a glance Ganesh told her to keep out of the

way. To the woman he said, 'Come into the study.'

The word had the desired effect.

'But take off your shoes here in the verandah first.'

Respect turned to awe. And when the woman brushed through the Nottingham

lace curtains into the study and saw all the books, she looked abject. (114-5)

Such combination of symbols of the two worlds of Eastern spiritualism and Western learning

is later successfully used to cure Hector, the black boy tormented by a black cloud. This

characteristic sets Ganesh apart from others in the same profession. The boy narrator points

out: "His prestige was secured by his learning. Without this he might easily have been lumped

with the other thaumaturges who swarmed over Trinidad." (127-8)

The novel's thrust, then, is that the bastardisation of the cultural capital is the means

whereby Ganesh gains success. The lack of any national culture presents the opportunity to

forge a new one, but double dealing and knavery are the features that lead to self-sufficiency.

Naipaul arranges the symbols in meaningful patterns to enhance the theme. Ganesh dresses in

the traditional attire, but only to deceive people about his mysticism, preferring Western-style

clothes on other occasions. He uses, according to circumstances, English, dialect, Hindi and a

bit of Spanish. He owns fifteen hundred books (including Everyman, Penguin, Reader's

Library), many of which he has never read, only to impress his disciples. He uses his reading

in psychology and self-salesmanship to cure his patients. He not only makes himself by

continually rewriting his history and taking new careers and names, but also brings together

the symbols and knowledge of various cultures—Hindu, Muslim, Christian, modern and traditional. He constructs a miniature India in Fuente Grove, accepted as a substitute for the real thing by a people anxious to preserve their cultural identity. The house has a Hindu exterior decorated with stone sculptures of Ganesa symbolically facing in opposite directions, but a modern interior fitted with a musical toilet-paper rack playing *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and a refrigerator full of Coco-Cola. The sign outside the house is bilingual. He copies the layout of *Time* magazine and the *New Statesman and Nation* for his own newspaper *The Dharma* ("the faith"). He speaks in Hindi at his spiritual gatherings, but quotes from Buddha's Fire Sermon and Dickens's *Child's History of England* to reinforce his arguments. These images and symbols attach to Ganesh's imitation and fraudulence. He is portrayed as both a master and victim of cultural ambiguity, or "the 'sharp character' who, like the sixteenth-century picaroon of Spanish literature, survives and triumphs by his wits in a place where it is felt that all eminence is arrived at by crookedness" (Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* 69). It is this aspect of the society of Trinidad that Naipaul tries to capture in Ganesh.

We can see that Naipaul in his first phase does not share the perspective of vernacular cosmopolitanism, which starts from the premise of diversity and signals the increasingly hybrid, lived, post-multicultural and undifferentiated transformations as outcomes of diasporic cultural mixing and indeterminacy. He does not celebrate the creative possibility of heterogeneity or the liberating aspect of contradiction and inconsistency as Salman Rushdie does.[7] Eriksen reminds us:

> The differences between Rushdie's and Naipaul's biographies must be
> emphasized. While Naipaul's background is that of the struggling lower middle
> class in semi-rural Trinidad, Rushdie was a middle-class boy who went to
> public school in England. Naipaul's scepticism towards contemporary
> celebrations of mixing and hybridity is obviously influenced by his own class
> experience as a boy from the periphery, whose highest aim in life consisted in

> being recognized by the metropolitans. Rushdie could allow himself to take
>
> this acceptance for granted. To Naipaul, celebrations of hybridity must seem a
>
> bit like the late 1960s student left's flirtation with symbols of poverty seemed
>
> to Chairman Mao (he was outraged at their outward shabbiness), as a luxury to
>
> be afforded only by the leisured class. (225)

Naipaul views cultural hybridity as a violation: cultural dislocation has no compensation and there is no gain to balance the loss. As Shalini Puri observes, "Naipaul alludes to—and adheres to—the notion of distinct races with distinct cultural assumptions and behavioral characteristics" (174). Naipaul's early novels are examples of hybridity that affirms the centre of power, adopts the cannon and mimicks the hegemonic style.

Compared with Trinidadians' hybridisation of local cultures and traditions, what annoys Naipaul more is their appropriation of Western cultural norms that clearly cannot be their own. Unfortunately, it is a typical, dangerous characteristic of cosmopolitanism in Trinidad in his view. He writes in *The Middle Passage*:

> If curiosity is a characteristic of the cosmopolitan, the cosmopolitanism on
>
> which Trinidad prides itself is fraudulent. In the immigrant colonial society,
>
> with no standards of its own, subjected for years to the second-rate in
>
> newspapers, radio and cinema, minds are rigidly closed; and Trinidadians of all
>
> races and classes are remaking themselves in the image of the Hollywood B-
>
> man. This is the full meaning of modernity in Trinidad. (56)

Naipaul understands cosmopolitan curiosity as openness to the agency and cultural expression of others. It resembles Amanda Anderson's summary of the cosmopolitan potential of modern curiosity with her notion of "the cultivation of dialogical openness" (143), which refers to the interest in a different culture to the point of allowing its precepts to become partly responsible for the creation of one's own identity. In the "borrowed culture" (Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* 64) of Trinidad, an artificially created society made up of transplanted peoples,

however, people have to judge themselves and each other by standards that appear to be created far away. The inferiority of their own culture determines that their creation of a sense of self only involves the piecing together of more powerful foreign cultural materials. In Naipaul's opinion, it is mainly because "they take pleasure in their American modernity" that "for this bastardization Trinidadians are as much to blame as anyone" (*The Middle Passage* 67). As Trinidadians' openness to other cultures intends to be selective, Trinidad's cosmopolitanism is equated with total assimilation to a more dominant culture (particularly American capitalist culture).

In *Miguel Street*, it is not the mother country that forms people's expectation or touches off their fantasies as much as America with its GIs, movies and songs that promote strong images of masculinity, power and wealth. Admiration for America is the latest craze, and everyone tries to emulate American mannerisms. The theme that people are reduced into clumsy mimic men in their succumbing to the specious American charm is present since the first sketch "Bogart". The boy narrator first explains how Bogart, whose real name remains unknown, gets his name: "I don't know if you remember the year the film *Casablanca* was made. That was the year when Bogart's fame spread like fire through Port of Spain and hundreds of young men began adopting the hardboiled Bogartian attitude. " (1) Miguel Street's Bogart takes his attitudes and gestures from his Hollywood namesake who evokes a distant world of romance. He even has a picture of Lauren Bacall in his room. He is "quite the most popular man in the street", although he does virtually nothing—he has never worked, "never laughed audibly", and "never told a story" (2). For Naipaul, style as a mode of knowledge designates a consciousness of ontological paralysis and a lack of social referent; in Miguel Street, the dominance of style carries its own resonance.

One day, Bogart begins one of his perennial, but sudden, absences. After his first disappearance, the boy narrator says: "It was as if Bogart had never come to Miguel Street. And after all Bogart had been living in the street only four years or so." (3) The lack of a

definitive relationship between Bogart and his environment is reinforced by his lack of history—"he had always remained a man of mystery" (4). It is only the increasingly rigid embodiment of Bogartian gestures that holds his position in the social field and thus the historical itself. In this way, Naipaul associates Bogart's uncertain absences for months with the fact that upon his return, he has completed the process of Americanisation, which compensates his diminished origins. Displaced subjectivity and the lack of traditions are evident in Bogart. After his first return to the street, he tells the men that after working as a cowboy on the Rupununi, he moves to Georgetown and sets up "the best brothel in the town" (5). "It was a high-class place," he says, "no bums. Judges and doctors and big shot civil servants" (5). Bogart's inferior class position as a bum himself is compensated by a shared masculinity: his story links the traditional American icon of the regenerative male (the cowboy) with power over women as commodity. This impresses everyone, and even brings out the Rex Harrison in Hat—"'Damn it, Bogart,' Hat said, and he became very like Rex Harrison" (5).

Bogart takes on more and more Bogartian gestures that project a mysterious, tough stance. He disappears and returns to the street even more Bogart-like than before. As the boy narrator comments, "Bogart became the Bogart of the films" (5). Revelling in his persona, Bogart sports a hat and an eternal cigarette, and lounges with his hands in his pockets. The success of his imitation emboldens him to drink, gamble and swear. His accent becomes "pure American" (6), and he gives away more and more money to the street kids for them to buy gum and chocolate. Bogart's gestures and speech are obviously those of a man who assumes a false persona and looks at himself and the world through other people's eyes.

After the police come to arrest Bogart, who remains in character, for bigamy, we learn that the impulse behind his mimicry is a very human one. Childless because married to a barren woman in Tunapuna, without a profession, Bogart is a nonentity. Feeling "sad and small" (7), he leaves Miguel Street, impregnates a girl in Caroni, and is forced into marriage

with her. Yet, as the glamour of his repute as "the most feared man in the street" (6) persists, he abandons the girl and returns to Miguel Street "to be a man, among we man" (7) to assert his virility by convincing the street gang that his absences are occasioned by acts of daredevilry. This demonstrates what Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz term as "the need for group belonging" by one who "feels deficient in personal identity" (58). Naipaul unmasks the impotence of the hardboiled Bogartian attitude by positioning it as an effect of Trinidadian underdevelopment, the exact opposite of the patriarchal, productive male promised by American modernity.

Nevertheless, Naipaul narrates the true story of the real Bogart in "Prologue to an Autobiography" (1982). We learn that the character in *Miguel Street* is modelled on a real man connected with Naipaul's mother's family. Unlike his fictional doppelganger who pretends to be a tailor, the real Bogart is an actual tailor ready to back up his tailoring sign with suits. He occasionally goes away to work on a ship, but to Naipaul as a child, such disappearances and returns only speak to "sensual fulfilment in another land and another language" (79). Whereas the real Bogart migrates to Venezuela, Naipaul admits that he "had cruelly made him [Bogart] a bigamist" (79). Moreover, Naipaul chooses not to write the stories of two of Bogart's real-life brothers in the book: one of them becomes a teacher and the other one a well-known cricketer. The omission is for the purpose of criticising Trinidad, "a place where the stories were never stories of success but of failure: brilliant men, scholarship winners, who had died young, gone mad, or taken to drink; cricketers of promise whose careers had been ruined by disagreements with the authorities" (*The Middle Passage* 35). This best exemplifies that Naipaul's hysteria leads him to present a distorted view of Trinidad, rather than a truthful one, in his early works.

While Naipaul recreates the non-cosmopolitan experience in Trinidad with his conviction that cosmopolitanism is fraudulent or even absent from the society, his standard against which the experience is judged can be revealed at the same time. It is the old

cosmopolitanism bound up with the European Enlightenment and associated with "urban sophistication, learning, privilege, high status, and a quasi-aristocratic intellectuality and aestheticism" (Marx 19). As I have argued in Introduction, the aesthetic, intellectual orientation in the European context has been associated with cosmopolitanism since the Enlightenment, during which the social stock of intellectuals like the literati was lionised to the extreme, and the exclusive elite were separated from the mass of the people. For Lorraine Daston, the ideal of the Republic of Letters, encouraged by the cosmopolitan ethos, was essentially "an elite confraternity distinguished by merit in literature, scholarship, and science" (374), because it promoted and was revived by "the new social status of intellectuals and their consequent plunge into a gregarious sociality, both with one another and with their betters" (370).

In his early novels, Naipaul always privileges what he calls "a feeling for lettering" and "ambitions connected with the printed word" ("Prologue to an Autobiography" 69). As Peggy Nightingale points out, Man-man in *Miguel Street* is "the first of Naipaul's characters to take refuge in the written word" (19). Like Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* who takes pleasure in the feel of the whole infrastructure of the writing and printing of books (ink, paper and typography), Man-man is "hypnotized by the word, particularly the written word" (32). He would spend a whole day writing a single word like "school" and "cricket" on the pavement. As Nightingale argues, "shaping a word is for him an attempt to order experience, to give a form and with it meaning to institutions like school and cricket which are essential parts of experience in Trinidad." (19) If Man-man is a kind of failed writer, the narrator of *Miguel Street* is "the first of Naipaul's writer narrators, using writing as a way of exploring the sensibility of his society" (Nightingale 19-20). Like Mr Biswas, the narrator begins his career as a sign-writer at an early age. Bogart, who makes a pretence of making a living by tailoring, first pays him some money to write a sign—"TAILOR AND CUTTER/ Suits made to Order/ Popular and Competitive Prices" (2). This fancy for lettering is not purely fictional.

In "Prologue to an Autobiography", Naipaul declares that it was his idea to paint a sign-board for the real Bogart's shop. He recalls: "I thought it looked genuine, a real sign. I was amazed; it was the first sign-board I had ever done." (57) In *Miguel Street*, from this first venture, the boy narrator goes on to do another project for Popo. At first, Popo wants to announce himself as an architect, but he is not sure about the spelling of the word. The boy narrator manages to dissuade Popo and finishes the sign as "BUILDER AND CONTRACTOR/ Carpenter/ And Cabinet-Maker" (9). He proudly signs his name "as sign-writer" (9) in the bottom right-hand corner. Though Popo likes standing up in front of the sign, he has "a little panic" (9) when people come to inquire. "The carpenter fellow?" He would say. "He don't live here again." (9) Whereas Nightingale sees in these two episodes the boy narrator's concern with "the physical shape of words rather than the concepts they express" (20), I would stress that sign-writing becomes the narrative's ironic means of codifying Bogart's and Popo's claims to artisanship, upon which the boy narrator has already cast his doubt.

Then the question is: why can the narrator achieve as a writer looking at Miguel Street with a critical eye while other characters cannot? Or, what makes him different? The fact that he voluntarily leaves for London (the centre of the British Empire) to receive a college education with a Trinidadian government scholarship should be borne in mind. Looking back on Miguel Street that he has left behind for good, he uses standard English, which is in a sharp contrast with the Creole English spoken by other characters, including his own boyhood self. Christian Mair observes: "Sociolinguistically speaking, the distribution of 'high' and 'low' varieties in *Miguel Street* is the same as in society at large, and the narrator's mastery of the 'high' variety, the literary standard, becomes an outward sign of his personal growth— away from the narrow provincial surroundings of his boyhood." (149) Mair concludes: "In his attitudes and values, the narrator is clearly no longer part of the world he describes." (149) Fawzia Mustafa emphasises that in *Miguel Street*, standard English is presented as the domain

of the educated and the powerful, and therefore foreign to the underclass world of the novel's other characters:

> The standard English of the narrative interludes or transitions is constantly challenged by the dialect and distinct syntax of a more local Trinidadian English so that eventually, as the narrator grows older, and his English becomes more standard, the level of his 'education' becomes the measure of both his distance from the world of the street and the *means* whereby the street community is given its 'coherence.' (34)

In *Miguel Street*, the ability to read and write standard English is an indicator of the narrator's high status as a reward of his elitist, Western education, which confers a privilege upon him only to distance and alienate himself further from his native community.

Naipaul casts his narrator's physical and ideological detachment from the world of Miguel Street and Trinidad as an achievement. At the end of the novel, before his departure from home, the narrator kicks over the brass jar of milk set by his mother in the middle of the wide gateway. His mother cries: "I know I not going to ever see you in Miguel Street again." (175) Knowing that he is "destined to be gone for good" (175), he walks "briskly" towards the plane that takes him to England, "not looking back, looking only at my shadow before me, a dancing dwarf on the tarmac" (176). He may have already had a premonition of "a break with the past and facing an alien world without the support of family, friends and excuses" (King 25). Detachment may be an unavoidable sacrifice while escaping from the limited and limiting Trinidad in which the narrator can never prosper, but is a worthy one compared with what he attains while entering a satisfactory culture and society that almost guarantees his personal achievements. He writes the book, and becomes a world traveller. Remarking Morgan's house on fire, he alludes to his experience: "I have travelled in many countries since, but I have seen nothing to beat the fireworks show in Morgan's house that night." (69) Timothy Weiss says: "The narrator as adult is worldly-wise; he can contrast Miguel Street

with other places he has traveled to." (*On the Margins* 24) Regarding his intellectuality and transnational mobility, the narrator of *Miguel Street* becomes an elite cosmopolitan in the traditional sense—the one with the capacity and resources necessary to travel and to absorb other cultures by individual actions. This shows that Naipaul conceives cosmopolitanism as an embodied aspect of character.

By the time Naipaul was writing *Miguel Street*, he had not begun his world travels yet. The image of the elite cosmopolitan evoked by his narrator epitomises his personal yearning—a colonial-turning-to-cosmopolitan who has a perfect grasp of other cultures, but can return to the First World in the crossing-over or translating at any time. For Naipaul, the self-fashioning of the elite cosmopolitan, with excessive knowledge of cultures and social conventions, is a critical forerunner to the actual production of texts and books. This has something to do with his "settled ambition" (Naipaul, "Reading and Writing, a Personal Account" 3) to be a writer. Drawn to the world of books as a way of transcending his society, Naipaul invented himself as a writer as a boy, long before he had discovered his talent for actual writing. He has carefully selected his reading materials, and compiled a personal anthology of writers and texts during his Trinidadian school years. He writes in "Reading and Writing, a Personal Account":

> There were some of the pieces that were in that anthology before I was twelve:
> some of the speeches in *Julius Caesar*; scattered pages from the early chapters
> of *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*; the Perseus story
> from *The Heroes* by Charles Kingsley; some pages from *The Mill on the Floss*;
> a romantic Malay tale of love and running away and death by Joseph Conrad;
> one or two of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*; stories by O. Henry and
> Maupassant; a cynical page or two, about the Ganges and a religious festival,
> from *Jesting Pilate* by Aldous Huxley; something in the same vein from
> *Hindoo Holiday* by J. R. Ackerley; some pages by Somerset Maugham.

>> …
>>
>> I wished to be a writer. But together with the wish there had come the
>> knowledge that the literature that had given me the wish came from another
>> world, far away from our own. (5-6)

This reflects what Belinda Edmondson calls "aspirational status"—"what people read reflects not just who they are (in terms of socioeconomic status) but who they *wish* to be" (10). It echoes Bruce King's remark that "Naipaul when younger wanted to be a 'sophisticated' writer, a world traveller, like Somerset Maugham, writing about exotic foreign places and the shocking ways of the rich" (98). The awe for books, readings and intellectuals, inscribed from Naipaul's early writing, is fundamental, since his wish to be a writer is "less a true ambition than a form of self-esteem, a dream of release, *an idea of nobility* [my emphasis]" (Naipaul, "Reading and Writing, a Personal Account" 12). This reflects Naipaul's desire for higher status as an elite cosmopolitan in the metropolis.

The problem is: as Naipaul himself escapes from Trinidad into the world of metropolitan letters, he regards this as the only claim to legitimacy, or the only successful mode of becoming a cosmopolitan. In his early novels, many of his characters follow his fantasy escape. For example, at the end of *The Mystic Masseur*, the boy narrator escapes to an English university, and Ganesh, who participates in local politics by successfully publicising his fame as a reader, writer and publisher, becomes G. R. Muir, Esq., M. B. E., "impeccably dressed, coming out of a first-class carriage" (208) from London. In *A House for Mr Biswas*, Mr Biswas, obsessed with letters and words, has an ambition to become a serious writer in Trinidad. Though he fails, the novel ends on a hopeful note—his son Anand (a fictional doppelganger of Naipaul) wins a scholarship to Oxford and never returns. Espousing the metropolitan ideological position in his early phase, Naipaul has not had the awareness that "his translation from the Caribbean to the metropolis is among the posthumous benefits conferred by the old principle of Imperial Preference" (Miller 111-2). It is thus difficult for

him to overcome the physical and ideological distance between the elite intellectuals and plebeian people (especially immigrants). The opening sentence of *The Middle Passage* is very telling in this matter. Naipaul tells the reader that "I was glad I was travelling first class to the West Indies", out of the physical range of "a crowd of immigrant-type West Indians" (1). Angus Richmond comments: "Only a fool would fail to notice that this is an ideological stand." (131) In *Miguel Street*, emigration (no matter whether legal or illegal, voluntary or involuntary) is a common and available way of escape in people's mind. When Bogart leaves the street for the first time, the immediate reaction of Hat is that "he gone Venezuela" (3). After Morgan burns down his house with his fireworks, rumour goes that he ends up in either Venezuela or Colombia. The narrator remarks: "They said all sorts of things, but the people of Miguel Street were always romancers." (69) This is an implication that emigration is only a fantasy by hopeless people of finding a new life elsewhere. For Edward who does successfully emigrate, his route is different from the elitist one of the narrator. After his wife runs away with an American, Edward goes to Aruba or Caracao working for a big Dutch oil company. Because Edward is not supported by education or professional skill like the narrator, only emigration within the Third World is realistically applicable. What is worse is that even emigration to another Third World country sometimes fails. Bolo, deceived again and again by Trinidadian newspapers, makes a secret plan to go to Venezuela. To his disappointment and resentment, the smuggler, who takes his money, just circles around Trinidad and puts him down in a swamp a few miles from La Brea, claiming that they have reached Venezuela. Hat soothes Bolo: "Bolo, you don't know how luck you is. Some of these people woulda kill you and throw you overboard, man. They say they don't like getting into trouble with the Venezuelan police. Is illegal going over to Venezuela, you know." (137) Trinidad's social changes are treated amusingly, without the analytical perspective found in Naipaul's later novels. Naipaul's mockery of his characters who attempt to escape and flee from disillusionment and poverty is condescending, rather than sympathetic.

It is now safe to say that what Naipaul yearns for in his first phase is elitist cosmopolitanism, a kind of cosmopolitanism from above. Whereas vernacular cosmopolitanism points to active practice for it encompasses subaltern subjectivities, Naipaul sees cosmopolitanism as a managerial design, a project in which everyone is readily categorised and defined, or in Walter Mignolo's words, "being participated" (744). It is evident in Naipaul's early consideration that only the elite intellectuals of the Anglo-American artistic coterie can access and hold a cosmopolitan world-view. This is a reinstatement of all-too familiar structures of privilege from the Enlightenment. He tends to emphasise that only the support of a satisfactory culture and society based on shared understandings of abstract ideals (democracy, dignity, justice, reason, rights and other "universal" principles) can impose cosmopolitanism, as an elitist mode of being, downward from on high. The closest that he has come to expressing something like a vision of such a culture and society is his talk given at the Manhattan Institute of New York, in which he presents the western civilisation as "Our Universal Civilization" always in creative process. It gives him "the prompting and the idea of the literary vocation" and "the means to fulfil that prompting", and enables him to "make that journey from the periphery to the centre" (506-7). In this universal civilisation, it is "necessary to be an individual and responsible", and "people developed vocations, and were stirred by ambition and achievement, and believed in perfectibility" (514-5). Likewise, elitist cosmopolitanism in his view, moving downward to order the principle of action and participation of individuals, gives perfection not only to individuals themselves, but also to the progress of society. Clearly, Naipaul's notion of elitist cosmopolitanism does not involve the actions of subaltern individuals who operate and struggle primarily alone.

Naipaul's yearning for elitist cosmopolitanism that is only available to privileged individuals reflects his colonial mentality. A frequent critique of the elitist perspective of the old cosmopolitanism associated with the Enlightenment is that it inevitably reflects influences

of social location and cultural tradition. Under the identity of the elite cosmopolitan lurks the recognisable presupposition of the authority of the Western experience or the model derived from that experience. For Craig Calhoun, there appears little doubt that elitist cosmopolitanism is "a discourse centred in a Western view of the world" ("The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers" 90). Peter van der Veer sees it as the Western, profoundly colonial "engagement with the rest of the world" ("Colonial Cosmopolitanism" 166). Hall expresses his mixed feelings about elitist cosmopolitanism because of its close ties with the Enlightenment. It "represented itself as 'universal'", he states, "but that universality inevitably became harnessed back to the West. 'We' were the enlightened ones, whose civilizational duty and burden was to enlighten everybody else—the unenlightened, the non-cosmopolitan" (349). Elite cosmopolitans, most of whom share a common educational background with Western history and literature, carry a heavy cultural baggage full of similar fantasies and prejudices, an existing image of the world. The legacies of colonialism and imperialism lead them to develop imperialist, rather than cosmopolitan, outlooks and views. Naipaul, who receives colonial education that has long been recognised as a vital institution of colonial power in upholding the traditional values and visions of the mother country, is an enlightened subject. In his first phase, his identification and perspective are largely Eurocentric, and his judgement of Miguel Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and the Caribbean in relation to English culture is unavoidably prejudicial. His preoccupation with elitist cosmopolitanism becomes, to borrow an expression from Caroline Rooney, "a matter of being assimilated into a culture which posits itself as superior" (145). The young Naipaul best illustrates Timothy Brennan's statement that the term "cosmopolitanism" is usually used in literary history to designate the uneasy "embrace of European artistic influences by writers who wish to mould the local culture in Europe's image" (*Salman Rushdie and the Third World* 32).

In this chapter, I read *Miguel Street* from the perspective of vernacular cosmopolitanism. It presents Trinidad's racial heterogeneity and cultural mixedness in a relatively benign manner. Miguel Street is a multi-racial community, in which its residents show openness to all forms of otherness. People's cultural outreach that normalises difference in their everyday life constructs a public sphere of cosmopolitan neighbourliness, featuring kindness to both community members and other strangers.

However, in his first phase, Naipaul has not developed the awareness of seeing cosmopolitanism as a fundamentally heterogeneous phenomenon, irreducible to a single definition. In *Miguel Street*, he perversely vetoes the Trinidadian version of cosmopolitanism at the local, micro level. He uses a double narrator in retrospection to convey his cultural critique of the picaroon society. The major thematic concern of the novel is to satirise the social reality of Trinidad as an entrapment, which forces people to wear the mask of eccentricity to hide their failures. Naipaul does not blame—he even shows sympathy for—his characters; what he emphasises is how limiting the environment in an impoverished colonial society can be. As individuals can never achieve anything in it, Naipaul sees their struggle as meaningless, even ridiculous. The cosmopolitan neighbourliness of Miguel Street is interpreted as a synonym of people's sympathy for each other's tragic life.

Naipaul hysterically presents a distorted view of Trinidad, rather than a truthful one. His criterion of judgement is Eurocentric. In his view, since an individual cannot prosper without a supporting society, escape is the only way out. Drawing on his own elitist path, he regards literacy by education as the only claim to legitimacy. What Naipaul yearns for is elitist cosmopolitanism in the Enlightenment intellectual context, which obviously is absent from Trinidad in his view. In his colonial fantasy, only a satisfactory culture and society far away can enable individuals to make personal achievements and to become elite cosmopolitans. So a defining element in his early novels is his characters' romantic desire for the idealised metropolis, the centre to which all things from the colony gravitate. Such a belief

in cosmopolitanism from above, which is limited in scope, reflects his colonial mentality.

Only later in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* and *The Mimic Men* does Naipaul begin to

realise the fraudulence and infeasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism in the seemingly

satisfactory culture and society, about which he used to fantasise.

Notes

[1] For example, Sami Zubaida identifies the more multifarious provenance and spread of cosmopolitanism by alluding to the Arab and Muslim cultures in "Middle Eastern Experiences of Cosmopolitanism", and Jonathan Parry focuses on "demotic cosmopolitanism" of public sector industrial workers in Bhilai in "Cosmopolitan Values in a Central Indian Steel Town".

[2] Similarly, Walter Mignolo calls for critical cosmopolitanism that "comprises project located in the exteriority and issuing forth from the colonial difference" (724) in "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis". Nyers suggests that "abject cosmopolitanism describes not a *problematic cosmopolitanism for the abject*, but rather a *problematising cosmopolitanism of the abject*" (1075) in "Abject Cosmopolitanism".

[3] This pair of binaries has certain colonial implications. The binaries surrounding cosmopolitanism are not far removed from the disjuncture between the "civilised" and "barbaric" upon which colonialism is predicated. As Nyers notes in "Abject Cosmopolitanism", "all too often it is an 'us'—Westerners, Europeans, humanitarians, etc— who are the cosmopolitans, the champions of justice, human rights, and world order; leaving 'them'—the Third Worlders, the global poor, the 'wretched of the earth'—as the abject, the societies and subjects in crisis, the failed states in need of intervention" (1073).

[4] Hiebert makes it clear that his perspective bears some resemblance to Hall's concept of vernacular cosmopolitanism (212).

[5] In "Cosmopolitan Traditions", Karen Fog Olwig argues that openness to strangers, emerging from migration, has been a vital Caribbean tradition of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

[6] As late as 1961, PNM posters described Eric Williams as Moses II. In *Black Intellectuals Come to Power*, Ivar Oxaal says that both lower- and middle-class blacks saw Williams as "a Messiah come to lead the black children into the Promised Land" (100-1).

[7] In "'Belonging' in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary", Craig Calhoun says that like Bhahba's call for hybridity, Rushdie's argument for the importance of impurity, mixture and novelty rather than appeals to purity exemplifies vernacular cosmopolitanism (540).

Chapter II

The Colonial Fantasy Shattered: The Fraudulence of Elitist Cosmopolitanism in *Mr Stone and*

the Knights Companion and *The Mimic Men*

In the first phase of his writing career that consists of four novels written in the 1950s, Naipaul judges the insularity of the Trinidadian milieu by the standard of elitist cosmopolitanism, for which he yearns. His manner is amused and satiric. In 1960, Naipaul was provided with a commission by the government of Trinidad to travel in the former slave colonies of the Caribbean and the old Spanish Main. Though still "a colonial" on his travels, he was enabled to "see, as from a distance, what one's own community might have looked like", to "have a new vision of what one had been born into", and to "have an intimation of a sequence of historical events going far back" (Naipaul, "Reading and Writing, a Personal Account" 16-7). The travel has made it possible for him to view his personal emptiness and homelessness against the wider context of the larger world. *The Middle Passage* published after the 1960 travel proves to be an important stimulus for the further development of Naipaul's art: his earlier preoccupations of a rather personal nature begin to give way to an apprehension of broader cultural and historical horizons, and to a more serious appraisal of cultural distinctions and similarities, cultural influences and interactions.

In the 1960s, Naipaul produced two novels. *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* is his only novel set entirely in England, dealing with exclusively English characters. Though *The Mimic Men* shuttles back and forth between the Caribbean and England, Naipaul says in an interview with Ewart Rouse that it is "more about London than anything else" (10). Its tripartite structure illustrates this point clearly. Though the narrator/protagonist Ralph Singh's reminiscence on his childhood and political career in Isabella (a fictional Caribbean island resembling Trinidad) in the second and third sections are the longest, he begins the book with his first experience in London as a college student and ends it with his final exile there when all the separate strands of his life are brought into a concluding perspective. Examining the

two novels in this chapter, I focus on how Naipaul constructs the metropolis. I would argue that in his second phase, Naipaul's colonial fantasy that elitist cosmopolitanism only exists and is accessible to the privileged individuals in the metropolis is severely shattered.

The metropolis is conventionally viewed as the site where cosmopolitanism is created and located, and its economic and cultural dominance becomes central to cosmopolitan imagination. Mike Featherstone, for instance, points out that "cosmopolitan dispositions are closely associated with cities", more importantly with Euro-American metropolises such as London, Paris and New York, since they have long been "the sites for markets and the mixing of people, commodities, ideas and cultures" and "the homes of a wide range of intellectual and artistic social and cultural movements and institutions" (1-2). Gary Bridge posits: "It is in the burgeoning transnational neighbourhoods of the global cities that the best prospects of cosmopolitanism are to be found: cosmopolitanism as a form of reason lived daily in the city of difference." (158) Leonie Sandercock argues for "a *cosmopolitan urbanism* as a normative project that is a necessary response to the empirical reality of multicultural cities" (39). Mica Nava further suggests that cosmopolitanism is "an ordinary everyday aspect of metropolitan UK culture" (134). The typical cultural form of the metropolis is cosmopolitanism understood as an exposure to a mix of many kinds of cultural and social frames of reference, thanks to which the individual has the simultaneous experience of both proximity and distance.

However, metropolitan-centrism in cosmopolitan theory—the elitist, normative conception that metropolitan culture is a prerequisite for cosmopolitan imagination—has been challenged and refuted. On the one hand, cosmopolitanism identified with the metropolis can quite easily become synonymous with a kind of urban sophistication, and cosmopolitan possibilities are classed, gendered or racialised. Tim Butler describes how White, middle-class gentrifiers in north London appropriate a discourse of belonging that accentuates and celebrates diversity, whilst their lives in practice are characterised by social exclusivity. The cosmopolitan is thus presented as White and middle-class, standing out in a multiethnic

metropolis because of their whiteness. Butler concludes that despite their "long rhetorical flushes in favour of multiculturalism and diversity" (2469), White and middle-class residents of north London regard ethnic minorities as "a kind of social wallpaper" (2484). They do not engage with the dialectical or transformative process that a cosmopolitan ethos entails; instead, their "metropolitan habitus—of feelings, attitudes and beliefs" transforms the metropolis into "the natural habitat for a section of the new (urban-seeking) middle classes" (2484). On the other hand, the cosmopolitan experience of individuals in the metropolis (especially immigrants) cannot be equated with the cosmopolitan nature of the city. Daniel Hiebert draws on his study of transnational communities in Vancouver to illustrate that transnational connections and exchanges in themselves do not necessarily foster cosmopolitanism amongst labour migrants or elite professionals. Hiebert even contends: "In fact, in certain cases transnational lifestyles may actually inhibit cosmopolitanism." (210) Ranji Devadason reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of the extent to which London engenders cosmopolitan values amongst its established minorities and ethnic majority. Devadason reminds us:

> Cosmopolitanism is not something which can be inferred from diversity in itself; it requires transformation in "structures of meaning" both for the individual and the political community. In the contemporary era, when the ethnic diversity and social mixture of cities are intensifying, it is important to consider how different residents and social groups experience the city. (2960)

When he was still at work on *A House for Mr Biswas*, Naipaul narrated how he experienced London in his 1958 essay "London". He emphasises his sense of being continually excluded from London, because "everything goes on behind closed doors" (14) there. His engagement with London seems spoiled by his inability to penetrate beneath its surfaces and to discover the substance of London life. Naipaul admits that his knowledge of London and of England remains profoundly unsatisfactory: "I feel I know so little about

England. I have met many people but I know them only in official attitudes—the drink, the interview, the meal. I have a few friends. But this gives me only a superficial knowledge of the country, and in order to write fiction it is necessary to know so much: we are not all brothers under the skin." (14) Describing several nights out at the restaurant, nightclub and theatre, which end with him lonely, looking for a bus, haunted by a sense of disappointment and waste, he complains about the depressing "privacy of the big city" and the lack of "communal pleasures" (15). He confesses:

> But after eight years here I find I have, without effort, achieved the Buddhist ideal of non-attachment. I am never disturbed by national or international issues. I do not sign petitions. I do not vote. I do not march. And I never cease to feel that this lack of interest is all wrong. I want to be involved, to be touched even by some of the prevailing anger. (16)

Naipaul concludes the essay by recording the "barrenness" of his life in London and the impact it might have on his imaginative faculties: "Unless I am able to refresh myself by travel—to Trinidad, to India—I fear that living here will eventually lead to my own sterility; and I may have to look for another job." (16)

Mr Stone and the Knights Companion shows that Naipaul tries to register his self-consciously peripheral engagement with the metropolis and sense of being defrauded by and displaced from its substance. At first glance, Naipaul's earlier characters in the steaming, chaotic Trinidad would be literally unimaginable in Mr Stone's cool, ordered world of middle-class London respectability. For the boy narrator of *Miguel Street*, for Ganesh and for Mr Biswas, London and England epitomise civility and order, the fountainhead of all inspirations. Mr Stone possesses all that is desirable to them—a house of his own in suburban London, a steady and respectable job, and a pension after his retirement. Whereas the image of the house in *A House for Mr Biswas* is frequently used to convey the disorder, haphazardness and transience of Trinidad, Mr Stone's house is a much more substantial affair,

a regulated space that happily records a long history of occupancy. Mr Stone takes pleasure "in the slow decay of his own house, the time-created shabbiness of its interiors, the hard polish of old grime on the lower areas of the hall wallpaper, feeling it right that objects like houses should age with their owners and carry marks of their habitation" (22). His well-ordered life, upon which he reflects with some frequency, is a source of satisfaction:

> Mr Stone liked to think in numbers. He liked to think, 'I have been with Excal for thirty years.' He liked to think, 'I have been living in this house for twenty-four years.' He liked to think of the steady rise of his salary, since he had gone into industry, to its present £1,000 a year; and he liked to think that by earning this sum he was in the top five per cent of the country's wage-earners (he had read this fact somewhere, possibly in the *Evening Standard*). He liked to think he had known Tomlinson for forty-four years. (18)

Mr Stone enjoys his rootedness in the milieu of middle-class London suburbia. The financial and social security into which he was born is supported by and contributes to a highly stable society with a set of dependable norms and rights, a coherent culture, and an accessible history. His surname "Stone" perfectly suggests the "solidity, continuity and flow" (20) not only of his own ready-made identities and positions, but also of the grandeur of London and England.

Nevertheless, Naipaul presents Mr Stone's life as insular and dull, "possibly the price of order in a well-regulated society" (Mustafa 91), to acknowledge and unravel his assumption of the "perfection" of the metropolis. At the opening of the novel, Mr Stone is introduced as an old bachelor with few attachments. He only briefly visits his widowed sister Olive who provides him with female attention after their mother died when he was seventeen, while fixing his "distaste" (28) for Olive's daughter Gwen. He has a friend with whom he "annually renewed" (10) the friendship, a housekeeper with whom he barely communicates, and a few colleagues with whom he has "only an office relationship" (47). He even refuses to

"bid anyone on it [the street where Mr Stone lives] good-day for fear that such greeting might be imposed on him in perpetuity, leading to heaven knows what intimacy" (36). Mr Stone purely cultivates and is strict with his never-rushed habitual actions, which border on dreary routines. He always shaves the right side of his face first, and puts on his right shoe first. He reads the first page and no more of the *Telegraph* at breakfast, and buys two evening newspapers from a particular vendor at Victoria to read at leisure after dinner, not on the train. He does not even savour the news, for he instantly forgets most of what he reads. He treats it "as part of a *newspaper*, something which day by day produced itself for his benefit during this after-dinner period, an insulation against the world out of which it arose" (20). In the office, he recognises the days of the week from the regular changing of his assistant's business outfits. At home, his housekeeper Miss Millington shops every Thursday morning and goes to the cinema every Thursday afternoon. The only thing that intrudes upon his settled existence is his neighbour's cat, a creature of free will. Its daily "obscene scuttlings and dredgings and buryings" (6) on his flowerbeds require frequent reparations. Armed with cat pepper, Mr Stone is at war with it. "Stone", in fact, symbolises the rigid, ossified order. Finding himself living a drab life in London, Naipaul makes Mr Stone's insular, ritualistic existence a story that "we have come to associate with the English provinces after the war, when English writing turned inward from larger issues and was fascinated by the manners, morals and lives of the drab rather than the sophisticated and cosmopolitan" (King 62).

The shadow of the war still hangs implicitly over England in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*. Mr Stone realises that "he was surrounded by women—Margaret, Grace, Olive, Gwen, Miss Millington—and that these women all lived in a world of dead or absent men" (131). If the Knights Companion scheme that he creates for the welfare of the retired is "for the protection of the impotent male" (84), the post-war Empire in terminal decline is just like that male. It is not only substantially ruined by the ravages of the war, but also ultimately transformed by its immigrant communities as a result of exultant decolonisation movements

around the world. Toward the end of the first chapter of the novel, Mr Stone goes to visit Margaret Springer whom he is soon to marry:

> Mrs Springer lived in Earl's Court. A disreputable, overcrowded area Mr Stone had always thought it, and he thought no better of it now. The entrance to the Underground station was filthy; in a street across the road a meeting of the British National Party was in progress, a man shouting himself hoarse from the back of a van. Behind neon lights and streaming glass windows the new-style coffee houses were packed; and the streets were full of young people in art-student dress and foreigners of every colour. (32)

The visible ethnic pluralism and cultural admixture incubating in post-war London are indicators of cosmopolitanism as "a socio-cultural condition" (Vertovec and Cohen 9) linked to large-scale migration, which facilitates a multiplication of cultural contacts and social exchanges bringing the English closer to other physically and psychologically distant cultures. John McLeod interprets Naipaul's depiction of Earl's Court as "the shattered colonial fantasy of decorum and the disturbing muddle of contemporary, cosmopolitan London—where the certainties of English place are challenged by the spontaneous and contingent transformations of subaltern renegotiations of space" (71). In other words, elements that used to be marginal or peripheral with respect to those dominant ones now express the formation of a cosmopolitan culture in the metropolis. Naipaul may not celebrate the positive dimension of cosmopolitanism that politically and socially challenges ethnocentric or national narratives, but it would be over-simplistic to interpret it as his nostalgic longing for a homogeneous, pure English culture. He points up here that the opening-up of the political-social space of the metropolis cannot necessarily cultivate an open, cosmopolitan vision among the metropolitan locals who, in fear of the death of their local and national identities, shun others. As Craig Calhoun has argued, "while cities can be places of creative disorder, jumbling together ethnicities, classes, and political projects, most people claim only familiar parts of the

diversity on offer" ("The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers" 104). Mr Stone

obviously carries a general dislike of the coloured immigrants infiltrating into Earl's Court, "a

symbol of a nascent multiracial society beginning to impinge on the homogeneous, older

England Mr. Stone represents" (Thieme, "Naipaul's English Fable" 499-500). The new,

heterogeneous urban populace contributes to making London's physicality that does not

necessarily square with, even betrays, the promise of English order, which guarantees

continuity between England's past and present, its colonial possessions overseas and

metropolitan heart. To Mr Stone, cosmopolitanism assumes a threatening dissolution of his

identity. Mr Stone is only reassured to find out that the private hotel off the Earl's Court Road

where Margaret lives appears to be a bastion against incursions—"a small typewritten

'Europeans Only' card below the bell proclaimed it a refuge of respectability and calm" (32).

The ignorance of the surrounding demographic change[1] and smooth retreat into white

supremacy (an almost fascist proclamation of national and racial exclusiveness) articulate the

irony of the author, himself a coloured immigrant depressed by the impenetrability of the

metropolis.

In *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, Naipaul adopts an overall cool voice with

detached irony to criticise the conservatism and cultural remoteness of Englishness and the

insularity of the English. Englishness becomes self-possessed, even ignorant, since the

English, who have difficulty in getting over "the barrier of self-consciousness" (Naipaul,

"London" 15) in their activities and responses, withdraw into themselves rather than look

outwards. This is most evident in their contacts with other cultures through travel. As I have

argued in Introduction of this thesis, a common feature of the old cosmopolitanism is the

lionisation of travel as the key to self-enhancement and the cultivation of a sophisticated,

worldly outlook. In the words of Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska, travel implies "a

journey of metamorphosis and transformation, in which the self is changed by the experience

of alterity encountered in a dialectic of difference" (206). Calhoun points out that

"cosmopolitanism has considerable rhetorical advantage", because "it seems hard not to want to be a 'citizen of the world'" ("The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers" 89) when exposed to other geographies and cultures through travel.

Nonetheless, Naipaul suggests that travel does not necessarily lead to a greater level of cosmopolitanism, which is supposed to be marked by an open stance toward difference and an inclusive consciousness. Ulf Hannerz points out that "we often use the term 'cosmopolitan' rather loosely, to describe just about anybody who moves about in the world" ("Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture" 238). Rosabeth Moss Kanter also warns us that "it is not travel that defines cosmopolitans—some widely traveled people remain hopelessly parochial—it [cosmopolitanism] is mind-set" (23). In contrast to Naipaul's earlier Trinidadian characters who have no chance to travel at home or abroad,[2] the English characters in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* enjoy the privilege conferred by the dominant power of their country to travel anywhere of their free will, even in a luxurious style. But unfortunately, they do not move mentally or psychologically. We are told that "Mr Stone preferred to spend his holidays in England. He had thought after the war that he would go abroad. In 1948 he went to Ireland; but the most enjoyable part of that holiday was the journey from Southampton to Cobh in a luxurious, rationing-free American liner" (60). When Mr Stone describes this journey to Gwen, Olive comments that it is "too self-conscious and namby-pamby" (148). Travelling in Paris, Mr Stone does not display an appreciation for the French cultural milieu into which he is inserted, and all that is left in his head is unpleasant memory:

> A fortnight in Paris two years later had been, after the first moment of pleasure
> at being in the celebrated city, a tedious torment. He had dutifully gone
> sightseeing and had been considerably fatigued; he often wondered afterwards
> why he followed the guidebook so slavishly and went to places as dreary as the
> Pantheon and the Invalides. He had sat in the cafes, but hated the coffee, and to

sit idling in an unfamiliar place was not pleasant, and the cups of coffee were

so small. He had tried aperitifs but had decided they were a waste of time and

money. He was very lonely; his pocket was playfully picked by an Algerian,

who warned him to be more careful in future; everything was hideously

expensive; the incessant cries from men and women of *le service, monsieur, le*

service! had given him a new view of the French, who he had thought a

frivolous, fun-loving people made a little sad by the war. And for the last two

days he was afflicted by a type of dysentery which made it impossible for him

to take anything more solid than mineral water. (60-1)

Similarly, Grace Tomlinson's trip to Paris, "not surprisingly", gives her "little pleasure" (130).

In a metropolis like Paris where cosmopolitanism is ideally marked by people's appreciation

for cultural diversities and exchanges, the close-mindedness of Mr Stone and Grace is

accentuated. Naipaul implicitly makes the point in the novel that the metropolis does not

necessarily foster cosmopolitanism, that people's open, cosmopolitan outlook should be the

key to therapy for parochialism. Failing to shed the bias of their own home culture, Naipaul's

English characters in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* are really what Hannerz calls

"anti-cosmopolitans…people who are locals at heart" ("Cosmopolitans and Locals in World

Culture" 241), who see and judge anything in other parts of the world as a kind of evil

contamination through their local, parochial lens. Lacking the deeper curiosity about the

world outside the self, they become the counter-image of Naipaul, who alludes to an

enjoyment of "the experience of travel and human discovery for its own sake" as it

"broadened my world view; it showed me a changing world, and took me out of my own

colonial shell" (*Finding the Centre* 11-2). Naipaul implies that insularity strangles the

English's capacity to look at the world with the possibility of cultural diversity. Their

unwillingness to pay a necessary cost to get involved with other European cultures shows

their hidden assumption about the ranking of cultures, in which only English culture stands at

the top of the pyramid. It is unimaginable how they would rank other marginal, subaltern cultures. Whereas the Trinidadian insularity in Naipaul's first four novels is about inferiority and self-abasement under the intimidation of colonialism, the English insularity presented in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* is about self-consciousness and arrogance.

At the same time, Naipaul is aware of the prevalent, dangerous homogenising power of the English insular parochialism intolerant of difference. In *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, a Jamaican family move into Mr Stone's neighbourhood. Their intrusion into the territory of middle-class London suburbia (like the presence of foreigners in Earl's Court) indicates that the metropolis begins to look like a mosaic. Yet, it is not very cosmopolitan. The Jamaican family try to demonstrate their "ferocious respectability" by receiving "no negro callers", accepting "no negro lodgers for the room they let", keeping a budgerigar, and having their house repainted by English decorators until "its gleaming black-pointed red brick was like a reproach to the rest of the street" (140). Here, Naipaul presents the hegemonic nature of the metropolitan culture. As long as England's cultural universalisation supports its insularity, coloured immigrants can only be acceptable if they spontaneously respect the particular sense of Englishness, acting, dressing, eating and talking as native-born Britons. They are expected to mimick their allotted roles, to become the mirror of a homogeneous England, and to enter and uphold the English order. Their particular histories (cultural, ethnic, racial and religious) have to be negated. Assimilation is their only way to avoid exclusion.

While the immigrants want to assimilate into English society by imitation, the middle- and lower-class English succumb to the mimicry of upper-class respectability in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*. The English characters for the most part are shallow mimics, lacking a genuine self to be falsified by posturing. Their role-playing comments on the insincerity and fraudulence built into the fabric of the metropolis. At the beginning of the novel, Margaret Springer is introduced by her unsuitably stagy dressing at the Tomlinsons' annual Christmas dinner party—"Mrs Springer was over fifty, striking in her garnets, a dark red dress of

watered silk, cut low, the skirt draped, and a well-preserved gold-embroidered Kashmir shawl" (12). She establishes herself as a wit in an obvious display of theatricality—"her manner went contrary to her dress; it was not a masculinity she attempted, so much as an arch and studied unfemininity. Her deep voice recalled that of a celebrated actress, as did her delivery" (12). Her statement that "the only flower I care about…is the cauliflower" (13) greatly impresses Mr Stone. In the gift of the phrase, Margaret remarkably resembles Sandra in *The Mimic Men*. So Mr Stone does have some reason to expect that Margaret will provide him some intellectual and social stimulation. Upon marrying Mr Stone, however, Margaret discards her party manner and attaches "the greatest importance to her functions as a woman and a wife" (46), until she appears to possess no true character of her own. She encourages Mr Stone to keep up and reinforce the empty routines of his former life: he becomes the Master to Miss Millington, and is cajoled into taking up gardening as a hobby. She also encourages him to undertake socially acceptable formalities, such as hosting a dinner party "which to a large extent recreated one of the Tomlinsons' dinner parties" (47). The dull, meaningless dinner party at which wine is sipped like liqueur, women play music and sing, and men clown and jest is a pathetic imitation of the lifestyle of the upper class. Gwen entertains the guests by reciting a scene from *The Importance of Being Earnest* "in imitation of the celebrated actress, for the female" (51), and the court scene from *The Merchant of Venice*, speaking rhetoric "as though it were everyday speech" (52). Later, after Mr Stone's social eminence grows with his Knights Companion scheme, Margaret adjusts once again "as easily as she had always taken on new roles" (87). She becomes the self-effacing wife "who encouraged and inspired her husband in his work" (87). To keep up with her new status as a socialite, she collects a formal wardrobe, talks about making changes in the house or moving to the country after Mr Stone's retirement, and envisages dinner parties spreading out on the lawn in summer. Margaret's mimicry of the elite illustrates one of Naipaul's central themes— human beings always imitate their social superiors. The English are no exception as well. This

echoes Naipaul's comment that "England is the least-educated country in Europe…it's so many people here, living at a very high material level, who have allowed their minds to go slack. The English bourgeoisie are mimicking their former roles. They express their soul by the color of their walls. They put dreadful pictures on their walls and *stagger* them" (Michener 64).

The upper-class respectability represented by the Tomlinsons and mimicked by Margaret and Gwen is actually superficial and fraudulent, because it assumes that access and openness to difference is only signalled by the consumption of cultural diversity and the attendant sense of sophistication. In the novel, Naipaul criticises this kind of elitist model of cosmopolitanism. The most successful cultural element in the spread of cosmopolitan ideals is what Calhoun calls "consumerist cosmopolitanism" ("The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers" 105), enacted through the consumption of exotic cultures. Elaborating on the cosmopolitan construct, Douglas B. Holt highlights cosmopolitanism as a style of consumption that creates and maintains status distinctions between high-cultural-capital and low-cultural-capital consumers. The high-cultural-capital consumers are said to possess a cosmopolitan habitus—a nexus of internalised and naturalised predispositions or proclivities toward cosmopolitan consumption practices that reflect a history of class-based socialisation. Holt's informants from "the upper tier of the middle-class—the highly educated, urbane New Class" (338), for example, "express Cosmopolitan tastes even when they are not participating in the activities that they deem essential for that lifestyle" (339). They gravitate toward exotic food and music, and are highly dissatisfied with the parochial cultural offerings of their own community. To the contrary, those informants possessing lower levels of cultural capital are not favourably inclined toward cultural fare deemed exotic; instead, they remain content in their local cultural milieu, and their consumption patterns are governed by strong preferences for the familiar and traditional. Ghassan Hage portrays cosmopolites as the elite pursuing refined consumption. Just as important as his/her urban(e) nature, the cosmopolite is a class

figure and a white person, capable of consuming and appreciating "high quality" commodities and cultures, including "ethnic cultures" (201).

But Calhoun cautions us: "Food, tourism, music, literature, and clothes are all easy faces of cosmopolitanism. They are indeed broadening, literally after a fashion, but they are not hard tests for the relationship between local solidarity and international civil society." ("The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers" 105) Hannerz gives a similar warning:

> Cosmopolitanism has two faces. In its aesthetic and intellectual dimensions, it can become a kind of consumer cosmopolitanism, a cosmopolitanism with a happy face, enjoying new cuisines, new musics, new literatures. Political cosmopolitanism is often a cosmopolitanism with a worried face, trying to come to grips with very large problems. We may suspect that it is entirely possible for people to be pleased with their experiences and their personal levels of connoisseurship in regard to cultural diversity without having any strong sense of civic and humanitarian responsibility transcending national borders. ("Cosmopolitanism" 71)

Both Calhoun and Hannerz recognise that consumerist cosmopolitanism evades cultural openness to and ethical, political responsibility for others. Pnina Werbner summarises the elitist nature of cosmopolitanism as a consumer orientation as follows:

> A cosmopolitan is, historically, an elect member of his or her society, familiar with the languages and high cultural products of European and American literature, art and music, able to converse about world history, philosophy, classical music, ballet, theatre and human rights. Culturally, such a cosmopolitan is an aesthetic consumer, living an elegant lifestyle, a connoisseur of good wine, *haute cuisine* and *haute couture*; a fashionable person with immaculate table manners, a sophisticated conversationalist and *bon vivant*, *au fait* with the latest novels and world current affairs. In other

words, the 'true' cosmopolitan—unlike many anthropologists—is a man or
woman of the world, but of a very specific world—that of Western, and
especially European, elites. He or she is usually also a collector of world art.
("The Cosmopolitan Encounter" 50)

Elitist cosmopolitanism becomes a conglomeration of self-interested individuals whose
primary aim is the personal satisfaction of an insatiable consumption of consumer goods.

In *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, elitist cosmopolitanism is revealed as the
superficial aestheticisation and stylisation of metropolitan life through the depiction of the
Tomlinsons' Christmas dinner parties. As Tony Tomlinson is "a figure of some importance in
his local council" who never jokes about "his territorial decoration" such as his initial
followed by the letters T.D., the couple's Christmas dinner parties increase "in severity and
grandeur with the years" (10-1) to match their superior status as the social elite. The dinner
party at the beginning of novel shows that the Tomlinsons narrowly and superficially view
their access to and consumption of exotic cultures in their everyday life as an indicator of
their status-defining cosmopolitan orientation and aesthetics. The tarnished relics of an
Austrian holiday that they turn into their "traditional decorations" (15) appear to demonstrate
the sophistication of their cultural interest. But the dinner party arrangements (candles, carved
wood, manger scenes and pine trees), the floral decorations, and Grace Tomlinson's corsage
that gain admiration from the guests turn out to be the result of a brief course at the Constance
Spry school in St John's Wood. When the conversation among the guests comes around to the
subject of films lately seen, the narrating voice informs the reader in a slightly ironic tone that
Tony raises the discussion "to a more suitable intellectual level", which is "acknowledged as
his prerogative and duty" (13). Tony then announces that he watches *Rififi* "on the
recommendation of a person of importance" (13). This elitist cosmopolitan aesthetics seems
to differentiate him from the middle- and lower-class (for instance, Miss Millington who goes
to the cinema to the cheap show for pensioners), but it is revealed as only posturing. He tries

hard to attract his audience by "losing nothing of his suffering appearance, looking at none of them, fixing his eyes on some point in space as though drawing thoughts and words out of that point" (13-4), whereas all the comment that he can produce is the repetition of "extraordinary" and "no dialogue". This scene discloses Tony's lack of the intellectual ability that a real elite cosmopolitan possesses. The Tomlinsons imbricate conspicuous signifiers of their identity as elite cosmopolitans through the display of luxury. Their expenditure of resources and cursory consumption of cultures do not commit to a genuine cosmopolitan attitude or outlook. It is a fraudulent deployment of cosmopolitanism.

While the Tomlinsons' seemingly elitist cosmopolitan aesthetics and consumption are self-deceptive, the young PRO Whymper in the novel, "a man without a family, someone who belonged only to the city" (109), is a trickster, adopting superficial cosmopolitan attitude and taste to conceal his xenophobia toward immigrants and to achieve social superiority. The urban deceit that Whymper embodies is identified by his house, furniture and food. His undistinguished terrace house with no garden is in Kilburn, but its location on the side of the High Road gives him a respectable Hampstead telephone number. He lives on the ground floor, renting out both the basement and other floors. His front room, decorated with two "perfunctorily modern" armchairs, a bullfighting poster, a jumbled bookcase of paperbacks, old newspapers and copies of *Esquire*, *Time* and *The Spectator*, and "a neat shelf of green Penguins" (110), projects the image of urban sophistication. Inviting the Stones to dinner, Whymper displays his cosmopolitan consumption practice by serving them "cold sliced beef below a thick layer of finely chipped lettuce, cabbage, carrots, capsicums and garlic, all raw" with olive oil, Polish black bread that he thinks "ten times as good as our cotton wool" (110-1), Greek retsina, biscuits with brie and camembert, and Turkish coffee. Ironically, he sniffs at the food in his plate "with mock disgust" and asks desperately for tomato ketchup, complaining: "Those dirty foreigners, eating all this garlic and grease." (111) Later, Whymper's posturing cosmopolitan taste is further exposed by his illiberal attitude to race. He

is driven into fury by "the sight of black men on the London streets" and spends the whole of one lunch-time walk "loudly counting" (114) those whom he sees. Nevertheless, when Mr Stone quarrels with and insults a typist of Polish origin in the office in public, Whymper the xenophobe gives an exaggeratedly righteous performance defending the typist and criticising Mr Stone. Mr Stone cannot even believe Whymper is "the man who during those lunchtime walks had spoken with so much feeling about 'foreigners cluttering up the place'" (128). Whymper's hypocritical adoption of an open, cosmopolitan attitude covers up his quintessential rejection of foreigners and wins him the advantage needed in the job market. At the end of the novel, Whymper takes all the credit for Mr Stone's original creation of the Knights Companion scheme to get a top executive position of publicity director in another company. Karl Miller comments that Naipaul "takes pleasure in the deals and treasons of Mr. Stone's circle, and makes of it a sort of sooty, strangulated, boring Miguel Street, with its own fragmented, none-too-organic community life" (123).

In consideration of Whymper's stealing of the fruit of Mr Stone's mental labour, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* can be read as an allegory about "the fate of art in a consumer society" (Thieme, "Naipaul's English Fable" 503). Approaching the end of his career and life, Mr Stone examines the decay and death in his surroundings with an increasing sense of alarm. He experiences "a sense of waste and futility and despair" (18), as he realises that each passing day is a marker of "the running out of his life" (20) and rituals are no stay against death. Apprehending with fear his slide into retirement, he conceives the Knights Companion scheme. The articulation of the scheme is meaningful: it is the only way that Mr Stone can protest against the enervation of old age, ward off the oblivion and humiliation of the anonymity of death, and perpetuate himself, through his creative impulse in his waning years. In the novel, Naipaul pays close attention to the process of composition. Mr Stone is portrayed as an artist whose creation proceeds from deeply felt emotion, without any game-playing in the creative process or its artistic product. He experiences "the anxious joy of

someone who fears that his creation may yet in some way elude him" (72). He works with exhilaration and "passion" (82) night after night in his study, and "fatigue never came to him" (73). When the writing is completed, he feels "exhausted, sad and empty" (74). The period of composition becomes an extended moment of stasis, as art becomes a stay against change. As a result, the writing demonstrates "perfection and inevitability" (73). When the Knights Companion scheme receives Sir Harry's approval, Mr Stone feels elated—"around him the world was awakening to green and sun. The tree in the school grounds at the back became flecked, then brushed, with green. And this was no mere measuring of time. He was at one with the tree, for with it he developed from day to day, and every day there were new and inspiring things to do" (79).

But soon, Whymper is appointed to lick the Knights Companion scheme (Mr Stone's idea of a welfare programme) into shape. As a guest says at one of the Tomlinsons' Christmas dinner party, "an idea is one thing, but the packaging is another…Packaging. Everybody's interested in packaging these days" (123). In the consumer society of England, the consumption of cultural experiences is heavily mediated. Whymper, who makes "something out of nothing" and takes pride in "his ability to refine" (80), is an expert at this. He provides the propaganda, the "ridiculous and cheap" (84) but popular embellishments that promise commercial success. The Knights Companion scheme rapidly develops under Whymper's management into a public relations venture, with labels that paradoxically stress "youth and age, dignity and good companionship" (86). The modern-day knights (the active pensioners of the company) are issued appointment scrolls with the Excal seal and badges with figures of armoured and visored knights, when they journey to visit the inactive pensioners with token gifts of chocolates or flowers. At Christmas, the company hosts a Round Table dinner, during which the sword "Excalibur" is presented to the Knight Companion of the year. The commercial exploitation and cultural consumption of the Arthurian romance are complete. Realising that Whymper is "riding to success on his back", Mr Stone conjures up "a picture of

almost biblical pitifulness: a lusty, fat-cheeked young man on the back of someone very old, very thin, in rags, supporting his feebleness on a staff" (108), to contrast the Aeneas-Anchises myth. Raging impotently against Whymper's successful commercialisation of the Knights Companion scheme, Mr Stone admits his insignificance and expendability. He plummets to his emotional nadir, convinced only of the fraudulence and futility of his artistic endeavour:

> Nothing that was pure ought to be exposed. And now he saw that in that project of the Knights Companion which had contributed so much to his restlessness, the only pure moments, the only true moments were those he had spent in the study, writing out of a feeling whose depth he realized only as he wrote. What he had written was a faint and artificial rendering of that emotion, and the scheme as the Unit had practised it was but a shadow of that shadow. All passion had disappeared. It had taken incidents like the Prisoner of Muswell Hill to remind him, concerned only with administration and success, of the emotion that had gone before. All that he had done, and even the anguish he was feeling now, was a betrayal of that good emotion. All action, all creation was a betrayal of feeling and truth. And in the process of this betrayal his world had come tumbling about him. There remained to him nothing to which he could anchor himself. (149)

In despair, Mr Stone perceives creation as distortion: between the original conception and its expression there is the shadow of commercial artifice. The contradictions between a consumer society and its commercialisation of artistic products are explored in the novel.

Mr Stone and the Knights Companion dramatises "the fraudulence of the big city, the irrelevance of its apparent order" (White 133). In the novel, Naipaul for the first time confronts and questions his long-held colonial fantasy about reassuring metropolitan purpose and desirable elitist cosmopolitanism seen from afar. His depiction of the dull middle-class London life challenges metropolitan-centrism in elitist cosmopolitanism. In his observation,

the multiplication of cultural contacts and exchanges facilitated in the metropolis does not necessarily mean that the metropolitan locals exposed to it are pre-disposed toward cosmopolitan openness. The English, for example, in fear of the death of their local and national identities, shun immigrants, even in the face of the inevitable break-up of their homogeneous social world. Lacking the deeper curiosity about other cultures, they view the world through a local, parochial lens, even in their privileged travel that elitist cosmopolitanism assumes to cultivate a sophisticated, worldly outlook. Using a detached, ironic tone, he criticises the English insularity as self-conscious and ignorant, and implies that people's open, cosmopolitan vision should be the key to cosmopolitanism. He discusses the allure and danger of elitist cosmopolitanism: consumption of various cultural products and luxurious stylisation of metropolitan life are superficially understood as signals of access and openness to differences. From the perspective of an immigrant, Naipaul points out that under such a consumer orientation may actually lurk xenophobia toward others; from the perspective of a responsible realist writer, he expresses his concern with the contradictions between a consumer society and its commercialisation of artistic products.

In *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, London is steeped in illusions and shams all of its own, and the metropolitan respectability becomes a mere facade. Naipaul's sense of disillusionment can be best illustrated by the dream that he has not long after his return to London from his second journey to India recounted at the end of *An Area of Darkness*:

> An oblong of stiff new cloth lay before me, and I had the knowledge that if only out of this I could cut a smaller oblong of specific measurements, a specific section of this cloth, then the cloth would begin to unravel of itself, and the unravelling would spread from the cloth to the table to the house to all matter, *until the whole trick was undone*. Those were the words that were with me as I flattened the cloth and studied it for the clues which I knew existed, which I desired above everything else to find, but which I knew I never would.

(289-90)

An analogous sense of London and England as a trick pervades *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, and many of Naipaul's subsequent novels (for example, *The Mimic Men*, *A Bend in the River* and *The Enigma of Arrival*) are suspended between such a colonial dream of perfection and the knowledge of its fraudulence.

The Mimic Men reinforces Naipaul's shattered colonial fantasy of London and England, epitomes of European high culture and elitist cosmopolitanism. At the opening of the novel, during his first sojourn in London shortly after the war with all the compulsions and hopes driving him away from his native island of Isabella, Ralph Singh portrays his experience of all the insecurities and uncertainties as an immigrant. The Kensington boarding-house where he stays is owned by a Jewish landlord Mr Shylock, "the recipient each week of fifteen times three guineas, the possessor of a mistress and of suits made of cloth so fine I felt I could eat it" (3). These seem to speak of Mr Shylock's financial, sexual and social fulfilments in the metropolis. Ralph Singh even imagines Mr Shylock looking "distinguished, like a lawyer or businessman or politician" (3). Nonetheless, his admiration and aspiration are very quickly destroyed by the reality in England—the "secrecy and swiftness" (4) of Mr Shylock's death. Even snow that once embodied purity and perfection, order and civilisation for Ralph Singh becomes a threatening element. When he sees snow for the first time in his life, his feeling of expectation is coloured by the awareness of disillusionment, and his mood shifts from the ecstatic to the morbid. The selection of his observation emphasises the tensions:

> Snow. At last; my element. And these were flakes, the airiest crushed ice. More than crushed: shivered. But the greater enchantment was the light. Then I climbed up and up towards the skylight, stopping at each floor to look out at the street. The carpet stopped, the stairs ended in a narrow gallery. Above me was the skylight, below me the stair-well darkening as it deepened. The attic

door was ajar. I went in, and found myself in an empty room harsh with a dead-fluorescent light that seemed artificial. The room felt cold, exposed and abandoned. The boards were bare and gritty. A mattress on dusty sheets of newspapers; a worn blue flannelette spread; a rickety writing-table. No more. (4-5)

Seeing the attic where Mr Shylock used to live, Ralph Singh realises "an analogy between the wandering, displaced Aryan and the homeless Jew, both cosmopolitans rejected by the societies in which they attempt to settle" (King 78). Looking out from the attic, he sees "the thin lines of brown smoke rising from ugly chimneypots", and the plastered wall of houses next to the "wholly white", "tremendously braced and buttressed" (5) bombsite. There is a contrast between the beauty of the snow and the ugliness of the buildings and the bombsite. The tension of Ralph Singh's experience lies in the minute observation of the dinginess and shabbiness of the setting within which the perception and hope of absolute beauty occur. It predetermines his decisive failure in London later. He begins to question his irrelevance to the metropolis: "Yet what was I to do with so complete a beauty?" (5) He "felt all the magic of the city go away and had an intimation of the forlornness of the city and of the people who lived in it" (5). The mood of *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh's memoir, is thus established—the fusion of the moment of expected fulfilment and celebration with the knowledge of loss and desolation on both communal and individual levels.

Mr Shylock's boarding-house, also "called a private hotel" (3), ironically reminds the reader of the "Europeans Only" Earl's Court private hotel where Margaret stays in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, except that the boarding-house is a world of immigrants from different parts of the world. The christening party for the illegitimate child, mothered by the boarding-house's Maltese housekeeper Lieni and fathered by an Indian engineer, gives a clue about the "forlornness" of London and its inhabitants:

Other boarders came down. The girl from Kenya; her man friend, a blond,

vacant alcoholic incapable of extended speech and making up for this with a

fixed smile and gestures of great civility; the smiling, mute Burmese student;

the Jewish youth, tall and prophetic in black; the bespectacled young Cockney

who had as much trouble with his two Italian mistresses, according to Lieni, as

with the police; the Frenchman from Morocco who worked all day in his room,

kept to Moroccan temperature with a paraffin stove, translating full-length

American thrillers at speed—he did one or two a month. (13)

Here, a tableau of ethnic diversity is painted. The heterogeneity and intermixture of

immigrants with different cultural backgrounds instantly rise in visibility, suggesting a major

demographic shift in the post-war metropolis.[3]

Although Naipaul makes the hybrid experience in the historical context of

transnational migration the primary ground for the intermingling of cultures and identities, he

does not naively contend that mere coexistence of people of heterogeneous cultural, national,

religious or other identity formations guarantees the uptake or expression of cosmopolitan

openness. He is sceptical about people's cosmopolitan disposition—a conscious attempt to

become familiar and engaged with others, and to be receptive to cultural outputs of others.

Whereas *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* presents the insularity and prejudice of the

metropolitan society that eludes immigrants, *The Mimic Men* discusses from the perspective

of the immigrants how and why they restrain themselves from the mingling and fusion of the

cultures of others. Like the English characters in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, the

immigrants in London in *The Mimic Men* are not enthusiastic about experiencing joy or

stimulation through immersing themselves in cultural differences, either. There are only fear,

suspicion and exclusion in their engagement with others. This seems to be an irony—the

global migration has "contaminated" the larger world, while the immigrants themselves are

not in praise of cosmopolitan contamination. In the novel, at the christening party for Lieni's

baby, Lieni's Maltese friends "came in together and talked glumly in English and their own

language" (12). Among the disparate elements of the boarding-house, the Maltese, enjoying

immediate contacts with different cultures, encapsulate themselves in their territorial language

and culture. Ralph Singh observes: "Conversation, apart from that conducted by the Maltese

group, was not easy. We sat and waited for Lieni, whom we could hear in the kitchen." (13)

But Lieni is virtually left in despair: she and her baby are abandoned by the engineer who has

a wife and children in India. The abandonment ultimately undercuts and mocks the

christening of the hybrid baby, a seeking for official sanction. Compared to the Maltese who

do not step out of their ethnic clique, Ralph Singh seems more "cosmopolitan": he always

picks out the Continental girls (Norwegian, Swedish, French and German Swiss) in his sexual

encounters in London. However, his involvement is superficial. He confesses:

> Both of us adrift in London, the great city, I with my past, my own darkness,
>
> she no doubt with hers. Always at these moments the talk of the past, the
>
> landscapes, their familiar settings which I wished them to describe and then
>
> feared to hear about. I never wished even in imagination to enter their Norman
>
> farmhouse or their flats in Nassjo, pronounced Neshway, or their houses set
>
> atop the rocky fiords of geography books. I never wished to hear of the
>
> relationships that bound them to these settings, the pettiness by which they had
>
> already been imprisoned. I never wanted our darkness, our auras, to mingle.
>
> (24)

Like the Maltese, Ralph Singh refuses an open stance toward others as well. His random

interracial sexual liaisons, which show "his inability to be part of or to lose himself in

someone or some group beyond himself" (King 74), force upon him alienation, bewilderment

and corruption. He even secretly feels relieved when they fail. Ironically, among all his sexual

relationships, only his incestuous relationship with his Aunt Sally in Isabella brings him the

strongest sense of purity and security:

> I could not conceive of myself with a girl or a woman of another community or

> even of families like my own. Here for me was security, understanding, the
> relationship based on perfect knowledge, in which body of one flesh joined to
> body of the same flesh, and all external threat was diminished…There would
> be nothing again like this mutual acceptance, without words or declarations,
> without posturing or deceptions; and no flesh was to be as sweet as this, almost
> my own. (168)

What restrains Ralph Singh's cosmopolitan impulse is his inborn, enclosed Hindu system of racial and cultural purity alerting him to the potential danger of hybridity. This demonstrates Zlatko Skrbis' and Ian Woodward's finding that "globally-derived cosmopolitan openness is counterbalanced by various allegiances, anxieties and self-interests" (736). For Naipaul, as long as the immigrants lack cosmopolitan openness in their dealing with cultural diversity and otherness, the cosmopolitanism that they ostensibly epitomise in the form of hybridity cannot be a state of readiness searching for contrasts rather than uniformity.

In his confession of the anxious nature of his interracial sexual failures, Ralph Singh forms a new connection—his pursuit of sex and his disillusionment with London. His awareness of the social isolation within which he exists is evident:

> 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. (17)

As Peggy Nightingale observes, the god of the city that Ralph Singh searches for is "the god who would unite individuals in a common order" (100). Rather, he experiences London as a private nightmare of intensified alienation and loneliness:

Here was the city, the world. I waited for the flowering to come to me. The trams on the Embankment sparked blue. The river was edged and pierced with reflections of light, blue and red and yellow. Excitement! Its heart must have lain somewhere. 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 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. (18)

London—"the great city, centre of the world" (17), the symbol of colonial hope and promise—is shown as a scene of lost and abandoned individuals, lonely and helpless in distress. The physical greatness of the metropolis that has nothing to do with the colonials/immigrants only reminds them of their powerlessness. In John Clement Ball's words, the phantasmic metropolis that Ralph Singh experiences "highlights the dissolution of community into atomized individuals" and "dissolves individuals into nothingness" (145-6). Ralph Singh's feeling of rootless isolation is a common experience shared by the ethnically segregated immigrants: they are shunned by the host society, have no community to fall back on, and at the same time are afraid of stepping out of their home culture to get involved with others. Similarly, Naipaul writes about his early London life in *An Area of Darkness*: "Here I became no more than an inhabitant of a big city, robbed of loyalties, time passing, taking me away from what I was, thrown more and more into myself…All mythical lands faded, and in the big city I was confined to a smaller world than I had ever known. I became my flat, my desk, my name." (38) The dissociation between the metropolis and its immigrant population

illustrates Naipaul's shattered colonial fantasy that entering the idealised metropolis can guarantee the individual's personal achievements.

In *The Mimic Men*, the immigrants' forced status of being unattached in their two-dimensional metropolitan life provides an "advantage" for them: they can invent their identity as they wish. As Ralph Singh tells the reader, "there was no one to link my present with my past, no one to note my consistencies or inconsistencies. It was up to me to choose my character" (19). To compensate for their anonymity in the metropolis, the immigrants offer "simple versions of themselves" (13) by reference to upper-class, European respectability. For example, an Italian woman is addressed as the Countess; it is said that she is "'in society' in Naples; in Malta she had once been to a ball which Princess Elizabeth had attended" (10). Duminicu who steals "incessantly" (19) from shops and stores claims his noble birth in Malta. Ralph Singh himself chooses "the character that was easiest and most attractive": he becomes "the dandy, the extravagant colonial, indifferent to scholarship" (19). With the help and encouragement of Lieni who tries to fit the image of a "smart London girl" (10), he exudes an air of affluence typical of "the rich colonial" (20) with an affectation of casualness and style. He wears a cummerbund, frequents the dances held at the British Council where he frivolously exaggerates his dancer's movements and tries out his French with the Continental girls, takes a taxi to the college a couple of times a week, enjoys the admiration from his Isabellan fellows for his stylish fashion taste, and travels about England and the Continent. The dandy persona that Ralph Singh plays in his mimicry is, in the words of Steph Ceraso and Patricia Connolly, "a hip, British elegance—a feminized version of hegemonic masculinity" (114).

Ceraso and Connolly further point out that "Ralph's performance of upper-class British masculinity is blatantly strategic" (114). I would emphasise that it is more a cultural strategy of self-definition and self-maintenance. In Isabella since his childhood, Ralph Singh knows that "it was a disgrace to be poor" (89). Although he sympathises with his alienated

father (a poor schoolteacher), he prefers to lay claim to his mother's family. His mother's family are "among the richest in the island" and belong to a small group known as "Isabella millionaires" (89). They own the Bella Bella Bottling Works, and are the local bottlers of Coca-Cola; they sponsor two popular radio programmes, and organise schoolchildren to visit their factory, distributing free Coca-Colas at the end of these educational tours. From the perspective of consumerist cosmopolitanism, the roving commodities of a global brand like Coca-Cola are vehicles for defining one's place in the world. Jonathan Friedman has argued that "consumption within the bounds of the world system is always a consumption of identity, canalized by a negotiation between self-definition and the array of possibilities offered by the capitalist market" (314). Certain consumers are said to buy global brands to enhance their self-image as being cosmopolitan, modern and sophisticated. Friedman uses the consumption of coke imported from Holland in Brazzaville as an example—"to be someone or to express one's position is to display the imported can in the windshield of one's car. Distinction is not simply show, but is genuine 'cargo' which always comes from the outside, a source of wellbeing and fertility and a sign of power" (315). In *The Mimic Men*, the wealth and importance of his mother's family as "agents for external capitalists" (Nazareth 143) set an ideal pattern of elitism for Ralph Singh. He sees the association with Coca-Cola as a demonstration of privilege: "In Coca-Cola therefore I at an early age took an almost proprietorial interest. I welcomed gibes at its expense and liked to pretend they were aimed at me personally, though I could not find it in myself to go as far as Cecil, who offered to fight any boy who spoke disrespectfully of his family's product." (90) He is bothered on his tour to the factory of the Bella Bella Bottling Works by his "anonymous" (90) position. He envies Cecil, the heir to the family's business who "prowled around everywhere, Mister Cecil to everybody" (90). In London, he no longer has to live under Cecil's shadow. His intentional promotion of his lineage as the bottlers of Coca-Cola wins respect of his Isabellan fellows. It further wins Lieni's willingness to help to create his dandy persona, "a performance of certain

race and class norms (white, bourgeois)" (Cerason and Connolly 114). Without the help of the widely-known cultural image of Coca-Cola, Ralph Singh's dandy persona will not seem to be convincing or admitted in the metropolis.

As Margaret imitates her social superior (the Tomlinsons) in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, Ralph Singh is attracted to Sandra, a white, English schoolmate. Sandra's Englishness outweighs Ralph Singh's Indo-Caribbean identity; her elitist cosmopolitan taste outshines his dandy persona. Ralph Singh reflects on the austerity of post-war England: "The war had also left its mark. No one was more sensitive to anything that savoured of the luxurious; no one had a greater capacity for creating occasions. A bottle of wine was an occasion, a meal in a restaurant, a seat in the dress circle." (46) Sandra, however, displays her elitist cosmopolitan taste through consumption to rise above and to reject the crudeness of the lower class into which she was born. She has "a cruel eye for the common" and passes Ralph Singh "the word and the assessing skill" (46). She is "determined to fight her way up" (46) by conducting witty conversations, consuming expensive food, and diligently reading approved contemporary authors like George Bernard Shaw. She even expresses her wish to be either a nun or a king's mistress! Ralph Singh's attraction to her is grounded in her power and strength "to be free of the danger of that commonness which encircled her" (46). He confesses: "To me, drifting about the big city that had reduced me to futility, she was all that was positive. She showed how much could be extracted so easily from the city; she showed how easy occasions were." (46) Sandra's enjoyment of consumption satisfies Ralph Singh's colonial fantasy of how elitist cosmopolitanism should exist in the metropolis. He views his alliance with her elitist cosmopolitan taste as an alliance with the metropolitan attributes of ambition, spirit and an avid celebration of life. But the fact that Ralph Singh overlooks is: when Sandra asks him to marry her, she is just uncertain about her future in London. Having failed a qualifying examination, the route of escape from the commonness through education is no longer available to her. Returning to the colonial milieu of Isabella where she can enjoy

a privileged position with Ralph Singh the dandy, she at least can still play her persona as an elite cosmopolitan. The marriage has nothing to do with love or respect from the start.

If London is the testing ground for Ralph Singh's colonial fantasy, Isabella is the testing ground for Sandra's elitist cosmopolitanism. Upon the couple's return to Isabella, their mixed marriage is instantly shunned by Ralph Singh's maternal family. But they do not care, because they soon find it easy and comfortable to operate in a "neutral, fluid" group of people similar to themselves:

> The men were professional, young, mainly Indian, with a couple of local whites and coloured; they had all studied abroad and married abroad; on Isabella they were linked less by their background and professional standing than by their expatriate and fantastically cosmopolitan wives or girl friends. Americans, singly and in pairs, were an added element. It was a group to whom the island was a setting; its activities and interests were no more than they seemed. There were no complicating loyalties or depths; for everyone the past had been cut away. (57)

These self-labelled cosmopolitans build up what Marylouise Caldwell, Kristen Blackwell and Kirsty Tulloch term as "expatriate enclaves as desirable milieus" (136). Seeing themselves as superior to the Isabellan locals, they show little enthusiasm for immersing themselves in the local culture. They only accept experiences offered by their own social contacts and networks that retain an element of cosmopolitan elitism in opposition to the old world from which they feel they have escaped. As most informants of Caldwell, Blackwell and Tulloch are "happy to embrace the expatriate lifestyle, seeing it as a site for a desirable constellation of consumption choices" (136), the cosmopolitans in Isabella in *The Mimic Men* see their hedonistic consumption as a display of their elitist cosmopolitanism, which separates them from the locals. Lacking openness and adaptability to Isabella, they favour maintaining a global lifestyle and international consumption patterns, which can persist across environments. They

consume quantities of caviar and champagne "for the sake of the words alone" (58), have picnics on the beach, barbecue around the illuminated swimming-pool, or build a Scandinavian-style beach-house with a fireplace that might never be in use on the tropical island. This is in accord with the finding of Amir Grinstein and Luc Wathieu that cosmopolitans are "likely to seek global consumption patterns that they carry with them wherever they reside" (337), even though their persistence with their previous choices is "dysfunctional or suboptimal with respect to the new environment" (338). For Ralph Singh and Sandra, consumption interests and activities, via embodied preferences for familiar tastes in dressing, food, literature, music and interior décor and special and favourite possessions, provide an important means of constructing friendship networks and stabilising their everyday life. Ralph Singh observes that Sandra is "at her most avid and most appreciative" (58). Not caring about money, she savours brand names of French wines, shows off her fashion taste by wearing Indian sandals, London stockings and shoes together, and boasts the glamour of her London accent, her interest in literature and music. For the first time, Ralph Singh's feeling of anonymity disappears. He feels like a real elite cosmopolitan in a way he never has while living in the metropolis. He proclaims: "We celebrated our unexpected freedom; we celebrated the island and our knowledge, already growing ambiguous, of the world beyond; we celebrated our cosmopolitanism, which had more meaning here than it ever had in the halls of the British Council." (58)

Naipaul has revealed the fraudulence of elitist cosmopolitanism superficially understood as a consumer construct in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*; he further explores the infeasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism marked by hedonistic consumption in the Third World in *The Mimic Men*. The biggest problem of elitist cosmopolitanism is that it transplants the idealised Western cultural forces of authenticity to shape the non-Western society, defining it as a second-rate imitation without a close contact or involvement with the local milieu. Grinstein and Wathieu find in their study that the expected duration of sojourn is

a crucial moderator of cosmopolitan behaviours. In long-duration sojourns, cosmopolitans tend to retreat into a global lifestyle, as they "progressively come to view adjustments as a loss of their identity, a costly confinement away from their preferred international consumption patterns and global lifestyle standards and expectations" (338). With the passage of time, the elite cosmopolitans in Isabella in *The Mimic Men* more and more eschew the local people and culture in favour of the perceived global standards of excellence. Ralph Singh and Sandra grow apathetic to the beauty of Isabella after listening to their friends' pastoral odes to the West—the sunset in Mississippi, the snow in Prague, and the English Midland landscape at dusk. The sense of place and community—an assemblage of fragments and a shared fantasy—of the cosmopolitans in Isabella is forged through their sense of themselves as the elite, as travellers, as touched by the charm and magic of worldliness and metropolitan life. The power of the myth of the metropolitan centre further displaces the periphery. Later, when all the consumption activities in self-repetitions become boring, the elite cosmopolitans begin to complain about "the narrowness of island life: the absence of good conversation or proper society, the impossibility of going to the theatre or hearing a *good* symphony concert" (69). Thomas F. Halloran comments:

> The pastorals of the centre—the cosmopolitan voice that critiques Isabella's lack of centres of national and cultural arenas—exemplify the power of Western writing to influence the imagination of the colony and create a hierarchy of culture, whereby the colony defines itself on the colonizer's terms. This construction is particularly powerful because it is the colonized who lust for Western commodities and traditions. (124)

The cosmopolitans perennially complain about the cultural sterility of Isabella that cannot even provide them with satisfactory diversions. They even go to the airport to listen to the names of foreign cities, viewing it as an entertainment. This is because their elitist values are framed around the cultural specificity that only originates in the West. In the analysis of Craig

J. Thompson and Siok Kuan Tambyah, expatriate professionals incorporate cosmopolitanism as a system of ideological discourses into their idealised identity project. Thompson and Tambyah thus emphasise that the personalised uses of cosmopolitan discourses such as consumption are all situated within sociologically-defined class and status positions (217). Jan Nederveen Pieterse concludes: "The strange double life of conventional cosmopolitanism is that while claiming universality it reflects a regional, parochial order." (1252) In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul similarly places great emphasis on the historical legacy of colonial meanings and cultural ideals encoded in elitist cosmopolitanism and the ways that these ideological structures are subtly reproduced through the consumption of cultural diversity. The cosmopolitans in Isabella live in their own bubble, ignoring the contradiction between their celebration of cosmopolitanism that is supposedly about openness to other cultures and the distance that they intentionally keep from the local milieu. As they are completely embedded in the self representation of the Western power, the elitist cosmopolitanism that they represent is only featured by narcissism, cultural monotony and historical parochialism. Against the indefiniteness of Isabella, it becomes a form of appropriation whereby cultural difference is consumed, subsumed and ultimately dominated.

Sandra's ethnocentric, illiberal attitude toward race further exposes the fraudulence of elitist cosmopolitanism. When the cosmopolitan charm wanes in Isabella and commonness engulfs her again, Sandra begins to assert a higher view of herself through a contemptuous labelling of others, according to their national or racial background. She pejoratively calls her Swedish friend "common little Lapp", a Dutch girl who marries to a Surinamese "subkraut", and a Latvian girl "sub-Asiatic" (68); among all, Isabella is "the most inferior place in the world" full of "inferior expats" (71). She becomes the female version of Whymper in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*. Sandra's high self-concept does not go beyond the anxiety of pettiness, and easily dwindles into the most common form of racial snobbery, the same defensive measure adopted by her cosmopolitan friends to shore up the pride of their elitism

and privileges. Even Ralph Singh feels more and more uncomfortable with her "fixed judgements and attitudes" (68). In his eyes, when the metropolitan certainty that he seeks in Sandra is shown to be nothing more than emptiness and ennui, she becomes as vulnerable as himself in London; when the desperate self-defence behind her fake elitist cosmopolitanism becomes clear, she becomes superfluous. Sandra soon leaves Ralph Singh for Miami with her American lover. The quick failure of their marriage (a pattern of dependence and pretension) symbolises the infeasibility of the metropolitan, elitist model of cosmopolitanism in the Third World.

Despite the failure of his marriage, Ralph Singh becomes a successful real-estate man in Isabella. Inheriting his grandfather's derelict citrus plantation, he builds a highly sought-after housing development called Kripalville (soon corrupted to Crippleville). Whereas he cannot be "happy spending without earning" (19) due to his small income in London, he now as a young millionaire who "worked hard and played hard" (59) no longer has that concern. However, Ralph Singh gradually sees that within the unanchored group of his cosmopolitan friends, relationships are artificial, insincere and stained. He senses envy, jealousy and suspicion beneath the self-congratulatory surface of their hedonistic consumption; their elitist cosmopolitanism turns into a petty rivalry. When they crazily damage his newly-built Roman house, he drives to the ruins of a famous old slave plantation to calm down, immersing himself in the pain and rage of Isabella's history and reality. Later, at the time of writing the memoir when he is more concerned with his sense of self, he records his business success as a pure fact giving him no sense of achievement or satisfaction. He is aware that the outward prosperity is only a smoke-screen that hides his alienation from himself. He reminds his readers more than once that his prosperity is owed more to his "instinct" (61) or "intuition" (62) than true foresight in doing business. This is an implication that Ralph Singh, like Mr Stone, is alienated in a consumer society, in which "capitalist cosmopolitanism" in the form of overconsumption is "the dominant variant of cosmopolitanism" (Pieterse 1247).

Ralph Singh's business success leads him into the local politics for Isabella's independence. Unlike his cosmopolitan friends, he actually participates in the local milieu. But this involvement further dehumanises him, and eventually confirms his disillusionment with his colonial fantasy. Ralph Singh argues that politicians on the whole are hollow people clinging to some form of artificial power to create the illusion of success through manipulation:

> Politicians are people who truly *make something out of nothing* [my emphasis].
> They have few concrete gifts to offer. They are not engineers or artists or
> makers. They are manipulators; they offer themselves as manipulators. Having
> no gifts to offer, they seldom know what they seek. They might say they seek
> power. But their definition of power is vague and unreliable. Is power the
> chauffeured limousine with fine white linen on the seats, the men from the
> Special Branch outside the gates, the skilled and deferential servants? But this
> is only indulgence, which might be purchased by anyone at any time in a first-
> class hotel…The politician is more than a man with a cause, even when this
> cause is no more than self-advancement. (37)

Like Whymper in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, politicians only care about whether what they sell will be bought by common people. Whereas Whymper sells cultural products, politicians sell their creation of an illusion of their elitism through playacting. Both are about consumption. Ralph Singh observes that colonial politicians, in fear of losing the abstract power, push their bluff further in frenzy. In Isabella, colonial politicians are puppets manipulated through the Queen's representative, the Governor, numerous English expatriates who "virtually monopolized the administrative section of our civil service" (228), and higher technical experts on short-term contracts. They cannot stand on their own in the "fragmented, inorganic" society where real powers "come from the outside" (224); their unstable foundation rests with the metropolitan centre. Their utter powerlessness drives them away

from the poor people whom they claim to represent, but closer to "the richness of the world" suddenly revealed to them "in trips abroad at the invitation of foreign governments, in conferences in London, in the chauffeured Humbers and in the first-class hotels of half a dozen cities" (223). In their contact with the mother country, they are irresistibly drawn by the glamour of "the trappings of power" (229) in the same way that Ralph Singh used to be attracted to Sandra's elitist cosmopolitan orientation in the form of consumption. In fear that "the rich world so wonderfully open to them might at any moment be withdrawn", the colonial politicians try hard to "turn that airy power…into a reality" (223). Bribery, assets transferring overseas and political scheming run rampantly in Isabella. In a dream-like, hallucinatory tone, Ralph Singh recounts the corruption and impotency of the colonial politicians in Isabella's futile political sphere. Nevertheless, Ralph Singh himself refuses to go along with the squalid stream of the endemically corrupted. After his experience in London and his failed marriage with Sandra, he is aware of the naivety of his colonial fantasy. After his five-year political career, he voluntarily chooses to retire, when he is sacrificed during a difficult attempt to nationalise sugar-cane estates. Though disgraced, his withdrawal is somehow ennobling rather than irresponsible. Otherwise, Ralph Singh would have become another con-politician like Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur*.

The biggest development that Naipaul makes in *The Mimic Men* is that he for the first time reflects on the corrosive, damaging effect of colonial education on the sensibility of students, especially students like Ralph Singh and the colonial politicians who enter the elite strata of the society. Colonial education brings about escapism and fantasy, and leads them to hollow mimicry and a denial of their environment and of themselves. In his 1964 article "Jasmine", Naipaul criticises the built-in alienating effect of the formal practice of studying English literature: it divorces a reader from relating literature to real life and breeds experiential separation. English literature, he says, comes to him as "an alien mythology", and "books came from afar; they could offer only fantasy" (45-6). An important point in this

article is the students' inability to associate the word that they have read with the object that they have never seen. Literature's combined appeal rests with the fantasy that it provides for an imagination that only has the word as reference. Naipaul recalls that as a young colonial in Trinidad growing up reading English novels, he has developed the habit of imaginatively transposing the stories into a Trinidadian setting, thereby engaging in literature without the interference of knowing about England or its parochial, national concerns. The exposure to and familiarity with the reality subsequently gained by residence in England, nonetheless, has taken the deceptive colonial fantasy out of his readings in the English literary tradition, substituted by local knowledge instead. The article's final coda where Naipaul recounts an incident in British Guiana describes the moment when he learned the name of a flower (jasmine) that had remained nameless since his childhood. After his initial exhilaration, he concludes: "But the word and the flower had been separate in my mind for too long. They did not come together." (52)

Naipaul's comment on his own school-day response to literature is similar to Ralph Singh's. In *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh sees the incubation of his emptiness and ennui in the education that he has received at Isabella Imperial and in the environmental influence of his childhood and student days. The Western-style education is imitative, predisposing the students to daydream-like colonial fantasy. The students at Isabella Imperial learn of the varieties of Canadian apples, skiing in the Laurentians, and "*la circulation*, not circulation but *traffic*" (157) in Liege, instead of their own culture and history. The carefully-crafted colonial education evokes cultures and values of a faraway world, creating unrealistic myths that become the focus of their unfulfilled desire and fantasy. As Ralph Singh comments, studying English, Arithmetic, Reading and Geography and writing essays about visits to temperate-zone farms, they are prepared to be "natural impersonators" (144). Meanwhile, the real life on the island is suppressed for the ideal, cosmopolitan life of the metropolis that only the educated elite may have a chance to enjoy, through imposition of a British curriculum. For the

students, the world is split into two irreconcilable realms—the purely imaginary, conceptual

world of the First World and the local known, embarrassing society that acquires the sense of

a taboo. There is a distinct dichotomy in their life at school and outside of school. They

choose to withdraw into the private but unreal sphere of school life, banishing actual everyday

life. In doing so, they are further alienated and fragmented, as Ralph Singh combines fantasy

and reality together:

> In my imagination I saw my mother's mother leading her cow through a scene
>
> of pure pastoral: calendar pictures of English gardens superimposed on our
>
> Isabellan villages of mud and grass: village lanes on cool mornings, the ditches
>
> green and grassy, the water crystal, the front gardens of thatched huts bright
>
> with delicate flowers of every hue. She was as brightly coloured a storybook
>
> figure as her husband. (95)

With the aid of colonial education, Ralph Singh's intellect becomes fascinated with anything

from overseas. Quite ironically, he vividly imagines his ancestors as English villagers on the

basis of the colonial hierarchy of cultures: the beautiful pastoral is represented in literature

located exclusively in the metropolitan centre. Ralph Singh does not want to identify with his

ancestors who look "aboriginal and lost, at the end of the world" (93), but would prefer to

relate himself to a vision of the English countryside commonly recognised as more proper and

superior. His colonial fantasy is constructed according to the idealised formula of the West.

After years of such schizophrenic living, his mind becomes unable to distinguish between

reality and unreality. His first memory of school illustrates the extent of his colonial rupture.

Ralph Singh distinctly remembers having taken an apple to his teacher, even though it is

impossible in reality because Isabella has no apples. Yet, his memory insists on the apple. His

fragmented consciousness explains: "The editing is clearly at fault, but the edited version is

all I have." (97) Vivek Dhaershwar attributes Ralph Singh's puzzlement to the damaging

effect of colonial education in which the school is seen "as one of the apparatuses of colonial

power, as a site of subjectification" (75). Dhaershwar postulates that in the process of

subjectification, Ralph Singh's identity is "produced by the kind of asymmetrical power

implied in the substitution of the 'apple' for the 'orange'—the 'metropolitan' object/practice

for the colonial one" (75).

Through Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul reiterates the abstract quality of

colonial education that reinforces colonial fantasy. Through irrelevancy and derogation

filtering through colonial education, an imperialist worldview is created to dehumanise the

students as ontologically inferior. Unconscious of their pawn-like role in the whole process of

subjectification of the school, the students live double lives in disenfranchisement and

hypocritical pretension: the illusion and unrealism built by colonial education already tells

them not only what they are but also what they should be. Since adolescence, Ralph Singh's

restless fantasies and dichotomised worldview are redirected through European languages and

readings of idealised lands and landscapes elsewhere. Associated with and surrounded by the

rich (Deschampsneufs of French origin impressing everyone with his wealth, women leading

pilgrimages to Miami to shop, and men carousing at the Turf Club), Ralph Singh directs his

fantasy to a more elite, cosmopolitan level and mimicks the more privileged ones in the

Western consumer society. Recognising his "shipwreck" in Isabella, he tries to deny it

through escapism from reality into illusion. However, the knowledge of England's reality

gained by residence there as an immigrant bridges the experiential separation bred by his

colonial marginality and the knowledge of Isabella's reality acquired by involvement with the

elite cosmopolitans and participation in the local politics as a returning emigrant eventually

shatters his colonial fantasy. At the end of the novel, Ralph Singh is in the detached vacancy

of exile in a suburban London hotel. The exile brings not the glamour of the metropolis, but

the state of a man stripped of family, country and role in society, accepting banality and

commonness that used to drive him into despair in his first sojourn in London. The final

acceptance of exile brings an end to his previous judgement of the world by dreams and

illusions. He calmly acknowledges that he "has given up the Empire" (268) like a lady who

has lived in India, Kenya and Northern Rhodesia but ends up in the hotel alone. He starts a

new life from looking for drama in minute observations of the smallest things around him.

This habit, replacing the one of colonial fantasy, leads him to notice that the hotel is occupied

by people in a similar situation of homelessness—"we are people who for one reason or

another have withdrawn, from our respective countries, from the city where we find ourselves,

from our families. We have withdrawn from unnecessary responsibility and attachment. We

have simplified our lives" (269-70). He begins to have compassion for the shared human

condition of lonely exile—"it comforts me to think that in this city alone there must be

hundreds and thousands like ourselves" (270). He even feels "grateful" and "intolerably

moving" (270) for the inhabitants' emotion of honour and loyalty during the gathering at

Christmas in the hotel. This is totally different from Naipaul's depiction of the Tomlinsons'

Christmas parties in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*. Ralph Singh's retrospective eye in

the conclusion of the memoir that acknowledges the deflation of all his phantom fantasies

underlying all the lesser dreams of elitist cosmopolitanism is the opposite to the grim and

contemplative tone in which Naipaul describes Mr Shylock's Kensington boarding-house.

    The Mimic Men confirms Naipaul's shattered colonial fantasy of the metropolis and of

elitist cosmopolitanism. It reiterates and strengthens one theme of *Mr Stone and the Knights

Companion*—the perceptual, lived reality of the heterogeneity of immigrants and the

coexistence of their disparate cultures shatters and transforms the monolithic nature of the

English society. Although Naipaul makes transnational migration in the form of hybridity the

primary ground for the intermingling of cultures and identities, he does not naively contend

that mere coexistence of people of heterogeneous cultural, national, religious or other identity

formations in the metropolis guarantees the uptake or expression of cosmopolitan openness.

Probably because of his own immigrant experience, he is sceptical about the immigrants'

capability to float above the boundedness of their primordial communities and national

fantasies. Though he shows sympathy to the rootless isolation of the immigrants robbed of loyalties in the metropolis, he is more concerned about the necessity of and difficulty in cultivating cosmopolitan dispositions at a micro, individual level in people's everyday experiences. This signals Naipaul's reoriented perspective of viewing cosmopolitanism from below.

Naipaul further considers the fraudulence and infeasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism superficially understood as hedonistic consumption in the context of the Third World in *The Mimic Men*. The consumption of global brands and products does not necessarily associate with genuine cosmopolitan openness to other cultures; instead, it may only demonstrate a parochial lens or an imperialist outlook. Naipaul criticises elitist cosmopolitanism's transplantation of the idealised Western cultural forces of authenticity to shape the non-Western society, defining it as a second-rate imitation without a close contact or involvement with the local milieu.

The most important step that Naipaul has taken in *The Mimic Men* is his reflection on the damaging effect of colonial education, which builds unreal colonial fantasy and leads the colonials to hollow mimicry of the elite. Presenting the process of Ralph Singh's disillusionment, Naipaul suggests that only the realistic knowledge of both the First World and the Third World can lead the colonials out of their colonial shell. Ralph Singh's final acceptance of exile as a universal human condition is in accord with Naipaul's criticism of the immigrants' self-encapsulation: to enact the cosmopolitan identity project, the incompatibility between nomadic ideals and the countervailing desire for meaningful connections to people and places, a sense of communal belonging and stable, comfortably familiar routines has to be overcome. Disillusioned with elitist cosmopolitanism, Naipaul turns to how the plebeian in the condition of exile in a wider world rather than the elite deal with this problem in his next phase.

Notes

[1] Mr Stone's neighbour The Male, enveloped in the false security of his "frenzied home-making" (22), is also oblivious to demographic changes in his neighbourhood: the old and settled give way to the young who lay great store by material possessions, and petty speculators move in, converting houses into flats.

[2] In *The Mystic Masseur*, Leela talks about having a holiday but never actually has one, and in *A House for Mr Biswas*, Mr Biswas regards his holidays "simply as days on which he did not go to work" and a one-week holiday in Sans Souci is "beyond ambition" (479).

[3] This is a forerunner to the prologue of *In a Free State*, in which Greeks, Lebanese, Spanish, Egyptians, English, Yugoslavs, Germans and Americans travel together on a Greek steamer.

Chapter III

A Self-Reflexive Reorientation: The Fall of Elitist Cosmopolitanism and the Rise of Plebeian

Cosmopolitanism in *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River*

In the decade following the publication of *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* and

The Mimic Men, Naipaul's creative and critical energies show a change in focus. The

insularity of Trinidad and disillusionment with England give way to broader cultural and

historical horizons, with a significant attention to Africa and the black community. I would

argue that Naipaul's cultural critique and historical observations in his writings of the 1970s

are consciously extended to a more cosmopolitan arena, and his critical thinking and

understanding of cosmopolitanism grow and reorient. He foresaw the inevitability of

cosmopolitanism transforming from the elitist, Western notion consumed by a select few in

privileged positions into a non-elitist mode encountered by all mankind in the global world as

early as in the 1970s, while the new cosmopolitanism emphasising this plebeian tendency

began to develop in the 1990s. He pre-empts the discourses about citizenship, nationality,

immigration, globalisation, internationalisation and nationalism that begin to emerge today.

Nevertheless, by effectively dramatising the displacement and transplantation of mankind

resulting from violent histories of economic, cultural and political interactions in his novels,

he suggests that cosmopolitanism may at times generate its opposite. In his eyes, the world

was not in the 1970s and will not in a long time be ready for cosmopolitanism, since it is still

economically and politically unequal. With his profoundly sceptical, even pessimistic, vision

of the cosmopolitan ideology, Naipaul presents the sometimes ugly reality of the world

realistically.

In a Free State marks a new stage in Naipaul's career. Naipaul himself has recognised

this. In reference to *In a Free State* shortly after its publication, he remarked in a letter to a

friend that "I feel it's the book that this whole writing career was meant to lead up to" (Henry

22). *In a Free State*, comprising two short stories and a lengthy title novella framed by a

prologue and an epilogue which are reshaped entries from Naipaul's journal, possesses a

thematically novelistic unity, exploring the related phenomena of exile and rootlessness.

According to Bruce King, Naipaul's experimental mixing of autobiography with fiction

"shows his awareness that in his exile and travels he has become representative of a modern

human condition" (90).

As King points out, Naipaul since the 1970s "has become a different writer who

travels, often using uncomfortable transport and worrying about his expenses, through a world

of troubled, economically dependent independent nations, the new 'exotic' places for the

West, observing the way those in power treat each other" (98). Joan Cocks also argues:

> He [Naipaul] determinedly travels away from metropolitan centers of relative
>
> power, wealth, and privilege into their hinterlands in order to interview remote
>
> herdsmen, backwater teachers and students, lesser officials, crude rednecks,
>
> and petty clerks. Thus he dispels any necessary contradiction between
>
> cosmopolitanism and populism, and any necessary connection between
>
> cosmopolitanism and a haughty disdain for the countryside. (51)

Naipaul's contact with a vast assortment of human types in his travels is reflected in his

fiction. *In a Free State* is his first successful attempt to prove that his relatively privileged

position as a globe-trotting writer does not obscure his focus on the ordinary, less privileged

people within a more cosmopolitan context. A widening geographical setting of the book

spans four different continents—Europe, Africa, Asia and Americas. The variety of places

and nations effectively demonstrates his "much grander, much more total vision of

placelessness" (Hamilton 20), and his fear that the universal state of freedom is threatened by

political, social and racial categorisations of mankind. The characters are as varied as the

setting, too. The "Prologue" focuses on the suffering of an English tramp on a Greek steamer,

packed with passengers of different nationalities, crossing the borders between Greece and

Egypt; the first story "One out of Many" is about a Hindu cook transplanted from Bombay to

Washington D. C.; the second episode "Tell Me Who to Kill" tells the story of two Hindu brothers moving from the West Indies to London; in the title novella "In a Free State", two English expatriates embark on a car drive through the heart of Africa; and the "Epilogue" gives an account of Naipaul running into a Chinese circus twice, once during his stopover in Milan, and the other in Luxor. In Naipaul's own words, *In a Free State* is a book "about journeys, unhappy journeys, by people switching countries, switching cultures" (Henry 23). All the characters are on the move and all the stories are tales of exile—"the journey becomes an apt symbol for the world in flux that it portrays. The people who feature in the novel are exiles, expatriates or tourists belonging to different nationalities all of whom are far from home" (Mohan 98-9). The title of the book thus not only suggests Naipaul's political concerns, but also philosophical and psychological implications—"'free' means unbound, without ties; it does not mean empowered" (Lane 106). The exploration of the nature and illusions of commitment appears to echo the free-floating view of the old cosmopolitanism which claims detachment and independence, except that the state of being unattached in *In a Free State* is not celebratory, but a passive acceptance of the condition of survival. This is more a view in accordance with the new cosmopolitanism.

Timothy Brennan declares that "the new cosmopolitanism is felt to be plebeian. The cosmopolite in this fiction is not an elitist or a jet-setter alone, but also simply the 'people'", by which he means "not, as in Fanon, an occult presence of almost religious power; they are not the agents of historical change but the comic register of our common inadequacies, gullibilities, creativities, and desires" (*At Home in the World* 39). Though Brennan is highly critical of Naipaul, I think that the plebeian, victimised characters put together in motley scenes in *In a Free State* exactly illustrate Brennan's definition and criterion of the new cosmopolitanism. The characters are alien minorities, expatriates and outsiders; each of them, from different cultures and nationalities, suffers in the postcolonial world without any exception; longing for a better life, they have no ability to change their life endangered by

historical changes. They exactly fit in the category of the new force of cosmopolitans defined by Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty in "Cosmopolitanisms".

More remarkably, most of the characters in *In a Free State* are semi-literate or even illiterate. Characters like Santosh in "One out of Many" and the West Indian narrator of "Tell Me Who to Kill" have barely received any legitimate education, not to mention the elitist one that Naipaul himself has received. Long before his immigration to London, the narrator of "Tell Me Who to Kill" has already been aware that his illiteracy would hamper him, even in the West Indies. He muses: "The world change around me when I was growing up. I see people going away to further their studies and coming back as big men. I know that I miss out. I know how much I lose when I have to stop school, and I decide that it wasn't going to be like that for my younger brother." (60-1) But in the same story, even those who enjoy the privilege of going abroad to further their study fail. The narrator's cousin has a mental breakdown under too much pressure in Montreal, and the narrator's younger brother Dayo gives up study and aimlessly wanders about in London. Though the protagonist of "In a Free State" Bobby goes to Oxford, he criticises the Oxford elite for being presumptuous and snobbish. Not benefitting from his elitist educational background, he is much more humiliated when he gets arrested in London because of his homosexual preference. Nor is it helpful in elevating his career or social status in Africa. Bobby is eventually swallowed by the turmoil there. The humanistic concern for the most underprivileged among the underprivileged becomes a decided watershed separating *In a Free State* and Naipaul's earlier works.

Landeg White is the first discerning critic to notice that "there is nothing in the book [*In a Free State*] about writing. No character is working on a book himself, no character complains about language" (193). Anthony Boxill elevates the argument to a higher level by stating that "the characters of the book are not artists—they are not frustrated creators. The book does not solicit sympathy for a select few; it concerns itself with all mankind, even the

insane and the perverted" (81). In my opinion, this is the most important marker of Naipaul's conscious reorientation of his conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism, an amendment of his earlier understanding of and yearning for the elitist, even luxurious, cosmopolitan sheen, instilled into him through colonial education. In *In a Free State*, he focuses more on those semi-literate or illiterate people uprooted from their origins to the metropolis without necessary skills or resources to survive. Without the gilt of education, they cannot escape to the imperial centre to further their study like the boy narrator in *Miguel Street*, or rise to fame and fortune like Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur*, or find a refuge in writing like Mr Biswas in *A House for Mr Biswas*, or savour creation in the writing process like Mr Stone in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, or bring an order to their life by writing their personal memoir like Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men*. No escape, including education and writing, is ever possible in *In a Free State*.

The postcolonial space constructed in the "Prologue" in *In a Free State* is of a "dingy little Greek steamer" (1) sailing from Piraeus to Alexandria after the independence of Egypt. It is "overcrowded, like a refugee ship", which "belonged perhaps to idleness, unemployment and pastoral despair" (1). It has nothing to do with the "white and reposed" (512) liner that Owad takes from England back to Trinidad after his study in *A House for Mr Biswas*, or the "luxurious, rationing-free American liner" (60) that Mr Stone takes from Southampton to Cobh in his journey to Ireland in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, or the Moore-McCormack liner that Frank takes in "A Flag on the Island". Here, only "the great black hulk of the liner *Leonardo da Vinci*" (3) appears vaguely and disappears quickly in the backdrop. The population on board the steamer is a motley crowd from both the East and the West—Greek crew, American schoolchildren, Egyptian-Greek refugees, two Lebanese businessmen (one with an American accent, and the other one producing furniture in the style of Louis XVI), Spanish night-club dancers, Egyptian students returning from Germany, a Yugoslav, Germans, Arabs, an Austrian boy named Hans, an English tramp, and tourists and Naipaul

both of whom are "neutral, travelling only for the sights" (2). These passengers are itinerants like the assorted bunch of boarders at Mr Shylock's Kensington boarding house in *The Mimic Men*. The Greek steamer, comprising diverse nations, is a microcosm of the whole world.

Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge and Chakrabarty suggest that "cosmopolitanism, in its wide and wavering nets, catches something of our need to ground our sense of mutuality in conditions of mutability, and to learn to live tenaciously in terrains of historic and cultural *transition*" (580). In this sense, the heterogeneity and intricate intermixtures of people aboard the steamer in the "Prologue" in *In a Free State* make it a carrier that is supposed to embody cosmopolitan virtues like openness and mutual understanding. However, the picture depicted by Naipaul is not so harmonious or peaceful. Without the mutual intelligibility or understanding of heterogeneous cultures, there only exist reciprocal aversions and cruelties, rather than affections and generosities, among the ordinary people of different nationalities. Mutual distrust defines people in cliques based on nationality, and encapsulates them in their territorial languages and cultures. The American schoolchildren stick together, indifferent to the happenings around them, and "when they spoke among themselves it was in whispers" (6). Naipaul sensitively perceives that the space of the steamer is divided between Americans and non-Americans. Americans enjoy their privilege in this first-layered division with the support of their nation's superpower. The non-American part is "predominantly Arab and German and had its own cohesion" (6). But this cohesion is not solid. A bilingual Egyptian student becomes a juggler entertaining Arabs and Germans. The Lebanese furniture-maker, an Arabic speaker, pretends to respond warmly to the Egyptian's singing, but actually feels gloomy and weary about "these natives" (5). When the Lebanese businessmen and the Egyptian communicate in Arabic, Naipaul is shunted aside. The further the steamer sails away from Piraeus's "Greek civility" (1) and closer to Alexandria—"the paradigm case of Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism" (Zubaida 37) as a hub of goods, ideas, religions and peoples from the East and the West protected by an imperial context since the 19th century, the more

evident the exclusive cliques based on nationalities ironically become. The racial division becomes the most obvious in front of immigration officials, when "Germans detached themselves from Arabs, Hans from the Lebanese, the Lebanese from the Spanish girls" (13-4). When it is made out to be actual and real, cosmopolitanism appears to be impoverished between disparate, unstable, and even possibly contradictory elements. Nationality still counts. Human beings still classify and identify themselves with a shared language, nationality or territory. This is dissonant with the old cosmopolitanism's non-territorial definition of its subjects (citizens of the world), but at the same time makes the new cosmopolitanism's call for openness toward others more urgent.

Then, "what's nationality these days", as the English tramp, claiming himself "as a citizen of the world" (3), asks the question once he is on board of the steamer? Ironically, the tramp himself is Naipaul's focal point to answer the question. The tramp is elated when he talks about his global travels: "I've been to Egypt six or seven times. Gone around the world about a dozen times. Australia, Canada, all those countries. Geologist, or used to be. First went to Canada in 1923. Been there about eight times now. I've been travelling for thirty-eight years…New Zealand, have you been there? I went there in 1934." (3) The tramp's decent profession as an intellectual and his corporal mobility easily evoke the image of an elite cosmopolitan figure. Noticeably, all the places that he has visited used to be colonies of the British Empire. The tramp thus seems to belong to a time "when British culture and society were growing in power and respect around the world and 'English gentlemen' traveled abroad, secure in the knowledge of their country's superiority" (Walder 90).

Pitifully, the tramp's nostalgic boast is based on a remote memory back to more than forty years ago, and the world, like himself, has changed beyond recognition during that period of time. The tramp appears as an embodiment of the English elite enjoying the privilege of wandering freely and securely around the world:

> The tramp, when he appeared on the quay, looked very English; but that might

only have been because we had no English people on board. From a distance he

didn't look like a tramp. The hat and the rucksack, the lovat tweed jacket, the

grey flannels and the boots might have belonged to a romantic wanderer of an

earlier generation; in that rucksack there might have been a book of verse, a

journal, the beginning of a novel. (2)

Aboard the steamer, the tramp is more closely scrutinised, and it turns out that he is only an

old man, impoverished, lonely and nervous. Even "his clothes, like his Empire, are seen to be

in ruins and his neck scarf seems more like a noose" (Nightingale 148). The problem for the

tramp is that he is still immersed in the former glory of the Empire, which used to secure his

position as an elite cosmopolitan, lacking the certitude of history. Encapsulated within another

spatiotemporal model, he has not realised, or refused to realise, that in a radical disjunction of

cultures, his old assumptions and consciousness, behaviours and habits are no longer

applicable. Pathetically, his whole life of travelling around the world is reduced to mere

speeches "full of dates, places and numbers, with sometimes a simple opinion drawn from

another life. But it was mechanical, without conviction" (3). Without the protection of the

imperial context, a citizen of the world who is supposed to belong to all nations belongs to

none. The tramp is coerced to make the break with his inherited attachments to a less secure

but wider sphere of life. What becomes ironic is that he does not know how to cope with the

freedom that he obtains from his rootlessness. His purported need for "solitude" and his wish

"not to be noticed" are offset by a contradictory craving for "company" and "attention" (6).

He chooses a chair that "stood in no intimate relationship to…any other group of chairs" (6)

in the crowded smoking-room, and begins to read his old pocket diary, and "laughed, and

looked up to see whether he was being noticed" (7). When no one responds to his

exaggeratedly loud performance, he raucously tears his magazine to draw attention. He

possesses no ability to acquit himself, to behave well, when multiple cultural perspectives are

forced upon him. Through the tramp's comic performance, "Naipaul suggests that it is an

illusion to suppose that individuals can shake themselves loose from their social context and exist as if unattached to any society, as world citizens who belong at once everywhere and nowhere" (Weiss, *On the Margins* 168-9). This echoes Bruce Robbins' critique of the old cosmopolitanism as an ideal of detachment and absolute homelessness and his calling for "actually existing cosmopolitanism" as "a reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance" ("Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism" 3).

After spending a disturbed night in the same cabin shared by the tramp, the furious Lebanese businessmen threaten to kill him. With the instigation of the Egyptian student, they seek for help from the robust Hans to set up "a tiger-hunt, where bait is laid out and the hunter and spectators watch from the security of a platform" (9). Dennis Walder notices the ironic twist here—the tramp is "to be tormented in a way reminiscent of an old imperial pastime of the British, hunting tigers in India on the backs of elephants" (91). This time, the hunter becomes the hunted. Every passenger, including Naipaul, "feared to be involved with him" (6), so they just passively observe the tramp insulted verbally, beaten physically, and tormented psychologically. The tramp symbolises the fall of elitist cosmopolitanism after the withdrawal of imperial power. But who bullies and humiliates the tramp is equally important. In their first appearance, the Lebanese businessmen are eager "to explain that it was luggage, not money, that had prevented them travelling by air" (4). Their conversations are always about money, fortune, investment, costs and profits. Walder calls them "more powerful citizens of the world" (91). Walder's definition is more in accordance with the old cosmopolitanism, which sees the global business elite as archetypal cosmopolitans. I would regard the Lebanese businessmen as world capitalists, who, "driven across the globe in their pursuit of infinite wealth, destroying private property in what Arendt calls the true sense of having one's own place in the world", are "perhaps the gravest obstacle to the new cosmopolitan ideal" (Cocks 60). World capitalists represent a very limited kind of global citizenship. They are financially motivated to cross the borders freely. They do not need the

protection of nationality; what is supporting them behind their backs is the universally powerful capital that knows no boundary. They cannot, or do not intend to, understand the loneliness or fear of other, different kinds of citizens of the world, especially those who are bondless, homeless and exiled. The most dangerous to the constitution of the basis of cosmopolitanism is that they take their wealth as a matter of course to humiliate other sojourners in the world. Francis Bacon has a famous remark: "If a Man be Gracious, and Curteous to Strangers, it shewes, he is a Citizen of the World." (40) It certainly is a good ideal, but Naipaul warns the reader that the reality is harsh. Citizens of the world, especially the elite, do not necessarily possess the virtue of behaving well with an open attitude toward others nowadays, because the world has lost its innocence as a result of the colonial experience and capitalist expansion.

The tramp finally fights back. But his way of self-protection is to lock himself in the cabin and to threaten to resort to arson if anyone breaks in. The Lebanese businessmen are driven to sleep in the dinning-room, but the tramp suffers, too. He stays up all night, listening to footsteps outside. The self-enclosed space of the cabin is an indication of his future position in the world—being closed off to all external affiliations, stuck within his loneliness, nervous and terrified about any change of the world. Perhaps, it is the real picture of the new citizen of the world. Through the tramp in the "Prologue", Naipaul implicitly suggests that citizens of the world offer neither fulfilment nor security, because much of what mankind presume to be their individual strength actually comes from the protection of their nationality (its economic and political powers, in particular). It becomes more obvious when an individual volunteers or is coerced to leave the protection of his culture for the larger, more dangerous world. It is Naipaul's biggest concern: where is the perfect equilibrium point between attachment (nationality) and detachment (being a citizen of the world)? This theme foreshadows the following two short stories and the title novella in the book.

Brennan points out that "cosmopolitanism today involves not so much an elite *at home*,

as it does spokespersons for a kind of perennial immigration, valorised by a rhetoric of wandering, and rife with allusions to the all-seeing eye of the nomadic sensibility" ("Cosmopolitans and Celebrities" 2). As early as in 1971, the two short stories—immigrant stories—in *In a Free State* have already "signaled more a sense of the author's expanded purview than a thematic consolidation of post-Second World War migratory patterns from the Third World to the First" (Mustafa 114). They explore the threats confronted by cosmopolitanism through the pariah underclass of immigrants from the Third World moving into the metropolis in the First World. Naipaul dramatises the changing of spatiotemporal perspectives to investigate the issue of immigration in the context of globalisation. The space of city (Washington in the first story and London second) is associated with the immigrant's mentality, sense of being an outsider, and formation of identity. The immigrant's relation with a particular city is essentially a refraction of interpersonal relationships. Naipaul's depiction of the anonymous, subaltern masses of Greek refugee migrants in the "Prologue" foreshadows that the immigrants in the next two stories will be the same "casualties of that freedom" (2), the freedom to cross borders, to make individual choices and to detach themselves from any culture, in the metropolis "where movement and travel are undertaken with ease and where the encounter with other cultures is a matter of free choice, negotiated on favourable terms" (Abbas 771).

The first story "One out of Many" is Santosh's story of his passages, first from his Indian village in the hills to Bombay, then from Bombay as a domestic servant to Washington as an American citizen. In relation to cosmopolitanism, Bombay is definitely not Naipaul's random choice in this story. Bombay has long been coupled with the notion of cosmopolitanism. Arjun Appadurai proposes that Bombay has always been "India's most cosmopolitan city" (630) before the 1990s, during when its name was changed to Mumbai due to religious riots. In his view, Bombay's cosmopolitanism is reflected in its domination by commerce, manufacture and trade, immense circulation of wealth in the form of cash,

philanthropic public sphere and cheap but convenient public transport, along with its large

floating population, widening gap between the poor and the rich and fierce competition for

jobs. For Colin McFarlane, "Bombay has been for centuries a focus for global trade around

the Arabian Sea and beyond, owing in large part to its endowment with one of the largest

harbours in South Asia, and, especially from the mid-nineteenth century, has long been

attractive to a wide range of migrants" (480). The feature of Bombay as cosmopolitan is thus

its historically large number of immigrants and multicultural makeup. It is an open and

tolerant city of immigrants that welcomes and assists the immigrants from all over India

regardless of their background. A cosmopolitan imaginary emerges from the interior rather

than from the exterior. As Naipaul views his family's move from Chaguanas (the Indian

countryside) to Port of Spain (a cosmopolitan city) as a migration in "Prologue to an

Autobiography", Santosh's move from his poor village to the cosmopolitan city of Bombay is

also an experience of migration. Beginning the story with a retrospective point of view,

Santosh describes his life in Bombay as happy, respectable, financially and socially secured:

> I am now an American citizen and I live in Washington, capital of the world.
> Many people, both here and in India, will feel that I have done well. But.
> I was so happy in Bombay. I was respected, I had a certain position. I worked
> for an important man. The highest in the land came to our bachelor chambers
> and enjoyed my food and showered compliments on me. I also had my friends.
> We met in the evenings on the pavement below the gallery of our chambers.
> Some of us, like the tailor's bearer and myself, were domestics who lived in the
> street. The others were people who came to that bit of pavement to sleep.
> Respectable people; we didn't encourage riff-raff.
> In the evenings it was cool. There were few passers-by and, apart from an
> occasional double-decker bus or taxi, little traffic. The pavement was swept
> and sprinkled, bedding brought out from daytime hiding-places, little oil-lamps

lit. While the folk upstairs chattered and laughed, on the pavement we read

newspapers, played cards, told stories and smoked. The clay pipe passed from

friend to friend; we became drowsy. Except of course during the monsoon, I

preferred to sleep on the pavement with my friends, although in our chambers a

whole cupboard below the staircase was reserved for my personal use. (15)

I quote the opening paragraphs of the story at full length because they evoke many confusing

questions. First, what makes Santosh's two migrations vastly different since he does not seem

to suffer at all in Bombay while his migration to Washington only causes loneliness, loss and

final deracination? Second, why does he prefer pavement-sleeping when he is provided with

accommodation in his employer's house? Third, since Naipaul, who dubs India as "an area of

darkness", is not very likely to celebrate Bombay's cosmopolitanism as Appadurai does, why

is Santosh's Bombay life portrayed as so innocently happy?

Appadurai's analysis of Bombay's housing is a great inspiration to clear up the

mysteries mentioned above. The root cause is with whom Santosh shares the space on the

pavement. According to Appadurai, the large population is a common problem for any

cosmopolitan city in the world. What makes Bombay special is that it attracts more poor

people than it can handle. Its housing is a unique illustration of the dilemma. He writes: "It is

true that there is a vast and semiorganized part of Bombay's population that lives on

pavements—or, more exactly, on particular spots, stretches, and areas that are neither building

nor street…'pavement dwellers' and 'slum dwellers'…have become self-organizing,

empowering labels for large parts of the urban poor in Bombay." (636) Appadurai calls the

poor pavement-dwellers "the truly destitute", including "beggars; homeless children; the

maimed and the disfigured; the abandoned women with small children; and the aged who

wander deaf, dumb, or blind" (636). In a word, pavement-dwelling becomes "a technique of

necessity for those who can be at home only in their bodies" (638). It is evident that

pavement-dwellers are at the bottom of the hierarchy of Bombay/India. Caste or religion that

is supposed to be crucial in India no longer matters on Bombay's pavements, because everyone is similarly poor there.

Naipaul noticed the unique phenomenon of public sleeping in his first visit to India in 1962. In *An Area of Darkness*, he describes the pavement-dwellers in Bombay as a symbol of India's poverty. He is surprised and angry to see the pavement-dwellers' obliviousness about their exposed private life, the "exhaustion and undernourishment" (42) of starved children, and the filthy excrement everywhere in the street. He gets frightened that he himself "might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd" (39), comprising mostly the faceless poor. Naipaul's fear of losing his distinctiveness in India is projected on Santosh. On the surface, Santosh, coming from the countryside where he only works casually as a porter during the tourist season, belongs to the anonymity of pavement-dwellers in Bombay. However, he is endowed with something to make him different, even distinctive. Having served his apprenticeship in hard times, he becomes a cook. The professional skill labels him as a respectable domestic servant working for an important official. He stands out in the poorer, more anonymous crowd living on the pavement. So what he enjoys about pavement-dwelling is actually his higher social status. Santosh himself realises this, and feels satisfied. When his pavement friends in the morning are in a hurry "in silent competition to secluded lanes and alleys and open lots to relieve themselves", his own secured privilege seems more evident—"I was spared this competition; in our chambers I had facilities" (15-6). His cupboard is more a symbol of his privilege than privacy. This is why he stops sleeping on the pavement and spends much time in his cupboard when he knows that his employer is leaving Bombay for Washington. Losing his job, accommodation and security, he is nothing different from other pavement-dwellers. Like Naipaul, Santosh is afraid to be swallowed up by the crowd, into facelessness. Once it is confirmed that he will accompany his employer to Washington, he goes to sleep on the pavement that very night. His privilege not only returns, but elevates to a new, higher level. The irony of Santosh's two vastly different migrations is that he is

distinctive among the faceless poor in Bombay, but ends up being faceless in Washington. Naipaul intends to investigate the reason in the story.

The space of the Bombay pavement shared by Santosh and other urban poor is probably Naipaul's cryptic allusion and response to Jawaharlal Nehru's attempt to disperse cosmopolitanism in India. McFarlane points out:

> The vision of nationalist modernism emerged most powerfully in these early years of Independence, when the Indian state was wrestling between Gandhian conceptions of India as village based and Nehruvian visions of India as an urbanizing country moving towards modernity. In this latter narrative, the cities were to be the loci of progress, opportunity, and social justice. Bombay, the commercial capital of India since well before Independence, became a key site for this vision. (486)

To Vinay Dharwadker, between Gandhi and Nehru lie the vivid contrasting "complexities of modern Indian cosmopolitanism" (8), because if Gandhi "emphatically *ruralized* his cosmopolitanism" by retreating to the village and excluding cities, Nehru "*urbanized*" (9) his different kind of cosmopolitanism by modernising the cities. In Nehru's modernist vision, Bombay is a planned and just city providing economic opportunities and social services for all, a model for India's future economic growth and urbanisation. Nevertheless, the socialist promises that Nehru makes, in Naipaul's eyes, fail to be implemented. While Naipaul fiercely criticises Nehru's India for lacking cultural and historical depth and failing to integrate its past and present in *An Area of Darkness*, he slightly mocks the Nehruvian effervescence about the possibility of a modern, secular and socialist nation as embodied in the space of Bombay in "One out of Many". Seen from Naipaul's perspective, Bombay's cosmopolitanism is only a feint, because its acceptance of immigrants is based on their communal poverty. But poverty can never be the cornerstone of cosmopolitanism. Nehru's attempt to disperse cosmopolitanism in India is well-intentioned, but ill-prepared. In Naipaul's observation, it

will be a long way to reducing poverty in India. Without an effective method to alleviate poverty first, the promotion of cosmopolitanism in India is only a leftist leap. The Bombay riots of the early 1990s, "which emerged not just from communal tensions but from resentment of the enduring poverty in the city" (McFarlane 489), finally shattered the city's cosmopolitan imaginary. In another light, it demonstrates Naipaul's keen observation in the early 1970s.

Naipaul indicates that India's large scale of poverty blinds Santosh's awareness of class division, racial discrimination, and inequality among nations. For example, on the second day of his arrival in Washington, Santosh realises the huge economic gap between India and America. He only has a cup of coffee and a piece of cake, buys a pack of cigarettes and goes to a movie in the morning, but spends nine days' pay already! In deep distress he muses: "But I had been thinking in rupees and paying in dollars." (26) Moreover, whereas cosmopolitanism emphasises the agency of the individual subject, Bombay's cosmopolitanism retards Santosh's alertness as an individual/immigrant to deal with his displacement, as migration is both determined by and amplifies existing social inequalities. Naipaul constructs the space of the plane to illustrate Santosh's loss of social privilege and unpreparedness for displacement. Not even out of Indian borders yet, Santosh's privilege enjoyed on the Bombay pavement is severely shattered. At the airport, he feels ashamed of his cotton bundles, unacceptable as luggage. On board the plane, the stewardess, smiling at everybody except him, asks him to sit at the back of the plane when she spots his bundles. Up in the air, in a state of being between the borders, he comes to understand that he actually belongs to the lowest class:

> When we settled down I looked around for people like myself, but I could see no one among the Indians or the foreigners who looked like a domestic. Worse, they were all dressed as though they were going to a wedding and, brother, I soon saw it wasn't they who were conspicuous. I was in my ordinary Bombay

clothes, the loose long-tailed shirt, the wide-waisted pants held up with a piece
of string. Perfectly respectable domestic's wear, neither dirty nor clean, and in
Bombay no one would have looked. But now on the plane I felt heads turning
whenever I stood up. (18)

The belated recognition is sarcastic. Since his pavement-dwelling friends cannot afford
travelling or migration overseas, Santosh's former privilege makes him a victim instead. In
the community of modern elite, privileged nomads associated with decent dressing and social
etiquette, Santosh becomes the base of the social hierarchy alone. When he for the first time
in his life realises his otherness, he is on the plane, a metaphor of cosmopolitan existence—
not to be in any particular place, but simultaneously everywhere. The flight is an essentially
irreversible trajectory; Santosh has nowhere to return. With the subversive realisation, he gets
nervous. The limited space on the plane that threatens to choke him is the projection of his
restless mentality. He acts ridiculously, loses control of himself, and at last smears the plane
with his vomit and excrement. This episode foreshadows that Santosh's migration to
Washington will bring alienation, identity crisis, inferiority complex, loneliness and terror,
when he confronts the wealth and supremacy of the Western culture more closely.

Santosh's maladjustment in Washington is presented through his relation with the
space of the metropolis. From his migration to Bombay, it can be seen that city is a medium to
enter into the complex interrelationship with its particular inhabitants, who at once transform
and are transformed by it. A city is a social space where various peoples, cultures, traditions
and ways of knowing converge, encounter, coexist, complement, refract, vary, and ultimately
transform each other simultaneously; it is regarded by Ackbar Abbas as "the privileged, if not
necessarily exclusive, sites for the emergence of the form of life that we call the
cosmopolitan" (772). Again, Appadurai's analysis of Bombay's housing is of help to
understand Washington's city space and its dialectic with Santosh. Appadurai argues that
pavement-dwelling renegotiates the spatial arrangement of Bombay:

At the same time, small commercial enterprises sprout on every possible spot

in every possible street, attached to buildings, to telephone poles, to electricity

switching houses, or to anything else that does not move. These petty

enterprises are by nature shelters, so many commercial stalls are, de facto,

homes on the street for one or more people. The same is true of the kitchens of

restaurants, parts of office buildings—indeed, any structure where a poor

person has the smallest legitimate right to stay in or near a habitable structure,

especially one that has water or a roof. (637)

In other words, wherever there is a pavement-dweller in Bombay, there exists a possibility of doing business in the street. It is open to deliberation whether it is an enhancement of Bombay's cosmopolitan ethos, but it does show the city's spatial and social openness. A dialectical approach should be adopted to look at this problem. Sleeping on the pavement in public may mean the loss of privacy, but every city inhabitant is at the same time exposed to a wider availability of social lives. With various kinds of business and commerce set up on the pavement, the civic is in co-presence with the entrepreneurial. Sociality visibly circulates in Bombay. Every city-dweller is an observer and the observed. Unavoidably, they actively get involved with the constant motion of the city.

Santosh does not simply blend into Bombay's public life on the pavement. He is in the habit of exploring the city in his walks, in the style of what Walter Benjamin calls a flaneur, though in a different context. Every morning, rising up from the pavement, Santosh always spends half an hour or so strolling around: "I liked walking beside the Arabian Sea, waiting for the sun to come up. Then the city and the ocean gleamed like gold. Alas for those morning walks, that sudden ocean dazzle, the moist salt breeze on my face, the flap of my shirt, that first cup of hot sweet tea from a stall, the taste of the first leaf-cigarette." (16) The wandering flaneur has more opportunities to confront different happenings in Bombay where city life is easy in reach. Seen from another way, the spatial and social openness of Bombay makes it

viable for Santosh to be a flaneur.

Though his employer warns him again and again that "Washington is not Bombay" (16), Santosh does not expect, not to mention get prepared, to experience enclosedness and imprisonment in Washington. Very soon on his arrival, he feels "no openness for me that evening. From the aeroplane to the airport building to the motor car to the apartment block to the elevator to the corridor to the apartment itself, I was forever enclosed" (21). Failing to find his room, he sleeps in the corridor outside the apartment door, under an "imitation sky" decorated with stars, feeling "like a prisoner" (21). The space of Washington is introduced as enclosed and suffocating; it is also a portrait of Santosh's sense of being excluded. His first attempt to get out into the open is frustrated by the elevator, ending up being enclosed by the "plain concrete corridors and blank walls" (22) in the basement. Later, Santosh moves into a cupboard in his employer's apartment. The space of the cupboard is not an emblem of privilege now, but of alienation, exclusion and imprisonment.

Very soon, Santosh begins his flaneur-style walk in Washington. However, the spatial distribution and its cultural, political, social implications signal quite a change from that of Bombay. In Santosh's description of his street experiences, all that he encounters is with blacks and hippies, no trace of "authentic" Americans. On the drive from the airport to the apartment, he sees the *hubshi* (blacks) roaming in the streets in large numbers freely. Later, he sees idle blacks in the street, and black guards, black cashiers, black beggars and black porters in the supermarket. It is not possible for him to attach himself to the blacks. They belong to a "wild race" (21); his religion tells him that it is "indecent and wrong" (29) to even have contact with them. In his first walk in the city, Santosh mistakes some Hare Krishna dancing at a roundabout as his "own people" (24). Seeing them from a distance, he is very pleased to find out that the bare-footed men in robes and women in saris are chanting Sanskrit words in praise of Lord Krishna. He regards it as the community to which he belongs. But a closer scrutiny denies his ethnic and racial connections with them:

It might have been because of the half-caste appearance of the dancers; it might have been their bad Sanskrit pronunciation and their accent. I thought that these people were now strangers, but that perhaps once upon a time they had been like me. Perhaps, as in some story, they had been brought here among the *hubshi* as captives a long time ago and had become a lost people, like our own wandering gipsy folk, and had forgotten who they were. When I thought that, I lost my pleasure in the dancing; and I felt for the dancers the sort of distaste we feel when we are faced with something that should be kin but turns out not to be, turns out to be degraded, like a deformed man, or like a leper, who from a distance looks whole. (25)

The blacks and the hippies remind the reader of the Civil Rights Movement and the youth movement in the 1960s, but it cannot be ignored that the blacks belong to a marginal ethnic group while the hippie culture is a subculture. No mainstream American life is visible in the openness of Washington:

Scattered among the *hubshi* houses were others just as old but with gas lamps that burned night and day in the entrance. These were the houses of the Americans. I seldom saw these people; they didn't spend much time on the street. The lighted gas-lamp was the American way of saying that though a house looked old outside it was nice and new inside. I also felt that it was like a warning to the *hubshi* to keep off. (27)

The shut-in space of the mainstream American society cannot simply be explained by its people's respect for privacy. The battle between different powers present in the space of Washington is much more complicated. Marginal and minor communities occupy the space of Washington. The mainstream power that is supposed to be dominant at the centre is pushed towards the periphery instead. It maybe is its own way of self-protection, but at the same time it is confined by its enclosure. Like Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men*, Santosh cannot, or does

not want to, attach himself to any other different ethnic or social group, and at the same time

is denied access to the mainstream metropolitan society. No space is reserved for Santosh.

The whole enclosed space of Washington, without visible display or frequent interaction of

social life, is impenetrable. To become an unattached, "free" immigrant is the only option left

to him.

Again, education is a key reason, and the American society's invisible class division

based on ethnicity should also be considered. Santosh, a cook without a legitimate education,

depending on his employer for a living, can only meet people doing the same lower jobs in

the service industry, such as supermarket cashiers, security guards, house cleaners, mostly

blacks. Later, working in Priya's Indian restaurant, he co-works with Mexican waiters who

with turbans can pass as the Indian staff. If marrying an American citizen is Santosh's only

choice to become a legal immigrant after he escapes from his former employer, he can only

marry the black cleaner who works in the building of his former employer's apartment, while

other women whom he knows are immigrants as well—a European (he cannot tell whether

Swiss or German) and a Filipina working in a cake-shop. His job does not have contacts with

white Americans, because no white American belongs to this lowest class. No doubt he is

secluded from active participation in the social framework. The more educated Priya used to

be "a man of some standing, not quite the sort of person who would go into the restaurant

business" (36) in India. In America, in order to survive, he first runs a cloth business

importing textile from India, and then opens an Indian restaurant, though "this shopkeeping is

not in my blood. The damn thing goes *against* my blood" (38). No matter what, he is "able to

cope with Washington" (40). The gate to the middle-class American society is at least open to

the self-employed Priya, though he only has business connections with the blue-collar

workers like Bob who cannot understand—or rather, has no interest in understanding—the

Eastern culture.

In the story, the only character who is allowed access to the mainstream American

society is Santosh's former employer, a government official posted from Bombay to Washington. He works with Americans, and invites them to dinner at his apartment. It can be seen that the American society is class- and race-oriented. The interplay of class and race defines the social basis for immigrants, and becomes the critical nexus between the creation and distribution of wealth. Class wears the garments of race while race provides excuses for class disparity. The immigrants become victims of both class and race, and the more uneducated, the worse. However, Santosh's employer, enjoying the privilege of sharing the self-conscious space of the Americans, suffers as well. He "took pains over his work, was subjected at his own table to unkind remarks by his office colleagues" (32). Once, he invites an American to dinner. Unexpectedly, the American blatantly brags about his illegal action in India. He pays his Indian guide two dollars to hack the head off a sculpture in an ancient temple. He even boasts: "If I had a bottle of whisky he would have pulled down the whole temple for me." (32) He represents Naipaul's caution that America is not as free as it boasts. This is how Naipaul himself feels about America. According to Richard Kelly, Naipaul "spent two years researching and writing *The Loss of El Dorado*…When he arrived in the United States he discovered that his Boston publisher really wanted a popular book for tourists, not a critical analysis of Trinidad. Profoundly depressed and angry, and lacking the cash advance he assumed the book would bring, he made his way back to England" (109). If even one as educated as Naipaul cannot be easily received by America, the task is hardly possible for the uneducated like Santosh. Naipaul is worried that America is still obsessed with the canonical, orthodox and traditional visions. By and large, America is a euphemism for the First World or Western culture. Its economic development and political dominance do not associate with willingness to engage with, not to mention accept, otherness.

Though Santosh is shut out of the American society, it does not mean that he can avoid being influenced by the American culture or values. There is an invisibly penetrating way to lead him into the American society that he cannot enter in real life, without his

immediate physical involvement in the street or in his work. It is the media, by which "cosmopolitanism today" is "propelled and defined" (Brennan, "Cosmopolitans and Celebrities" 2). Naipaul in the 1970s already perceived the key role played by the media in the production and maintenance of cosmopolitan attitudes to the wider world. Considering American capitalism, materialism and consumerism, he is concerned that mass media will become a cultural accomplice to spread America's hegemonic culture, generating sameness, uniformity and anonymity among the immigrants, even in the whole world. Naipaul tries to discuss the impact of the media through Santosh's obsession with television:

> I watched a lot of television and my English improved. I grew to like certain commercials very much. It was in these commercials I saw the Americans whom in real life I so seldom saw and knew only by their gas-lamps. Up there in the apartment, with a view of the white domes and towers and greenery of the famous city, I entered the homes of the Americans and saw them cleaning those homes. I saw them cleaning floors and dishes. I saw them buying clothes and cleaning clothes, buying motor cars and cleaning motor cars. I saw them cleaning, cleaning.

> The effect of all this television on me was curious. If by some chance I saw an American on the street I tried to fit him or her into the commercials; and I felt I had caught the person in an interval between his television duties. So to some extent Americans have remained to me, as people not quite real, as people temporarily absent from television. (27-8)

Television brings it all right into Santosh's room. He can consume the American society through it. It effectively satisfies his imagination that there exists the possibility for him to get involved. The "real" life of the middle-class Americans is supplanted by television. Television allows Santosh's conceived co-presence and dialogue with Americans, face-to-face, freely, which are not likely to happen in reality. The quasi-interaction helps him locate

himself in the eyes of others. He would compare his own look with some man on TV, wondering whether he is as handsome as that man. Then he "would have to get up and go to the bathroom and look in the mirror" (30). Anthony Giddens has argued that "freedom is not a given characteristic of the human individual, but derives from the acquisition of an ontological understanding of external reality and personal identity" (47). Television is the specific form of acquisition for Santosh to identify himself in relation to the "real" Americans:

> I thought back to the time when these matters hadn't interested me, and I saw how ragged I must have looked, on the aeroplane, in the airport, in that cafe for bare foot, with the rough and dirty clothes I wore, without doubt or question, as clothes befitting a servant. I was choked with shame. I saw, too, how good people in Washington had been, to have seen me in rags and yet to have taken me for a man. (30)

Undeniably, television awakens Santosh's individuality. He becomes obsessed with checking his look in the mirror. He no longer sees himself as a parasitic part of his employer's presence, as he used to in Bombay. On the contrary, he realises that his employer, though an educated man doing a decent job, is as uneasy and cautious as himself in Washington. He does not confine himself in the apartment, but begins to take long walks in the city after he sees its vulnerability in the black riots on TV. It is during one of those walks that he runs into Priya, and immediately decides to escape from his employer to work for Priya. His salary is decupled and his sleeping place upgrades from the cupboard to a whole room. Without television, Santosh could not have earned his "freedom".

The problem is: all the images—of consumerism, in particular, in Santosh's case—conveyed by television are purely enforced conceptions. They are imaginary, not real. Television just pretends to speak on behalf of the mainstream American society, in order to sell products or the American way of life. Mimicking the American respectability, Santosh buys a green suit, which is "associated with materialism and imperialism" (Nightingale 148).

But he never wears the super-big suit or tries to buy another one. The American identity is or will be never suitable for him. He escapes from his employer to work in Priya's restaurant as a "free", independent man. But to his former employer, he becomes the same as other Indian crooks who betray their boss after they get help, like the ones whom Priya has dealt with many times. He does not like his Mexican co-workers in the restaurant, who are obsessed with talking about the green card. But he soon realises that running away from his former employer, he is also "one out of many" illegal immigrants in America. His newly-awakening individuality shrinks quickly: "My face had become pudgy and sallow and full of spots; it was becoming ugly. I could have cried for that, discovering my good looks only to lose them. It was like a punishment for my presumption, the punishment I had feared when I bought the green suit." (42-3) Eventually, Santosh successfully legalises himself by marrying the black cleaner. But he knows clearly that "no television life awaited me. It didn't matter. In this city I was alone and it didn't matter what I did" (51).

The truth is: Santosh is not alone. He becomes one faceless member of the anonymous Indian immigrants who pretend not to see or hide from each other anxiously in the street of Washington. At the end of the story, Santosh renounces: "All that my freedom has brought me is the knowledge that I have a face and have a body, that I must feed this body and clothe this body for a certain number of years. Then it will be over." (53) Survival is the first priority for the immigrants; other issues do not count. They have the freedom to break faith with ethnic, national and religious ties, to disgrace and dishonour their countrymen, even to break the law. All these threaten the freedom of the host country. In a word, the consumerist images on television spread America's hegemonic culture, imposing upon other cultures. Santosh is the casualty, left in alienation, loneliness and loss. This echoes Pnina Werbner's warning that "hegemonic cultural universalisation which is homogenising and intolerant of difference" ("Towards a New Cosmopolitan Anthropology" 11) is one of the most dangerous fronts threatening cosmopolitanism. Through Santosh, Naipaul implies that even America, the land

of freedom, is not ready to recognise the new type of citizens of the world yet. The mode of melting-pot only produces sameness and uniformity, and requires anonymity among the immigrants. The spirit is anti-cosmopolitan per se.

In "One out of Many", Naipaul defines individuality by negatives. Without a committed social context, individuality reduces the world to self-imprisonment and social isolation. There is an implicit suggestion that few immigrants understand how little their individuality counts when they really have to stand on their own without the protection of nationality (its economic power particularly), especially in the face of strong attacks of the Western hegemonic culture. Seen in another way, much of what mankind presume to be the strength of their individuality is actually the protection and strength of the ethnic, national and social groups to which they belong. Those who imagine themselves to be "in a free state" are in reality victims of the hegemonic culture, prisoners of colonialism. It becomes particularly clear when the displaced immigrants from the Third World leave the protection of their culture for the larger, more powerful, richer, but more dangerous world. This is Naipaul's answer to the question about nationality raised in the "Prologue" by the tramp.

The second story "Tell Me Who to Kill" in *In a Free State* describes a similar migration story, about a Hindu countryman in an unnamed West Indian island moving to London. The theme that the growing circulation of goods, ideas, and peoples across national borders does not necessarily facilitate cosmopolitan openness to foreign others and cultures, which is already made explicit in "One out of Many", is intensified in this story, for the narrator goes insane with a propensity to violence in London. The story is meant to "illustrate the pathological side of the migratory process" (Mustafa 116). Compared to Santosh, the mad narrator is a more dangerous threat to his host country. Of course, many enemies, rather than "the enemy" (98), should be responsible for his madness, such as his ambitious energy focused on his younger brother Dayo, his incestuous sexual desire for Dayo, Dayo's indifference, irresponsibility and parasitic dependency on him, his illusions about England

nurtured by Hollywood movies, and his bewilderment, resentment and sense of betrayal in England. It is still significant that his mental breakdown is completed in his fight with the young English louts in his own roti-and-curry restaurant. Naipaul makes the point more explicit in this story that the immigrant's relationship with the space of the metropolis is essentially an interpersonal relationship with the locals of the metropolis, of the host country. In England, this relationship, unfortunately, is xenophobic.

The narrator goes to London to look after Dayo who is pursuing his higher education. Poorly educated like Santosh, the narrator gets a job in a cigarette factory. He likes the factory more and more because he only has to deal with a machine. It is a great relief to him that in the factory he does not have to cope with complicated and humiliating interpersonal relationships as he used to in the West Indies. The narrator just does his job on the machine and gets paid in an envelope "as though you are some kind of civil servant or professional" (79). Naipaul implies that what is involved in the encounter between immigrant minorities and the English society is by no means a simple process of absorption into a unitary social system. The system is basically a capitalist one. The immigrants may be exploited, yet satisfied, as long as their work is rewarded. They may even falsely be led to believe that they are attached to the English working class, whereas the truth is that they cannot attain equality with their English peers due to discrimination.

Eager to earn more money, the narrator takes another night job working in a restaurant kitchen. His life is reduced to a lonely traipse: "London for me is the bus rides, morning, evening, night, the factory, the restaurant kitchen, the basement." (80) In this space, no Englishman exists. In his personal life, the narrator has few chances to come into contact with English people face-to-face. In five years, he only exchanges "Good Morning" with the old English lady living upstairs, not any other communication. The narrator sets up a false impression that life in London is impersonal, objective and financially rewarding, though lonely and tiring. But in fact, this does not mean that social relations between individuals and

groups in London/England do not exist. The class differentiation of the English society is only invisible to the newly-arrived, alienated immigrants without an advantageous position in the labour market.

Things are changed and twisted once the narrator decides to be his own boss. Opening a roti-and-curry restaurant with his savings of two thousand pounds, he first has to pay property agent, decorators, electricians and the catering company. Every meeting with them is a reminder to him that he is "no longer strong and rich, not caring what people say or think", that he becomes "a pauper, and my shabbiness worry me" (84). His relationship with London has a qualitative change. He used to simply deal with the physical space of the metropolis, whereas now he has to meet real English people who belong to the metropolis. Then the more troublesome encounters come:

> Then I run into prejudice and regulations. At home you can put up a table outside your house any time and start selling what you want. Here they have regulations. Those suspicious men in tweeds and flannels, some of them young, young fellows, are coming round with their forms and pressing me on every side. They are not leaving me any peace of mind at all. They are full of remarks, they don't smile, they like nothing I do. And I have to shop and cook and clean, and the area is not good and business is bad, and no amount of hard work and early rising will help. (84)

The sanitary inspectors may not be intentionally prejudiced as the narrator describes. It indeed is their job to be critical, sometimes even fault-finding. But clearly, everything in London, running in well-defined grooves, is so settled that it turns into mechanisation and bureaucratisation. It is very difficult for the immigrants on the margin to know, understand and accept the ossified order. The most troublesome threat to the narrator comes from the xenophobic English louts:

I don't know what attract them to the place, why they pick on me. Half the time

I can't understand what they say, but they are not people you can get on with at

all. They only dress up and come to make trouble. Sometimes they eat and

don't pay; sometimes they mash up plates and glasses and bend the cutlery.

That become like their hobby, a lot of them against me alone. That is their

bravery and education. And nobody on my side. (84)

But the reason that the narrator cannot understand is pretty clear: he is an immigrant. In the

English society, mild xenophobia is a norm. Coloured immigrants are seen as archetypal

others and strangers, both in their appearance and behaviour. The English louts, whose anti-

immigrant violence is essentially xenophobic, represent one of the "adversary responses to

global interconnectedness that might be reactions to the influx of migrant labor and refugees,

but also to other social and cultural traffic across borders" (Hannerz, "Cosmopolitanism" 71).

Werbner also asserts that xenophobia, "a fear and rejection of strangers" ("Towards a New

Cosmopolitan Anthropology" 11), threatens cosmopolitanism the most.

One day, discovering that Dayo has given up study and just idles around the British

Museum, the narrator returns to his restaurant with disappointment and hatred. The hoodlums

come to make trouble again, wrecking everything and beating him. The narrator cannot cope

with the harsh reality any more, and slips into dream-like madness. He confuses the reality

with his nightmarish fantasy. He blurs the violent scene with the hoodlums with a horrific

killing scene from Hitchcock's *Rope*. Madness is his only way to face and to avoid the

xenophobia. In only five months, the restaurant goes down and the narrator goes mad. Priya in

"One out of Many" at least can run his Indian restaurant in Washington, no matter how

worried he constantly feels about his Indian competitors and his accounts. Even Santosh, no

matter how alienated and self-enclosed at last, at least can get a good salary and support

himself. Why cannot the narrator make it in London in "Tell Me Who to Kill"? Naipaul

suggests that compared with America, England is still more monolithic. Even if America is

not ready for cultural diversity, it is more difficult for England to cope with it. The tyrannical

English ethnocentric bias and parochial traditions have a large breeding ground to generate

xenophobic sentiments toward the immigrants. More dangerously, if transnational immigrants

looking for further opportunities in England are frustrated because of the xenophobic

sentiments, they may have a reason to resent the exclusive social system. In that case, mutual

xenophobia between the immigrants and locals in England will cause more serious political

and social issues like violence and crime.

In the title novella "In a Free State", xenophobia becomes the triggering effect of

nationalism (cosmopolitanism's bitterest competitor) in a newly-independent African country,

whose economic and political strengths are in contrast to that of America and England.

Naipaul's concern about the fronts threatening cosmopolitanism is pushed to extremity: can

the most "innocent" ideology of cosmopolitanism be socially viable in the most "backward"

continent in the world? If not, what is its threat? To Naipaul, it is no doubt the postcolonial

Africa's nationalism and totalitarian regime, the negative consequences of nation-building.

Naipaul travelled in the Congo between 1965 and 1968. He also spent six months in

Uganda in 1966 as a writer in residence at Makerere University, and visited other East

African cities and Zaire then. His travels in Africa provide the material for "In a Free State".

In a 1979 interview, he says: "When you have watched the bush returning, you are different

from a young man from Harvard or London who is traveling, doing his project." (Hardwick

46) This means that Naipaul refuses to look at Africa from the perspective of an elite

cosmopolitan who is "usually also a collector of world art" with "great depth of knowledge

about primitive and non-Western art and its incommensurable value" (Werbner, "The

Cosmopolitan Encounter" 50). Naipaul has no intention of blindly celebrating Africa's

indigenous cultures or its political independence. He intends to tell the truth about

postcolonial Africa with honesty:

> As a man of action one would be continually weakened by harking after the
> truth, by too-honestly reassessing the situation all the time; so that for example
> in Africa you can get a profound refusal to acknowledge the realities of the
> situation; people just push aside the real problems as if they had all been
> settled. As though the whole history of human deficiencies was entirely
> explained by an interlude of oppression and prejudice, which have now been
> removed; any remaining criticism being merely recurrence of prejudice and
> therefore to be dismissed. (Rowe-Evans 57)

In order to achieve objectivity, Naipaul uses in "In a Free State" an ironically detached third person omniscient narration, instead of the first person narrator in "One out of Many" and "Tell Me Who to Kill". It is part of the reason why Bobby is chosen as the focal point. Bobby is a white Englishman who goes to Oxford and used to serve in the Air Force, but gets arrested and has a nervous breakdown in England because of his homosexuality. He thus confesses: "I'm not a great one for high society." (109) He is an alienated, marginal man in his motherland. He goes to Africa to discover that Africa "saved my life" (113). England may be uncongenial for him, but Africa is therapy. In the unnamed country, he willingly works as an administrative officer for the local government, and the fact that his boss is an African is never a taboo in his conversations. He wears a native shirt in African style. On all occasions, he is anxious to express his enthusiasm and friendliness for what is supposed to be indigenously African. Ironically, the novella ends with Bobby beaten up by African soldiers for no obvious reason and mocked by his African houseboy. What has gone wrong really?

Naipaul tries to explore the inconsistency in "In a Free State" by reducing the grand Africa to the liminal space, a site of struggles between oppositional forces in constant motion. This is a story about a 400-mile car drive undertaken by Bobby and Linda from the capital where they attend a seminar back to the Southern Collectorate where they work and live. The novella begins with the utmost economy:

> In this country in Africa there was a president and there was also a king. They
> belonged to different tribes. The enmity of the tribes was old, and with
> independence their anxieties about one another became acute. The king and
> the president intrigued with the local representatives of white governments.
> The white men who were appealed to liked the king personally. But the
> president was stronger; the new army was wholly his, of his tribe; and the
> white men decided that the president was to be supported. So that at last, this
> weekend, the president was able to send his army against the king's people.
> (99)

A large scale of dynamic political relations is exposed in the style of a fable. When empires retreat, war seems unavoidable. The political and military leaders who promise to restore the country rise up, but only trigger new devastating wars. The African tribal war, concealed as mutual enmity, is in essence a battle for economic and political arteries of the nation under the manipulation of imperialism. The African country becomes a space dominated by the pursuit of economic interest and political power. The one who masters the dominant right controlling the centre of the space (the president, in the case of the novella) will push the dominated (the king) to the margin and wipe it out completely.

The bulk of the journey is in Bobby's car, an enclosed space. Worse, the drive has to head directly into the heart of the king's territory. Even before Bobby leaves the hotel in the capital and the journey back "home" has not yet officially begun, the space of the sky is occupied by the white men's helicopter. It flies low to hunt for the king who flees away in disguise in a taxi, according to the circulating rumour. Throughout the journey, the "yak-yak-yak-yak" sound of the helicopter overhead is annoying and depressing. The space of the road is equally stifling. It is packed with trucks carrying the president's army, sent out to search for the king, to enslave the king's tribesmen, and to take other Africans to swear the oath of loyalty to the president but hatred "against the king and the king's people. And against you

[Bobby] and me [Linda]" (119). The president's policemen set up roadblocks to examine every passing vehicle for the escaping king and arms smuggled into the Southern Collectorate. Some naked Africans abruptly running across the road from nowhere break into the emptiness of the road now and then. The sharp treacheries of the road reach the climax when the king is found dead in a wrecked taxi. The crime scene is disguised as a car accident, with the help of an American black policeman. The peripheral, dominated king is successfully pushed out of the space, which now completely belongs to the central, dominant president. The president will not allow the existence of other marginal powers on his way to enjoying his centralised political power. The space including the sky and the road totally controlled by the president is an indication of his future tyranny in enveloping brutality and violence. The president's recurring official photograph everywhere in the novella is an omen.

For Bobby, the limited space in the car, though confining, means security. But he still cannot resist the pressing and pushing of the space from outside towards the internal space of the car. Terror penetrates into the car and into him. With the chaos going on in the space outside, he cannot enjoy the grand view of the African landscape on his drive as he used to. On the contrary, the landscape always reminds him that he himself is in danger of getting pushed out of the new African space, too. Bobby is always "free" to express his eagerness to be born as a black in the next life; in this life, the fact can never be changed that he is a white, the colour that reminds the Africans of former colonisers and oppressors. Time has changed, and Africa, too. The newly-independent African country is desperate to assert its ethnic claims, relating ethnic identity to nationalism. Stephen Saideman and William Ayres have insightfully pointed out that what matters in this relation is the identification of "us" and "them"—"who is seen as the adversary to be opposed matters as it may determine who the targets of nationalist policies might be" (39). In "In a Free State", Naipaul expresses his concern that Africa is at the double risk of simplifying the complicated identification of who is "us" and who is the relevant "them" into a pure stress on ethnicity, and politicising it as an

affiliation with the winning political side. The space in the sky and on the road has already

shown that who is black and indigenous (the king and his people) is not necessarily the "us";

who is black and indigenous and at the same time submits to the dictatorial nationalist (the

president) is supposed to be "the new men of the country" and "men of power" (100). Bobby,

a liberal who thinks that he is not in Africa "to tell them how to run their country. There's

been too much of that. What sort of government the Africans choose to have is none of my

business" (115), may be a political "us", because of his humanistic belief in equality and

respect for decisions and actions of the local government. However, his skin colour

determines that he can never be an ethnic "us". He will forever remain one of "them".

Bobby's strong desire to be accepted as part of the African community meets only with brutal

humiliation and rejection. African nationalism not only fails to enhance in-group solidarity,

but also strengthens out-group hostility.

The African landscape appears to speak silently to the English expatriates like Bobby

and Linda, when they gaze through the car window—"at a time like this we feel excluded,

and naturally we resent it" (120). The xenophobic sentiment, an ironic but destructive result

of nationalism, is concealed in the landscape. African nationalism, a form of anti-colonial

protest against foreign encroachment and interference, becomes an occurrence of xenophobic

reactions directed against non-African denizens. During the drive, every relic left by former

white colonialists is now derelict, collapsed and filthy. The Hunting Lodge, with many

magazines introducing the English countryside, is surrounded by "the forest debris of

collapsed trees", speaking of "an absence of men, danger" (128). The English couple

managing the Hunting Lodge are crippled in a motor accident. Without the protection of the

imperial power, they become vulnerable. Some public facilities, symbols of civilisation, are

deliberately blackened or destroyed. At the Esher filling station, "one of the symbols, the

telephone, had been partly covered over with a square of brown paper; and another symbol,

the crossed knife and fork, had been crossed out, apparently by a finger dipped in engine oil"

(142). In the town near the English colonel's hotel, the Africans go out of the bush and stay in the wrecked villas abandoned by the Belgian colonialists, but still live their tribal life. The colonel's hotel is "created by people who thought they had come to Africa to stay, and looked in a resort for a version of the things of home: a park, a pier, a waterside promenade" (170). It used to accommodate Belgians and Germans, but is now old, collapsed and unbearably dirty. The English colonel himself is old, injured, dirty and smelly, waiting hopelessly for his African servant to murder him some day.

Seeing the wreckage of a packet of Belgian cigarettes in the town near the colonel's hotel, Bobby makes it clear that the retreat of the white colonialists happens "after independence and the property scare, after the army mutiny, after the white exodus South and the Asian deportations, after all these deaths" (170). They flee in fear of the country's restless independence and nationalism. They know that there will be no space for their "good life" (176). The whites are not the only casualties; the Asiatics are too. Along the road, most of the Indian shops are closed. The owner of the only Indian shop still open for business talks about moving to the United States or Cairo. The Asiatic drapers who make suits for the African young officials are already deported. Brennan suggests that the new cosmopolitanism "displays impatience, at times even hostility to the legacy of decolonization and is filled with parodic or dismissive references to the exalted 'people' of the liberation movements" (*At Home in the World* 39). Naipaul's doubt about and critique of Africa's independence, nationalism and dictatorship illustrate his humanistic vision.

When the heavy rain comes, Bobby is stuck within the space of the car. But even the last "pure land" fails to provide him with solace. For Bobby, Linda is anathema. Most of her images of Africa seem to come from geography books that portray conflicting ideas of savage and romantic primitivism. She says: "If I weren't English I think I would like to be a Masai. So tall, those women. So elegant…Marauders. I love that word." (116-7) Linda makes no disguise of her disgust for the primitive aspects of Africa, such as smelly natives running

about naked and their ceremonies of dirt-eating. Obviously, she does not share Bobby's

enthusiasm for Africa. So the conversations in the car between the two resemble a duel of

sarcastic wits. Bobby's sarcasm is all reserved for the whites in Africa, while Linda reacts

with standard expatriate jokes and a deliberately provocative attitude toward Bobby's self-

righteousness. She verbally attacks his liberalism throughout the journey, whenever Bobby

makes a complimentary remark about Africans. She thinks that they are lazy and uncouth, and

avoids them by seeking the security of the government compound. Believing that Africans are

barbaric and fail to have any redeeming quality, she encourages Bobby to either avoid or

dominate them: "You should either stay away, or you should go among them with a whip in

your hand. Anything in between is ridiculous." (219) Linda's imperial haughtiness and

implicit racism are unbearable to Bobby and to the reader.

Linda's xenophobic racial ontology, based on her insistence on cultural purity, places

black Africans on the lowest rung of human species. She represents a kind of counter-

cosmopolitanism. Linda is Naipaul's spokesperson to express his pessimism about the world

in which cosmopolitanism seems to be in grave jeopardy in the face of xenophobia as

ethnocentric vestiges of European colonialism. However, though oppressive in any case,

counter-cosmopolitanism, in confrontation with liberalism that Bobby stands for, is a

reminder of the terrible cost of abstracted, ethereal universalism that lies at the heart of the old

cosmopolitanism. The new cosmopolitanism has to confront the real but not very pretty sight

of the world inhabited by prejudiced foreigners, and counteract, even actively suppress, the

world of prejudice in the name of human progress, if it does not want to remain an abstracted

discourse with no tangible meaning other than the ad hoc, pragmatic and often opportunistic

application of universal principles. In this sense, counter-cosmopolitanism has its positive

effect. Linda has a more honest assessment of the whites' position in Africa. Unlike Bobby,

she is more cynical and does not inflate the importance of their contribution. She does not

assume her right to be in Africa. Speaking of her position, she admits: "I hated this place from

the first day I came here…I felt I had no right to be among these people. It was too easy. They made it too easy. It wasn't at all what I wanted." (218) She has no illusion about herself. When Bobby complains of the expatriates who criticise the country while they are in it but tell another story when they have to leave, she responds: "I suppose that's true of me." (154) Though through the chagrined and resentful eyes of Bobby, Linda is not a sympathetic character and her limitations are clearly shown, Naipaul uses her to reveal Bobby's pretension.

Occasionally, Africans squeeze into the private space of Bobby and Linda in the car. At the Hunting Lodge, an African "filled the car with his smell" (133) as soon as he opens the door to take a lift. He forces Bobby to pick up his so-called "friend" on the road in the rain and to drive in the reverse direction. Linda decisively drives the two Africans out and restores the security of the space in the car. Later, the windscreen of the car is permanently ruined by an African at the filling station who cleans it with the central bar of metal of his cleaner. Bobby loses his temper and sees himself humiliated. Every unpleasant encounter reinforces Linda's prejudice and snobbery, but depresses Bobby more. It is an irony that Bobby, nice to Africa, is beaten up by some African soldiers for no reason at the end of the novella. His wrist is broken. Like the English couple at the Hunting Lodge and the colonel, he becomes the vulnerable victim of Africa's nationalism. He becomes a casualty of his cosmopolitan liberalism, which fails to recognise the social conditions of his own discourse. It is more ironic that Linda, xenophobic to Africa and Africans, remains at least physically unharmed. The contrast is an indication of the utopian naivety of Bobby's cosmopolitan liberalism.

The metropolitan locales in the previous two short stories in the book are replaced by the wilderness of Africa in "In a Free State". The novella studies a different postcolonial migratory trajectory—English expatriates in Africa, from the centre to the periphery. Naipaul makes this change to show that the loss of freedom is a universal human condition, while nationalism in the more marginal nation-state is more dangerous and destructive to global security and the welfare of mankind. He reduces Bobby's negotiation with the African social

space into the minimal physical space to suggest mankind's inescapability. Naipaul is highly critical of the monologic outlook of African nationalism. Xenophobia is unleashed, and tolerance of coexisting with others becomes impossible. The nationalist outlook excludes the cosmopolitan outlook; tragically, mankind suffers in between. "In a Free State" expresses Naipaul's speculation: how much homogeneity or heterogeneity is desirable for nationalism? How willing is an ethnic group to coexist with foreigners, strangers or others? How can cosmopolitanism cope with nationalism? Since even Bobby's deliberate friendliness toward Africa is linked to his sexual needs of picking up African boys, will there be any man in absolute unbiased hospitality and neutrality?

The "Epilogue", "The Circus at Luxor", puts all the elements explored in the previous sections of the book together, in Egypt again. The population there is still diversified—Greeks, Lebanese, Arabs, Negros, Germans, English and Italians. The Lebanese businessmen still talk about (even illegal) business. America makes its presence felt by building a new Hilton hotel on one bank of the Nile. A group of highly-organised Chinese circus performers informs us that a totally different political system is trying to announce its presence in the world. But the world that already fails to deal with its complicated heterogeneity may not be capable of dealing with a new Other. Moreover, Naipaul adds another trend threatening cosmopolitanism into the motley scene—world tourists. In the "Prologue", he regards himself as neutral as the tourists on the steamer, whereas in the "Epilogue", his attitude toward and relationship with tourists change completely. In the desert, whenever the Egyptian beggar boys approach the tourists, an Egyptian waiter strikes his camel whip on the sand to scare them off. A group of Italian tourists deliberately tosses bits of food onto the sand to attract the boys. When the children approach to gather the food up, they take pictures. Even the Egyptian waiter begins to make it a show, striking the whip on the backs of the defenceless children. Facing the archetypal cruelty, Naipaul intervenes. He grabs the waiter's whip, throws it on the sand, and threatens to report it to Cairo. This simple action separates him from the tourists. In his much

discussed article "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture", Ulf Hannerz excludes world-tourists from his definition and categorisation of cosmopolitans—"cosmopolitans tend to want to immerse themselves in other cultures, or in any case be free to do so. They want to be participants, or at least do not want to be too readily identifiable within a crowd of participants, that is, of locals in their home territory…Tourists are not participants; tourism is largely a spectator sport" (241-2). Naipaul's participation and intervention distinguish him from the world tourists who merely consume the diversity of human cultures. Naipaul is a cosmopolitan who loathes tourists and hates to be mistaken for one. However, he feels "exposed, futile" (245) instantly after his action. This should not be interpreted as his regret. In an interview with Adrian Rowe-Evans, Naipaul expresses his wish to be "a doer" (57). However, the cruelty is that the "long-visioned" people "who had long vistas of eternity to play with, were so overwhelmed by all that that they weren't going to do much" (57) about the reality of the world. The "Epilogue" in *In a Free State* reveals Naipaul's disappointment at the limited power of an individual to change the world. He succeeds only in temporarily preventing the cruelty. The children creep back, and the old pattern restores itself. It is Naipaul's lament that the world lacks more cosmopolitans who are not afraid of intervening or making a contribution on behalf of humanity.

In a Free State is the product of Naipaul's reoriented concept of cosmopolitanism, from a prerogative enjoyed by the educated and privileged few, to a plebeian tendency with the mass participation of free-floating cultures, ideas, goods and peoples. Naipaul breaks from elitist cosmopolitanism's arrogant affiliations with the Western culture, but casts his writer's net over a multiplicity of underprivileged peoples and poor regions to analyse the reality of the world. He considers cosmopolitanism from its opposite in this experimental book. To Naipaul, cosmopolitanism cannot be simply considered as an honorific or universalist term. It is closely related to economic, political and cultural powers. Focusing on the immigrants and refugees fleeing poverty or violence, he proposes that the old notion of a borderless

cosmopolitan community is inadequate. The encounter with other cultures may be a matter of people's free choice in the world in flux, but the imbalance in the power relation makes the negotiation not so favourable. The dilemma is mainly a legacy of colonialism, and it is intensified by the change of world order after the withdrawal of imperial power, the free border-crossing of world capitalists and tourists, the spread of the hegemonic culture by media, xenophobia accompanying nationalism and dictatorship, and so on. A series of complex issues threatening cosmopolitanism is discussed in the book, prompting Naipaul to ask what can make cosmopolitanism socially viable. In Naipaul's view, as long as the inequality between nations in the world exists and imbalance between border-crossing freedom and protective nationality cannot be negotiated, cosmopolitanism in the traditional, elitist sense is not likely to come into actual being.

Moreover, through the political, psychological and pathological study of displaced people, Naipaul sees every relation between different elements in cosmopolitanism as an interpersonal relationship per se. Colonialism is a clear wrong, but the discrimination and unbrotherliness in mankind's characters should also be blamed. In a rapidly changing world, since no place can be called "home", since "home" is wherever one person ends up, since escape is impossible, deracination or isolation is not desirable. Mankind should react more responsibly and openly to the fellow temporary sojourners in the world. Naipaul's scepticism or pessimism about cosmopolitanism does not mean that he stands for a negative cosmopolitanism. His intervention on behalf of justice in the "Epilogue" in *In a Free State* is strong evidence. To Naipaul, the most crucial factors that the old cosmopolitanism advocates and pursues—individual freedom of choice, communal norms, mutual understanding, respect for otherness, hospitality to strangers, devotion to humanity, cultural plurality and a borderless international society—remain in violent collision with the real world. A compelling, new cosmopolitanism should take the collision, together with any constructive dissent, into account.

In *In a Free State*, the widening geographical setting spanning four different continents is Naipaul's strategy to demonstrate that cosmopolitanism has become a non-elitist mode encountered by all mankind in the global world. The same predominant motif of homelessness or rootlessness is further explored in *A Bend in the River*, in a more violent and xenophobic form. Naipaul constructs an unnamed African town shortly after independence crammed with African locals, Indian diasporic people and European settlers as well as expatriates (Belgians, Greeks and Italians) to "enact a Naipaulian version of a generic postcolonial experience" (Mustafa 148). The varied demography, similar with the motley crowd comprising diverse nationalities on the steamer in the "Prologue" in *In a Free State*, reflecting similar global migration commonly seen everywhere in the postcolonial world, provides Naipaul with another testing ground for his keen insight into the universal phenomenon of displacement and placelessness. The heterogeneity and intricate intermixtures of people (foreigners/outsiders in particular) challenge the validity of cosmopolitanism caught between disparate, unstable, and even possibly contradictory cultures. In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul intends to probe a series of questions even more intensified than that of "In a Free State". Will cosmopolitanism be sustainable in Africa where the encounter with divergent cultures is not a matter of free choice but forced upon people as a consequence of colonialism? What form of openness to the world and kindness to strangers should be cultivated in the xenophobic African nationalism? And how?

King points out that *A Bend in the River* is "a book about Africa in which the lives, hopes and fears of foreigners are central. It is as much about expatriates and diasporas after decolonization as about national independence" (132). Naipaul does not have any commitment to Africa. His perspective is consistent with that of "In a Free State", his first African story. In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul's deepest sympathy with diaspora (especially Indian diaspora) threatened by the xenophobic African nationalism intensifies his grim vision of cosmopolitanism. His focus on histories of the non-integration of immigrants, the hostile

co-existence of "guests" and "hosts" in the framework of nation-state, and the explosion of national populations into new traumatic diaspora through cultural, economic and military upheavals, challenges the philosophical and political model of cosmopolitanism.

The phenomenon of movement, particularly forced or voluntary migration, is the basis of the formation of diaspora. Likewise, it is mobility, itinerancy particularly, that cosmopolitanism celebrates. Since new geopolitical space is continuously originated by the emergence of diasporic movements in the contemporary global world, it can be said that cosmopolitanism becomes a term thoroughly entangled with global migration. Since diaspora and cosmopolitanism are mutually decentred, Werbner claims that "diasporas have always been seen as the archetypal, boundary-crossing strangers, and in that sense they are thought to epitomize cosmopolitanism" ("Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation and Diaspora" 346). However, the relations between nation and diaspora and between nation and cosmopolitanism as categories of belonging and negotiated identity are fraught with contrasting trajectories.

Diaspora refers to a community of individuals living outside their homeland, who identify themselves in some way with the state or people of that homeland. The components of a diasporic identity are a history of dispersal, memories or myths of a homeland, ongoing interest in the homeland, retaining sense of its uniqueness, alienation in the host country, and desire for an eventual return to the homeland. Judith Shuval stresses:

> A diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing. (43)

Diaspora is not just a matter of possessing multiple identities as putting on different cultural faces. What distinguishes diasporic people is their ongoing attachment and persistent loyalty

to their earlier culture and specifically the homeland that they feel they have left. Ien Ang insightfully defines diaspora as "a concept of sameness-in-dispersal, not of togetherness-in-difference" (13). With the notion of the cosmopolitan as an identity-less or rootless citizen of the world, the old cosmopolitanism rejects the view that every man belongs to a community among communities. It marks a sensibility that transcends the provincialism and absolutism of singularly construed ethnic, racial, and especially national, identities. It does not fully allow for the continuing importance of country of origin and ethnic ties in migrant networks. The diaspora, though in a similar rootless and unattached condition like the elite cosmopolitan, is doubly misguided because of its dual loyalties or disloyalty to the country of settlement.

A Bend in the River displays an acute awareness of transitional complexities of belonging and identity entailed in the diasporic experience. It turns the reader's attention to the underprivileged diasporic being, and those who find themselves in the midst of a global space to which they cannot relate. It is not the attachment to home that concerns the diasporic characters in the novel, but rather the dramatic loss of home and the desire to be at home. Naipaul highlights the status of being neither-here-nor-there of peoples of the diaspora, who trouble the idea of citizenship and national belonging on the one hand and represent the new force of cosmopolitans on the other hand. In *A Bend in the River*, diaspora and cosmopolitanism appear closely related as ways of understanding transnational identities. Diasporic and cosmopolitan lifestyles constitute overlapping repertoires that offer complementary identifications for immigrants, especially those with prior experiences of (post)colonial contact zones, in diverse cultural settings.

Salim, the narrator/protagonist of *A Bend in the River*, comes from a Muslim family originally from north-western India, now living in Africa:

> Africa was my home, had been the home of my family for centuries. But we
> came from the east coast, and that made the difference. The coast was not truly
> African. It was an Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, and we who lived

there were really people of the Indian Ocean. True Africa was at our back.

Many miles of scrub or desert separated us from the up-country people; we

looked east to the lands with which we traded—Arabia, India, Persia. These

were also the lands of our ancestors. (12)

The community of sub-continental Indians possesses a typically diasporic vision, and bitterly experience alienation, loss of identity and nostalgic desires. Though unwilling acceptance by the host country often leads to the diaspora's alienation and exclusion, no trace of hostility or intolerance is found at this early stage. The problem is with the diaspora itself. It keeps itself aloof, separates itself from the African society and Africans, and forms its own ghettoes. The Indian diasporic community dwells in the marginalised space in the vast African continent, close to its ancestral land rather than the "true" Africa in the interior where the immediate contact with the Africans is unavoidable. This shows the ethnic and social phobia of the diaspora: it may get swallowed up and contaminated by Africa's ignorance and obscurity, epitomised by the image of scrub and desert seen by Naipaul as "the enemies of the civilization which I cherish" (Kakutani 15). The biggest fear of the diaspora is that it may eventually lose its unique identity based on its specific place of origin. In the triangular relationship between the three nodes of diaspora, guest-land and homeland, the collapse of the relation between diaspora and guest-land due to its lack of openness is a severe challenge to cosmopolitanism, a name for an orientation toward others and the world. In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul expresses his scepticism about cosmopolitanism by intensifying the complete collapse of the triangular framework. What if cosmopolitanism is not capable of dealing with mankind's hostility toward difference? It is his biggest concern in his representation of the diaspora.

Salim's Muslim family keeps the ancestral homeland alive in its heart and mind, and uses it to reposition itself in the alien land of Africa. Imagining and yearning for the lost homeland are its potent forces, and the diasporic past still haunts the diasporic present:

When we had come [to Africa] 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. Neither my father nor grandfather could put dates

to their stories. Not because they had forgotten or were confused; the past was

simply the past. (12)

Very much like the Hanuman House in *A House for Mr Biswas*, a microcosm of an alternative

India reproduced by the displaced Hindus in Trinidad, the family compound that Salim

describes is overcrowded, noisy, smelly and dirty, occupied by devout family members

consoled by their religion. Salim's family is not the only one doing so. The rich Hindu family

of Salim's childhood friend Indar lives in a bigger and grander compound, surrounded by a

high wall, with a main gate guarded by a watchman "to keep out the true danger" (21). In the

town at the bend in the river in central Africa which Salim later moves to, an Indian couple

live in a flat, decorated with religious prints, with the smell of asafoetida. Ironically, the

husband used to be a United Nations expert. An elderly Indian couple "didn't seem to know

where they were. The bush of Africa was outside their yard; but they spoke no French, no

African language, and from the way they behaved you would have thought that the river just

down the road was the Ganges, with temples and holy men and bathing steps" (31). Shoba

and Mehash, the Indian couple to whom Salim feels the closest, are careful only about their

Indian appearance, dress, food and living, "wrapped up in themselves and not too interested in

the world outside" (32). If cosmopolitanism is a name for an outlook toward both challenges

and opportunities of being a person or community dwelling in the world of ongoing social

transformations, the Indian diaspora's way of life depicted in *A Bend in the River* is reactive

rather than responsive to events. With this non-cosmopolitan orientation that refuses to

acknowledge the ubiquity of change or the presence of difference, Indian immigrants become

passive spectators or victims of pluralistic changes, rather than participants in such changes.

Naipaul has already criticised such acts of memorialisation of the Indian diaspora as unhelpful, even regressive, in *A House for Mr Biswas*, and his perspective remains the same almost twenty years later in *A Bend in the River*. The Indian diaspora left its ancestral land so long ago that though still living in the old ways and refusing to change, it actually has already forgotten its own history and lost its own cultural roots. Its diasporic identity is renegotiated and reproduced inevitably through creolisation and hybridisation. Salim's grandfather used to ship a boatful of slaves as a cargo of rubber. Two slave families have lived in Salim's family for at least three generations. At first, they are purely Africans, but later, "the blood of Asia had been added to those people" (16). Salim's servants Mustafa and Metty are both half-African, half-Indian. The ethnic distinctive feature of the Indian diaspora becomes hybridised to such an extent that its original identity is gradually dissolved. Despite its minority status and desperate maintenance of cultural difference, the Indian diaspora is increasingly forced to identify with the country of settlement—"but we could no longer say that we were Arabians or Indians or Persians; when we compared ourselves with these people, we felt like people of Africa" (12).

The Indian diaspora in *A Bend in the River* clutches at the ancestral religion as the last straw to protect itself from being assimilated in the tendency of hybridisation, but fails. This is a recurring theme that Naipaul explores in his fiction. In *The Mystic Masseur* and *A House for Mr Biswas*, he satirises the Indian diaspora's reducing religion to pure fetishism and therefore corrupting the ancestral heritage. In *A Bend in the River*, his mocking tone changes to a more poignant worry that the obsession with and apish devotion to religion of the Indian diaspora slackens its vigilance and leads to the obliviousness of the outside world. Paul Theroux mentions that in Kenya, Naipaul "reacted in much the same way as he had in Uganda" (61) by urging the local Indians to "make plans for crunch time now" (66), by which he refers to the occurrence of African nationalism and political disorder. Sadly, there is no

political discussion in Salim's family in *A Bend in the River*. His father and uncles (businessmen and traders) are "buried so deep in their lives that they were not able to stand back and consider the nature of their lives. They did what they had to do. When things went wrong they had the consolation of religion" (18). When Salim is young, kohl is always put on his eyes and a good-luck charm hung around his neck if he is taken out for walks. Even when an uprising breaks out in the east coast of Africa and the family has to scatter, all that Salim's father does is send him a wall-print of one of the holy places in Gujarat to tell him the necessity of returning to "the faith" (35). The religious faith that the Indian diaspora sticks to is just the superficial custom of dress, food and house decoration. It tries to retain a few petrified rituals lost in its vague memory, not the authority or spirit of the Indian culture. The Indian diasporic people close their eyes to the changes in the world, unaware of the capricious African reality because of the paralysing effect of their religion. The specific tension between cosmopolitanism and religious fundamentalism is revealed. Religion provides the cultural glue that the collective myth-making requires to develop—common organisations and rituals. However, cosmopolitanism determines to fashion tools for understanding and acting upon problems of a global scale. In Stuart Hall's words, it refers to "the ability to stand outside of having one's life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture—whatever it might be—and to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings" ("Political Belonging in a World of Multiple Identities" 26). Naipaul's primary concern is that the optimistic cosmopolitan theory, more easily equated to secularism and worldliness, may lull mankind into a false vision of the world as being culturally integrated, or at least capable of such integration, while religious allegiances condemn the believer to absolutism, parochialism and lack of tolerance in reality. His consideration is timely and relevant to a critical cosmopolitan analysis of the contemporary world.

On the one hand, the Indian diaspora in *A Bend in the River* refuses to get involved with the country of settlement, even though unwilling acceptance there is not obvious yet; on

the other hand, it still tries to retain its uniqueness in its yearning for the homeland.

Nonetheless, it cannot shun the universal tendency of hybridisation, especially when religion

loses its power in connecting spiritually with the homeland, but paralyses its alertness about

the dangerous reality. The diaspora-homeland relation also breaks down. Worse, the

diaspora's imagination that its connection with the homeland still exists is only a wishful

thinking on its own part. Indar, graduating from a university in England, applies for a position

as a diplomat at the Indian High Commission in London, but gets rejected: "But you say in

your letter you are from Africa. How can you join our diplomatic service? How can we have a

man of *divided loyalties* [my emphasis]?" (173) The split of the diaspora-homeland relation is

obviously based on the identity difference. At the end of the novel, when the Big Man

radicalises nationalism and confiscates the business and property of foreigners, the unwilling

acceptance of the diaspora in the guest-land is revealed. The last hope of the diaspora to

attach to some bond vanishes. In this sense, with the collapse of every relation in the

triangular framework between diaspora, guest-land and homeland, the diaspora becomes

rootless, lacking both a past and a future. This invokes a reflection upon the ideal detachment

and rootlessness that the old cosmopolitanism celebrates. The old cosmopolitanism advocates

detachment from affiliations, commitments and bonds that constrain ordinary nation-bound

lives, and thus belonging to all parts of the world rather than one specific country or its

inhabitants. The ability to be detached and rootless better equips elite cosmopolitans with a

stance to tolerate and to respect other cultures and values. The contradiction revealed in *A

Bend in the River* is: the older moorings of home in the modern world may no longer possess

much meaning and even have become distinctly threatening, but diasporic persons who

become similarly rootless may still avoid the involvement with other cultures and peoples. In

this case, can cosmopolitanism offer some kind of moral anchorage to the diasporic people?

Can people in diaspora who are forced to become rootless have the potential to be cultivated

and metamorphosed into cosmopolitans who are conscious, even proud, of living in a mixed-

up world and having a mixed-up self? If yes, on what terms?

Naipaul tries to represent the above questions through Salim in *A Bend in the River*. Like most of the characters in *In a Free State*, Salim does not receive much education. He leaves school at the age of sixteen, "not because I wasn't bright or didn't have the inclination, but because no one in our family had stayed at school after sixteen" (20-1). Later, as a shopkeeper, he reads encyclopaedias and magazines to dream "some impossible future time when, in the middle of every kind of peace, I would start at the beginning of all subjects and devote my days and nights to study" (255). He secretly envies Ferdinand, an African boy from the bush, who is easily provided with a chance by his country to receive education to become a government official. Naipaul's intention of choosing a moderately educated narrator/protagonist to tell an African story is similar with what he has already done in "In a Free State", that is, to avoid looking at the reality and truth of Africa from the perspective of the elite, like "chaps in universities" who find the "purely physical lives" of bush people "interesting" and "want to do compassionate studies about brutes" (Kakutani 15). Naipaul's humanistic concern for the underprivileged is an extension from that of *In a Free State*.

Moreover, Salim, from a rootless diasporic community without any impressive educational background, is twice displaced and transplanted in Africa, as he voluntarily escapes from his home and community to live in another African country. In this sense, he epitomises absolute rootlessness. Then, the main issue about rootless people like Salim who voluntarily cut off their already diasporic racial and social ties seems initially to be that of detachment or involvement, passivity or action, flight or integration. Is the ideal detachment or rootlessness that the old cosmopolitanism advocates psychologically and socially viable? Is there equilibrium between detachment and attachment, rootlessness and rootedness?

Salim introduces himself as an exile and stranger in a state of detachment and insecurity in his own family and community. He says: "So from an early age I developed the habit of looking, detaching myself from a familiar scene and trying to consider it as from a

distance. It was from this habit of looking that the idea came to me that as a community we had fallen behind. And that was the beginning of my insecurity." (17) He recognises the unprotectedness and weakness of the Indian diaspora in Africa in the face of the struggle for power following the withdrawal of the colonial order. He explains his insecurity about the fatalism of his decaying, static community as his temperament. In fact, his lack of religious consciousness is largely responsible—"my own pessimism, my insecurity, was a more terrestrial affair. I was without the religious sense of my family. The insecurity I felt was due to my lack of true religion, and was like the small change of the exalted pessimism of our faith, the pessimism that can drive men on to do wonders" (18). As religion is the last mooring with which the Indian diaspora desperately attaches itself, Salim's disbelief and lack of religion cause his distinctness from others. He thus becomes a self-alienated particularity in his own community. Salim not only refuses to associate himself with but also feels disappointed at his community's shared tastes and values.

To seek to develop his particular character and nature and to assert his independence, Salim decides that breaking out of his social and racial ties and being rootless is the only way out. He explains: "I had to break away from our family compound and our community. To stay with my community, to pretend that I had simply to travel along with them, was to be taken with them to destruction. I could be master of my fate only if I stood alone." (22) The "wonder" that Salim does, driven by his pessimism, is to take over a shop that Nazruddin offers him in a far-off African country. He chooses to cross from the east coast right through to the centre of the continent, and to start his new life there alone. Salim's boundary-crossing journey at the opening of the novel is an indication that his identity will be a constant in-betweenness in perpetual becoming through his negotiation with different spaces.

A Bend in the River focuses on Salim's experiences of escaping from and moving between different spaces, in which his activities are passive reactions rather than active responses. Salim cannot change the happenings in the space; he can only adapt himself. The

continual and frequent movement in phantasmagoric places gradually paralyses his sentimental feeling of familiarity with and dependence on one specific location. Spatial and temporal homelessness goes hand in hand, rather than one displacing the other. Salim's experience of dislocation signifies the loss of his genuine belonging. The multiplicity of spatial and temporal homes available for him calls for his flexible conception of selfhood, one that is able to incorporate this multiplicity and to welcome the ensuing homelessness. Only in this way can one be bestowed the potential to be a new type of citizen of the world who can adapt him/herself to his/her rootlessness.

Though Naipaul captures mankind's voluntary break from their inherited attachments to a less secure but wider sphere of life through Salim, he at the same time questions the psychological and social viability of the ideal detachment that the old cosmopolitanism advocates. Salim escapes from his community and drives to the town at the bend in the river in the hope of making a fresh start. When he arrives there, he is supposed to feel free and happy. Nevertheless, he feels alienated and estranged. He still calls it "Nazruddin's town" and the shop that he now owns "Nazruddin's shop". No matter how dangerous it is to return home in the distant bush on the river at night, Zabeth, one of Salim's regular customers, has her own tribe and village, "things that were absolutely theirs" (80) to go back to, while Salim only feels "unprotected, an intruder" (9) in the presence of the forest and the river. He does not like the Indian people whom he often visits and has meals with, but still, he goes to their house "more for the sake of having somewhere to go than for the food" (31). Even later in the economic boom when he earns some money and becomes more financially secure, he "still thought of myself as a man just passing through" (110). When he finds out that his servant Metty, sent to live with him during the scattering of his family, has started a family with an African woman secretly, he becomes furious, but more frightened, because his last connection with his family, his home and his community through Metty is lost. He muses in depression:

Nothing stands still. Everything changes. I will inherit no house, and no house

that I build will now pass to my children. That way of life has gone. I have lost

my twenties, and what I have been looking for since I left home hasn't come to

me. I have only been waiting. I will wait for the rest of my life. When I came

here, this flat was still the Belgian lady's flat. It wasn't my home; it was like a

camp. Then that camp became mine. Now it has changed again. (123)

The flat, which used to be a symbol of Salim's independence from his self-contained

community, reminds him of his solitude without protection or support coming from the

familiar. Nostalgically, Salim in a mood of heartache and loss admits that "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" (123-4). This echoes Robbins' argument

that "absolute homelessness is indeed a myth, and so is cosmopolitanism in its strictly

negative sense of 'free[dom] from national limitations or attachments'" ("Comparative

Cosmopolitanism" 173).

At the end of Part Three in *A Bend in the River*, Salim recognises his final dependence.

He goes to visit Nazruddin in London, and allies himself to Nazruddin in a spirit of

compromise by engaging with Nazruddin's daughter Kareisha, arranged as his wife at home

in the east coast of Africa a long time ago. It is based on his decision "to rejoin the world, to

break out of the narrow geography of the town, to do my duty by those who depended on

me…When no other choice was left to me, when family and community hardly existed, when

duty hardly had a meaning, and there were no safe houses" (266). It may seem inconsistent

and ironic that the racial and social bonds that Salim initially rejects at last turn out to be the

source of the alliance and means for survival that he needs to create greater strength in the

larger world. To figure out Salim's transformation from being voluntarily rootless to actively

reattached, it is necessary to compare Indar with him.

In "One out of Many" and "Tell Me Who to Kill" in *In a Free State*, Naipaul adopts

the first-person narrative. The semi-literate or illiterate narrator tells the reader his own idea

about the world. The transformation of cosmopolitanism to a non-elitist mode is illustrated

through the first-person narrator's experience of migration. In *A Bend in the River*, since

Salim has limited scope of vision due to his limited education, Naipaul introduces other

characters to extend Salim's range of experience and scope of perception. Therefore,

comparison and contrast between the rise of plebeian cosmopolitanism represented by Salim

and the decline of the old, elitist one epitomised mainly by Indar can be made. Questions

about detachment and reattachment, rootlessness and rootedness are explored. Furthermore,

Naipaul implies that people in diaspora can learn to fuse reflective openness to the new with

reflective loyalty to the known, as long as they have a realistic vision about the poverty,

backwardness and disorder in the Third World, where the mixture of cultures is forced as a

consequence of (post)colonialism but threatened by the xenophobic nationalism.

Salim and Indar live on the east coast of Africa till their adolescence. Musing upon the

colonial education that Indar and he have received, Salim stresses that the European historical

representation of Arab, India and Africa has something to do with ideology and power—"all

that I know of our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written

by Europeans…Without Europeans, I feel, all our past would have been washed away, like

the scuff-marks of fishermen on the beach outside our town" (13). The Eurocentric colonial

education provides the standard of civilised enlightenment to judge ancient cultures, and

creates an illusion of what the students are and what they should be. This longing for the

affirmative and self-possessed Europeanness leads to Salim's separation from his family and

community. Salim takes over Nazruddin's shop in the far-off town in another African country

partly because he is attracted by the European flavour that Nazruddin describes to him. In the

dangerous, long drive from home to the town, it is "what Nazruddin had said about the

restaurants of the town, about the food of Europe and the wine" (28) that supports him.

Dreaming and longing for Europeanness is all that Salim can do; he is unable to put it into

practice. Having dropped out of school early, he associates going abroad to study with

"something rare and expensive, something beyond the means of my own family" (56). But what seems impossible for Salim to pursue is easy to obtain for Indar. Indar goes to a famous university in England to do a three-year course, "not only because he was rich (I associated going abroad to study with great wealth), but also because he had gone right through our local English-language college until he was eighteen" (20). Indar is also twice displaced, but in a totally different mode from that of Salim. Indar's state of detachment, nomadic non-belonging and rootlessness from the beginning is in an elitist form, since he is able to choose and be chosen to enter the metropolitan centre where the encounter with other, predominantly European, cultures is a matter of free, pleasant choice; while Salim is self-transplanted in the peripheral Africa where these conditions are not available, since otherness has lost its innocence as a result of colonialism, and divergent cultural experiences are not freely chosen but forced upon him. This is the decisive distinction between the two Indian diasporic characters in the novel. Salim, with a more materialist, pragmatic attitude, purely seeks to "occupy the middle ground", whereas the elitist road that Indar chooses takes him "soaring above the cares of the earth" (18). But it is Salim rather than Indar that can represent the ordinary mass in the world. After all, the gate leading to elitism is only open to a select few.

When Indar first appears in Salim's shop, Salim immediately spots that "there was London in his clothes, the trousers, the striped cotton shirt, the way his hair was cut, his shoes (ox-blood in colour, thin-soled but sturdy, a little too narrow at the toes)" (128). Travelling a lot in the world by aeroplane, Indar becomes "a self-made man, a cosmopolitan, international expert and advisor on the problems of emerging nations, an intellectual independent of others" (King 131). As a guest of the government, Indar lives in an air-conditioned, extravagant-looking house in the show-room style in the New Domain, where he befriends and is well regarded by other elite cosmopolitans. At Yvette's party, he shows perfect social manners, familiarity with Western academia of history and politics, and even American folk music! Indar invokes the privileged and self-serving image of the elite cosmopolitan.

Growing up in Africa, educated in England and currently working around the world, he is the fullest expression of European bourgeois capitalism, increasing flexibility of citizenship and globally aligned nomadism. Salim does not feel "resentful or jealous", because it is always "part of his [Indar's] style, what might have been expected" (127). In relation to cosmopolitan practices, the question of economic basis is addressed here by Naipaul. Not all men have equal access to the elite cosmopolitan's lifestyle. Unavoidably, those with greater average economic resources, higher education and better social skills will have easier access to the necessary infrastructure, engaging thus more intensively with such transnational activities and networks. It is highly likely that those less affluent and less skilled may lack the upward mobility. In other words, the elite cosmopolitan's mobility, social status and ability to develop global attitudes and skills are derived from and counter-posed against the immobility of certain groups who are somehow fixed in the local place.

Indar's appearance makes it possible for Salim to weave between the two spaces of the town and the Domain freely. In the Domain, Salim gets to know for the first time in his life elitist cosmopolitanism that is open to Indar, but not to him without the support of family wealth or a college degree obtained in the First World:

> But now, being with them [the foreigners] in the Domain, which in every way was their resort, and being admitted so easily to their life, their world of bungalows and air-conditioners and holiday ease, catching in their educated talk the names of famous cities, I swung the other way and began to see how shut-in and shabby and stagnant we in the town would have seemed to them. I began to get some sense of the social excitements of life on the Domain, of people associating in a new way, being more open, less concerned with enemies and danger, more ready to be interested and entertained, looking for the human worth of the other man. On the Domain they had their own way of talking about people and events; they were in touch with the world. To be with

them was to have a sense of adventure. (136)

Compared with the self-labelled cosmopolitans in Isabella in *The Mimic Men*, the elite

cosmopolitans in the Domain in *A Bend in the River* (lecturers and professors) are more

oriented toward intellectual-pursuits. Salim admires them based on the elitism and privilege

that the space of the Domain represents, and feels ashamed of his cynical and insecure life in

the town with so little to be shown. In the distinction that is made between the cosmopolitans

who are able to move across spaces and disempowered locals trapped in one place, a

spatialisation of elitist cosmopolitanism can be seen.

Though Salim is attracted by "the glory and the social excitements of the life" (144) in

the Domain, he soon finds elitist cosmopolitanism there is not realistic, but superficial,

swanky and condescending. Salim first realises this through Indar's monologue about his life

in England and his work around the world that runs twenty pages in Part Two in *A Bend in the*

River. The problem with Indar is that his rootlessness is forced rather than his conscious,

voluntary choice. Though an elite cosmopolitan, Indar struggles between crushing the past

like "trampling on a garden" (131) and his nostalgic homesickness. To be born in the Indian

diaspora in Africa determines that Indar has no home to return to in the first place. It indeed is

his voluntary act to leave Africa for England to further his study, but it actually is the painful

rage toward the destruction of his family that pushes him to break out of his attachments and

bonds. He confesses: "The thought of the work of two generations going to waste—it was

very painful. The thought of losing that house built by my grandfather, the thought of the risks

he and my father had taken to build up a business from nothing, the bravery, the sleepless

nights—it was all very painful." (164) Indar says to Salim: "It isn't easy to turn your back on

the past. It isn't something you can decide to do just like that. It is something you have to arm

yourself for, or grief will ambush and destroy you." (164) Naipaul implies here that it is

against human nature to forcibly repress homesickness, and thus queries the validity of the

absolute detachment and rootlessness of the old cosmopolitanism. Is it really necessary and

possible for a cosmopolitan to cut him/herself loose from all the attachments and bonds that define who he/she is? How can a cosmopolitan love the world and devote him/herself to humanity if he/she has no positive feelings to those who are inherently closer to him/her (for example, family and community)?

In this sense, Kwame Anthony Appiah's theory of adopting rooted cosmopolitanism represented by cosmopolitan patriots "attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people" ("Cosmopolitan Patriots" 618) has its significance. Although Appiah stresses the feasibility and necessity of having loyalties to nation-states as well as to smaller entities at the same time, he does not deny the natural inclination of mankind to have more love and obligations to kith and kin. In other words, cosmopolitans can be individuals who construct their identities from whatever cultural resources to which they find themselves attached, and there will be no contradiction if they begin their cosmopolitan openness and toleration to difference in the world from membership in morally and emotionally significant communities like family and ethnic group. At the end of *A Bend in the River*, while Salim reattaches himself to Nazruddin, Indar is self-destructively in exile with "some dream village in his head" (285) in London, doing the lowest kind of job. If Salim's reattachment saves him and equips him with cosmopolitan openness to the world, Indar's rootlessness destroys him and deprives him of his competence to immerse himself in foreign cultures. Naipaul does not celebrate rootlessness in the novel. He highlights the importance of keeping a balance between rootedness and a sense of place against mobility. What is "rooted" in his concept of cosmopolitanism is that as individuals move cognitively and physically outside their spatial origin, they continue to be linked to place, to the social networks that inhabit that space, and to the experiences, opportunities and resources with which that place provides them.

Indar's second—also fatal—problem with elitist cosmopolitanism is that his privilege is actually dependent and manipulated from afar. It is Indar's rootless position as "a man

without a side" (178) that enables him to be chosen to work for his outfit by his American friend. Indar mistakes the independent, even luxurious, global trotting to devote himself to the interest of Africans, or humanity as a whole, for his personal power, though from the start he understands that the outfit is "using the surplus wealth of the western world to protect that world [Africa]" (178). It is after the outfit folds that he finds out that he has been depending on American wealth for years. Without family or home, he "cared more about his outfit than he pretended" and "invested too much in that outfit of his" (282). So, when the outfit folds, he goes to New York to see his American friend. Compared with the high price associated with the richness of New York, Indar's family wealth in which he always takes pride seems to become nothing. The tremendous wealth of his American friend whom he used to think of "as his equal, his friend" (284) greatly shocks him. It makes his insistence on staying in an expensive hotel in New York quite ridiculous. Indar finally realises that he "had grown to depend on this man", while "there was nothing of Africa in that apartment, or in the dinner party. No danger, no loss" (284). Like in "One out of Many" in *In a Free State*, the American hegemony quietly creeps around in the background in *A Bend in the River*. It is a new imperialism in disguise. Indar's well-intentioned but under-informed outfit replaces the former conquerors and priests to conduct a civilising mission, while America, enjoying its wealth and power in comfort afar, "spoke of Africa as though Africa was a sick child and he was the parent" (177), without knowing the reality in Africa or having sincere intention to provide help. Far from being an order beyond hegemony, elitist cosmopolitanism that universalises the hegemonic culture and transforms the values associated with imperialism is at risk of becoming another form of hegemony.

Two years after the publication of *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul compared Graham Greene and himself in an interview:

> My travel is so different from that of Graham Greene and others. They're
>
> travelers in a world that's been made safe for them by empire. They write

books in which they can imagine the Europeanness of their characters against the native background. The primary difference between my travel and theirs is that while they travel for the picturesque, I'm *desperately* concerned about the countries I'm in. (Michener 70)

Naipaul's intention of telling the truth about the world with objectivity and without fear of revealing the reality has not changed since *In a Free State*. In *A Bend in the River*, through Indar and his intellectual friends in the Domain, Naipaul criticises the elite cosmopolitans who possess a strong international orientation but low preference for local involvement and obligations, and are out of touch with the harsh reality of the world. He implies that an underdog like Salim who gains immediate, though forced, contacts with the reality in the Third World can have the potential to possess cosmopolitan openness to the world full of different elements. A more realistic cosmopolitanism, according to Naipaul, should be bottom-up rather than top-down.

Werbner focuses on the "empathy, toleration and respect for other cultures and values" and "reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; of living together with difference" ("Towards a New Cosmopolitan Anthropology" 2) of cosmopolitanism. At its base, cosmopolitanism is the recognition and tolerance of people's differences across societies, but negotiating these differences can be tricky. Appiah is optimistic that talking, discussing, conversing and engaging in respectful dialogues about difference are the most effective ways of resolving differences and learning to live with them. Naipaul is more pessimistic, but more realistic. In *A Bend in the River*, the refusal of the elite cosmopolitans to get in touch with the African Other due to the remaining prejudice of colonialism becomes a euphemism for their affiliation with the First World culture. They breed a negative kind of cosmopolitanism.

The elitist discourse of cosmopolitanism stresses the slogan of democratisation, globalisation and multiculturalism as the new goal of world society. However, the elite

cosmopolitans depicted in *A Bend in the River* are strongly internationally connected but locally disconnected, reluctant to get involved in the local life or to take on local obligations. Their exclusive social field works against the ideal of cosmopolitanism. Indar never conceals his disgust with Africans. When Salim asks him whether he goes to the town at the bend in the river by steamer, he responds: "You're crazy. Cooped up with river Africans for seven days? I flew up." (131) When Salim shows him around the town as a host and guide, he does not have sympathy for the darkness and filth, poverty and backwardness that he sees. Knowing that Salim has lived there for six years, he hurts Salim with his condescending attitude: "And you've shown me everything?" (134) Indar's conception of Africa is also naïve and illusory. He is aware that the large number of refugees caused by tribal wars under tyranny is a stumbling block for Africa's future. However, instead of facing the problem, he simply wants to "remove them from the countries where they couldn't operate and send them, if only for a little while, to those parts of the continent where they could. A continental interchange, to give the men themselves hope, to give Africa the better news about itself, and to make a start on the true African revolution" (178), as if wiping out the existence of the refugees in Africa is a once-and-for-all resolution. He seems to forget the dilemma that his own diasporic community has experienced, that is, the collapse of the triangular framework between dispora, guest-land and homeland. Naipaul's slightly mocking tone becomes more ironic when Indar tells Salim that his idea is well-received at universities "where they would like to keep some kind of intellectual life going without getting involved in local politics" (179). Ignoring the mutual distrust and hatred between people from different cultures and nationalities in reality, elitist cosmopolitanism becomes an empty talk among the intellectuals who stay in the ivory tower. It is Naipaul's warning that elitist cosmopolitanism is utopian as the physical distance between the intellectuals and ordinary, oppressed people is not overcome.

Besides Indar, Naipaul constructs different models through other characters to explore the infeasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism in *A Bend in the River*. Of all the characters that may be said to represent some facet of elitist cosmopolitanism, Father Huismans comes the closest. Cosmopolitanism, viewed as curiosity in the Other, emphasises embracing the whole world. It is replete with curiosity about alien cultures and respect for encountered civilisations. The cosmopolitan model that Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry set out highlights the involvement of "a *curiosity* about many places, peoples and cultures and at least a rudimentary ability to locate such places and cultures historically, geographically and anthropologically", and "an *openness* to other peoples and cultures and a willingness/ability to appreciate some elements of the language/culture of the 'other'" ("Cultures of Cosmopolitanism" 470). The cosmopolitan outlook of Father Huismans is built upon such eager curiosity and a sense of adventure. The Belgian priest, headmaster at the local lycee as well, is keenly fascinated by African culture and religion. A self-absorbed art enthusiast, he considers Africa as "a wonderful place, full of new things" (70). He frequently travels into the interior of the bush to add items to his large collection of carvings and masks that, in his eyes, display the religious spirit of Africa. The Christian priest is dedicated to his own vision of Africa. He takes no side concerning the politics of the empire. Father Huismans is more interested in history as the comings and goings of civilisations; it is a large and almost aesthetic view of history that bypasses the difficult question of political morality.

It is also Father Huismans that explains the Latin inscription "*Miscerique probat populous et foedera jungi*" carved on the dilapidated Belgian monument by the European operators of the steamer to Salim—"he approves of the mingling of the peoples and their bonds of union" (70). The municipal motto's provenance in Virgil's *The Aeneid* becomes clear to the reader. In *The Aeneid*, Aeneas, while trying to reach Italy, is blown off course by bad weather and lands in Carthage in North Africa. He falls in love with the widow-Queen Dido at the instigation of the goddesses Juno and Venus, but because of the intervention of

the god Jupiter who is determined to have Aeneas proceed to Italy to lay the foundation for the future Rome, Aeneas abandons Dido and resumes his journey to Italy. Dido, left heart-broken, commits suicide. In *A Bend in the River*, Salim contends that "the great Roman god" supposedly disapproves "of a settlement in Africa, of a mingling of peoples there, of treaties of union between Africans and Romans" (70) on the grounds that African blood would pollute Roman blood. To Salim, the European settlers commit sacrilege against their god, as they twist the two-thousand-year-old words by altering three words in the original line in Virgil's poem, to celebrate only sixty years of the steamer service linking the African town to the capital. However, Father Huismans believes in the over-reaching misquotation that suggests miscegenation and contamination:

> They were words that helped him to see himself in Africa. He didn't simply see himself in a place in the bush; he saw himself as part of an immense flow of history. He was of Europe; he took the Latin words to refer to himself. It didn't matter that the Europeans in our town were uneducated, or that there was such a difference between what he stood for in his own life and what the ruined suburb near the rapids had stood for. He had his own idea of Europe, his own idea of his civilization. It was that that lay between us. Nothing like that came between me and the people I met at the Hellenic Club. And yet Father Huismans stressed his Europeanness and his separateness from Africans less than those people did. In every way he was more secure.
>
> He wasn't resentful, as some of his countrymen were, of what had happened to the European town. He wasn't wounded by the insults that had been offered to the monuments and the statues. It wasn't because he was more ready to forgive, or had a better understanding of what had been done to the Africans. For him the destruction of the European town, the town that his countrymen had built,

was only a temporary setback. Such things happened when something big and

new was being set up, when the course of history was being altered. (71-2)

Father Huismans approaches African history on the largest scale; the broad sweep of history

is what justifies the present. The local events, such as the destruction of the colonial town and

the ups and downs of contemporary politics, are only seen as disturbances created by a larger

movement of history that is coming into being. Father Huismans interprets what he observes

teleologically, in terms of a transcendent historical goal toward which everything is moving.

It is fitting that Naipaul attributes this perspective to a priest.

Szerszynski and Urry point out that cosmopolitanism involves "the search for, and

delight in, the contrasts between societies rather than a longing for superiority or for

uniformity" ("Cultures of Cosmopolitanism" 468). Nonetheless, in *A Bend in the River*, the

elitist cosmopolitan model that Father Huismans represents, which entails a particular set of

cultural predispositions and practices, is distinctively European. Salim insightfully notices the

problem. Salim feels that "the idea Father Huismans had of his civilization had made him live

his particular kind of dedicated life. It had sent him looking, inquiring; it had made him find

human richness where the rest of us saw bush or had stopped seeing anything at all" (92-3).

Father Huismans is an elite figure with too many imperialistic associations due to his

privileged status as half a holy man to legitimatise European imperialism and half a colonial

intellectual to implant European culture. Both his energy and vision are shown to be products

of European civilisation. As cosmopolitanism remains an option only available to the elite,

Father Huismans's cosmopolitan virtue of curiosity of mind and dedication is accompanied by

a corresponding weakness—seeing African history through the European framework that

assumes a continuous movement toward development. Father Huismans's keen interest in

Africa is questionable, since he has veneration for "everything connected with the European

colonization" (72). There exists a risk that elitist cosmopolitanism, a modernist argument

supposedly against the tyranny of narrow ethnocentrism and parochialism, cannot escape its Eurocentric bias.

Father Huismans has significant knowledge about African ethnic groups, but he does not express any concern about Africans and their living. He remains indifferent to "the state of the country" (69), unconcerned about Africans except in their role as artisans. His collection, therefore, resembles a detached European exhibition rather than a display of authentic cultural interest. Ferdinand comments: "It is a thing of Europeans, a museum. Here it is going against the god of Africans." (93) Father Huismans' elitist cosmopolitanism falls into an aesthetic one for visual consumption.

As a representation of a "preserver" of Africa's dying civilisation, Father Huismans is ultimately punished for his contradictory cosmopolitan views. There are echoes of the high-mindedness of Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in the description of Father Huismans' death. However, his fate is an ironic reverse of Kurtz's. Father Huismans is brutally murdered by the African bush-dwellers for having trespassed on alien territory; his head is spiked, in contrast to Kurtz who inflicts this act on the Africans; and his collection of African religious artefacts is whisked away to the United States by an American Afrophile. But it is not solitude that brings Father Huismans down. Salim stresses that it is rather the "vanity" of his idea of European civilisation that "made him read too much in that mingling of peoples by our river; and he had paid for it" (93). To Salim, it is ridiculously naïve to think that the insular, narrow and parochial local Africans are being open to the ideal of cosmopolitanism.

The white Belgian Raymond who has the contradictory position of being both a carrier of European culture and historian of African development is similar to Father Huismans. Claiming to be a latter-day Theodor Mommsen (the chronicler of the Roman Empire), Raymond is shown to be hampered by the kind of intellectual quibbling that belongs to the

European ideal of scientific truth in history. When Salim first meets Raymond in the Domain, Raymond wonders about the possibility of knowing truth in history:

> Time, the discoverer of truth. I know. It's the classical idea, the religious idea. But there are times when you begin to wonder. Do we really know the history of the Roman Empire? Do we really know what went on during the conquest of Gaul? I was sitting in my room and thinking with sadness about all the things that have gone unrecorded. Do you think we will ever get to know the truth about what has happened in Africa in the last hundred or even fifty years? All the wars, all the rebellions, all the leaders, all the defeats? (151)

Salim feels that Raymond's talk is only an extension of the mood of the Joan Baez songs played at the party. It is instinctively the product of a secure society that likes to play sentimentally with the idea of danger and fear. Raymond's intellectual doubts are placed in the context of a mental exercise in which only those who are securely removed from the African setting can indulge.

Salim finds Raymond's historical undertakings empty and devoid of the sentiment of native Africans. Raymond's writings, actually compilations of inaccurate and random details of Africa, are superficial and un-provoking. He does not "go behind the newspaper stories and editorials and try to get at the real events", but heavily depends on government decrees and newspapers, which "handled big people—businessmen, high officials, members of our legislative and executive councils—with respect" and "left out a lot of important things— often essential things—that local people would know and gossip about" (209). His focus on and trust of the local elite only provides him with superficial knowledge of Africa's issues and future economic, cultural, political and social development. The common fault of both Raymond's and Father Huismans' elitist cosmopolitanism is that they fail to probe the real tragedy of Africa and its people. Their elitist stance is un-cosmopolitan. Moreover, Raymond is not genuinely dedicated to preserving the truth. He wants to record the history of Africa

only because "he was a scholar, used to working with papers, and had found this place full of new papers" (211). Salim thus feels that Raymond, who also possesses profound learning of African culture, history and politics, even has "nothing like Father Huismans's instinct for the strangeness and wonder of the place" (211). Raymond falls short of Father Huismans because his elite cosmopolitan character is created through his intellectual exploitation of the African others.

Raymond represents the failure of another kind of elitist cosmopolitan model in a more political sense. He begins with political liberalism and the desire to avoid European presumptions, but ends up with mere politics. Raymond says: "It takes an African to rule Africa—the colonial powers never truly understood that. However much the rest of us study Africa, however deep our sympathy, we will remain outsiders." (156) This is a similar liberal view with that of Bobby in "In a Free State". But to avoid the presumption of imposing an outsider's view on Africa, by simple deduction, Raymond transfers the burden of interpretation solely to the Big Man, an African. He becomes the spokesman and supporter of the Big Man's totalitarian policies. An academic, historian and writer, he aids the Big Man with all the presidential speeches. At the end, he becomes the Big Man's white lackey. He merely exchanges the white man's presumptions for the black man's vanity. The main limitation of Raymond's elitist cosmopolitan model is his failure to map out and to fight for clear political alternatives to the nation-state in Africa. If cosmopolitanism remains an elitist affair, it will fail to strengthen democracy.

In one display of the Big Man's abusive power, Raymond is dismissed from the presidential entourage and from the capital. He pretends that he is still valuable to his protégé and tries to evade his failure by not admitting it. He cannot face the truth, and lives in anticipation of his recall in the Domain, an institute for training young African officials and a centre for international conferences. The Domain may be a sanctuary for Raymond, and a resort to experience an exotic holiday in Africa for his young wife Yvette. But it is more an

image symbolising the huge distance kept between the elite cosmopolitans and local people. The Domain is built up by the Big Man, who proclaims that he is creating modern Africa, "a miracle that would astound the rest of the world" and "something that would match anything that existed in other countries" (116). It becomes the Big Man's showplace. However, the establishment of the new space of the Domain is based on the destruction of the old space of real Africa, depending heavily on European capital, labour and technology:

> The bush near the rapids was being cleared. The ruins which had seemed permanent were being levelled by bulldozers; new avenues were being laid out. It was the Big Man's doing. The government had taken over all that area and decreed it the domain of the State, and the Big Man was building what looked like a little town there. It was happening very fast. The copper money was pouring in, pushing up prices in our town. The deep, earth-shaking burr of bulldozers competed with the sound of the rapids. Every steamer brought up European builders and artisans, every aeroplane. The van der Weyden seldom had vacant rooms. (115)

The Domain is built as a safe but enclosed enclave by "by-passing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages" (116). In the eyes of the local people, it becomes "a hoax" (119). Its separation from Africa's reality (poverty, backwardness and political disorder) determines its self-enclosure and self-delusion. The Domain turns into an accumulation of lies and false talk about Africa. Salim even has to "climb down from the exaltation of the Domain" and return to the town to "grasp reality again" (143). Lacking the immediate contact with the reality of the world, especially the Third World, and bypassing an earthly resolution, elitist cosmopolitanism is in the risk of indulging in empty talk. The ordinary, plebeian people from the Third World may still yearn for the seemingly attractive lifestyle of the elite cosmopolitans. Elitist cosmopolitanism falls back to a euphemism of being versed in First World culture and transforming its values associated with colonialism in disguise. In *A Bend*

in the River, the elite cosmopolitans in the Domain like Raymond cannot realise that the power of devoting to the humanity of Africa or the Third World that they think is their own is actually manipulated by the Big Man. The intellectual-oriented elitist cosmopolitanism is used to serve tyranny. Naipaul expresses his concern about the demonising of elitist cosmopolitanism under the totalitarian regime.

A Bend in the River begins a few years after the Belgians withdraw and the Big Man seizes command in an aggressive coup of nationalism. It should be admitted that the Big Man indeed brings some kind of peace to the country that used to be threatened by violent insurrections and tribal wars under the colonial domination. His nationalist propaganda seems attractive:

> The speech, so far, was like many others the President had made. The themes were not new: sacrifice and the bright future; the dignity of the woman of Africa; the need to strengthen the revolution, unpopular though it was with those black men in the towns who dreamed of waking up one day as white men; the need for Africans to be African, to go back without shame to their medicines of their grandfathers and not to go running like children after things in imported tins and bottles; the need for vigilance, work and, above all, discipline. (241)

The Big Man gives up his army uniform for a stylish jacket, cravat, leopard-skin chief's cap, and carved stick to sway the crowd. He also forsakes French, the language of former colonisers, for an African language.

All that the Big Man does serves his nationalist goal—the existence of a single, independent African nation. He represents the incompatible contradiction to the cosmopolitan ideal. Institutionally speaking, the old cosmopolitanism is often thought to be inherently anti-nationalistic as it calls for the creation of a world state, and, consequently, the cultivation of world citizenship. Nationalism, in contrast, enjoins the right of national self-determination.

Due to the tension between the two, it is enormously difficult for Naipaul to envisage cosmopolitanism trumping nationalism, as nationalism can take extremely destructive forms such as genocide, inter-ethnic slaughter, military authoritarianism and war, all of which can be found under the Big Man's totalitarian regime in the novel.

Although Salim never comes into actual contact with the Big Man in *A Bend in the River* as Marlow does with Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, the Big Man looms ominously in the background and his people can always feel his omnipresent control and power from the capital. His fanatical speeches come over the radio, his photographs and statues are placed everywhere, and rumours about his excesses abound. It is a sign of his tyranny, a consequence of his attempt to "impose order on nation-states in which tribal and traditional village life still is the norm and in which the old animosities of tribes, and the cultural and economic insecurities of the new elite, are likely to cause conflict" (King 120). In the second rebellion described in Part One of the novel, the Big Man terrorises the army by unexpectedly executing the officials. Seeking to lay his claim to the town at the bend in the river, he sends the imported white mercenaries to put down the rebellion of the soldiers, disbanding them and sending them into the bush. Salim begins to feel that "for the first time since independence there was some guiding intelligence in the capital, and that the free-for-all of independence had come to an end" (87).

As Salim has predicted, the Big Man is on the way of becoming a stereotype of the corrupt, incompetent and violent African dictator. A military dictator who destructively manipulates a large, illiterate populace, the Big Man rules by brutish force and threats under the name of nationalism. Building pretentious shrines dedicated to his mother, he exploits the villagers by organising pilgrimages to the bush, yet he disregards the country's defaced monuments and dilapidated buildings and any physical improvement to the bush area. He sells his Maoist little green book to the general populace and has a national Youth Guard marching, shouting his misleading maxims and slogans. He punishes the Youth Guard by

sending them "back to the bush, to do constructive work there" (243) when they fail to generate large sales of his book. The bush is used to intimidate his people: "*Citoyens*! *Citoyennes*! We will teach these people to be like monkey. We will send them to the bush and let them work their arse off." (243) After months of ordering those who rebel against his regime to be killed, he terrorises members of his own government. He asks all the officials to witness an execution while the man who will be executed has no idea at all. As the Big Man's photographs become more and more larger-than-life (at last just a face appearing in the photographs), Salim feels that the Big Man's sense of his own power becomes "a personal thing, to which we were all attached as with strings, which he might pull or let dangle" (217).

Under such a circumstance, the Big Man's people naturally tend to think about a new revolution against him. The Liberation Army opposed to the Big Man declares in a Fanonian leaflet that "many false gods have come to this land, but none have been as false as the gods of today. The cult of the woman of Africa kills all our mothers, and since war is an extension of politics we have decided to face the ENEMY with armed confrontation. Otherwise we all die forever" (248). Toward the end of the novel, when the Big Man is on his way to the town at the bend in the river, the rebellious Liberation Army resorts to killing to achieve liberation. The frightened Metty tells Salim: "They're 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're going to kill all the masters and all the servants. When they're finished nobody will know there was a place like this here. They're going to kill and kill." (322) Like the revolution against the colonisers, there will be bloodshed, chaos, destruction and violence. The revolution against a dictator will destroy the old totalitarian regime, but bring a new one, a worse one. Colonialism leads to decay, decay to revolution, revolution to chaos, then back to revolution. It is the hopeless civilians who are always caught in this vicious cycle. This is a problem that many newly emerging African nations face. Through the Big Man in *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul expresses his worry that African nationalism may easily become a form of

totalitarianism and violent revanchism. His opposition against such tyranny reflects his cosmopolitan vision.

Culturally speaking, cosmopolitanism is a thesis about the irrelevance of membership in a particular culture. In contrast, nationalism begins from the basic idea that a given different national culture is worth protecting and fostering. It aims at preserving such difference at all costs. According to Bhahba, cultural difference is "a process of signification through which statements *of* culture or *on* culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability, and capacity" ("Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences" 206). Cultural difference satisfies the nationalist claims "based on a 'we-them' distinction in which the 'them' are enemies who generally pose potential military threats and have to be excluded from the claimed territory" (Kaldor 48). At the end of *A Bend in the River*, all the properties of the powerless foreigners in the African country are radically nationalised, confiscated and unconditionally given to Africans incapable of managing the businesses. It is the Big Man's claim "to offer an African Socialism combining the black nationalist demand for cultural authenticity" (King 118). Ethnicity is used as a sign of cultural difference to mark boundaries in social relationships. Based on the "we-them" distinction, nationalism strengthens the xenophobic feeling toward all the foreigners (diasporic communities, exiles, expatriates, immigrants and refugees). In the prevailing notion of national belonging, cosmopolitanism that anticipates hospitality to others becomes impossible.

In *A Bend in the River*, Ferdinand is educated to hold to his national culture, but at last finds himself a puppet of the Big Man's tyranny and an accomplice of the totalitarian government. The growth of Ferdinand, a stereotypical model of "a new man of Africa" (54), is a representation of African nationalism's pathetic but destructive seeking for national belonging in the strategy of cultural difference. Ferdinand is doomed, on the other hand a victim of the postcolonial African nation that creates him.

At first, when Ferdinand is taken from the bush to the town to receive education at the lycee, he is a stranger of mixed tribal heritage and in urgent need to find a model. Without the moulding of a national culture, he experiences a process of mimicry. In his attempt to be a "young African on the way up, the lycee student, modern, go-ahead" (53), Ferdinand imitates the gesture of his European teachers. Even Mis' Salim, "a foreigner, someone from the far-off coast, and an English-speaker" (6), is regarded as part of the European culture into which Ferdinand wants to merge himself. At this early stage, Ferdinand is already a mimic man.

However, such mimicry does not develop as well as Ferdinand has expected. He is patronised by the reluctant Salim. His request to go to America to study business administration is crudely refused. He shows off his close relationship with Salim to his friends. Unfortunately, Salim, getting involved in the unreasonable entanglement with the African boys, mistakenly lets out his anger on Ferdinand. As Ferdinand knows more about Salim, Salim's image as a guide and role model gradually evaporates. Salim, merely a dull ordinary person with limited ability, cannot help him find a suitable identity. Ferdinand unceasingly confronts failures, chasing an identity moulded by European culture, and it is natural that he begins to think about seeking for a new one.

It is during the second rebellion that Ferdinand, shocked by the power of African nationalism, begins to have a vague understanding of his cultural belonging in the frame of his nation, completely different from the European identity that he used to pursue. Salim notices the change in Ferdinand:

> 'The god of Africans'—the words were Metty's, and Metty had got them from the leader of the uprising against the Arabs on the coast. I had heard the words for the first time that night when we heard the gunfire from the hydro-electric station and knew that we were safe. The words, occurring when they did, seemed to have released certain things in Ferdinand. Those days in the flat had been days of special crisis for Ferdinand, and he had ever since been settling

into a new character. This one fitted, or made more sense. He was no longer

concerned about being a particular kind of African; he was simply an African,

himself, ready to acknowledge all sides of his character. (93)

The reason why "the gods of Africa" has such an essential influence on Ferdinand is that the

nationalist term satisfies his urgent need for cultural, ethnic and religious belonging. It

arouses his national pride and respect. With this new perspective to view his nation,

Ferdinand criticises Father Huismans' cosmopolitan curiosity as a condescending gesture

toward the backward, primitive African culture.

Later, in the Domain where Ferdinand receives an elitist college education as a future

government official, he raises a sharp question in one seminar. He asks Indar: "Would the

honourable visitor state whether he feels that Africans have been depersonalized by

Christianity?" (140) Philip Resnick has argued that "Christianity with its notion that all were

brothers and sisters in Christ, posited a universalistic ethos" (240). Thus, the old cosmopolitan

ideal can be encountered in the universal religion. Here, Ferdinand regards Christianity as

diametrically opposed to everything indigenously African. The implication in his question is

that Christianity should be expelled from Africa so that the cultural and religious difference in

Africa can be preserved and recuperated. Ferdinand's hostility toward Christianity is

accompanied by his raised-up nationalist consciousness. The nationalist emphasis on cultural

difference and belonging holds a nation together, but at the same time, its focus on the

preservation of its people's own lineage leads to the will to destroy systematically the lineage

of the Other.

At the end of the novel, Salim, who is thrown into jail for smuggling ivory, goes to see

Ferdinand, the newly-appointed Commissioner of the town. But Ferdinand "seemed shrunken,

and characterless in the regulation uniform that made him look like all those officials who

appeared in group photographs in the newspapers" (318). He is in a state of hysteria. Facing

the hunger for money of the greedy officials, deteriorating tribal and racial conflicts, a large

number of refugees and the political disorder of his country, he realises that nationalism's defence for cultural difference, which used to function during the time of cultural uncertainty and un-decidability after the nation's independence, only benefits the ethnically authorised local dictator. Ferdinand knows clearly that there will be no return to the bush from which he comes. He says: "Nobody's going anywhere. We're all going to hell, and every man knows this in his bones. We're being killed. Nothing has any meaning…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." (319)

Though his support for nationalism is shattered and finally breaks down, and he currently is in a high position of power, Ferdinand does not lose the ability to imagine the situation of the powerless and to sympathise with them. He lets Salim off from jail and asks Salim to leave the country as secretly as possible. It is his gesture of returning the favour to Salim, who "took me [Ferdinand] in that time [the second rebellion] and treated me as a member of your own family" (94). Ferdinand's humanity transcends his nationalist consciousness that Salim is supposed to be an ethnically and culturally different "them". The dramatic episode, surrounded by brutality and inhumanity at the climax of the novel, is not simply Naipaul's imaginative leap. It signifies Naipaul's remaining hope for humanity: mankind can possess kindness to others, no matter how bleak the world is. Only in this way may cosmopolitanism come into existence.

Defined by Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge and Chakrabarty, cosmopolitanism is a humanist discourse of a "rights culture" that should be "historically appropriate in the light of decades of abuse of human and civil rights obscured by the totalitarian drawing of the iron curtain, or the neo-imperialist flourishing of the stars and stripes" (581). Obviously, Naipaul is sceptical about this: whose culture can and should be the bearer of such a universal "rights culture" advocating human moral goodness without becoming a new hegemony? He denies many cultural options in *A Bend in the River*. Cosmopolitanism cannot be represented by the

fatalist Indian culture from which Salim voluntarily escapes, or the hegemonic American culture whose enormous wealth supports Indar's luxurious globe-trotting and privileged world-citizenship, or the liberal European culture that the white elite like Father Huismans and Raymond pretentiously adopt. The xenophobic African culture that the Big Man implements and Ferdinand tries to defend is even a more dangerous threat to cosmopolitanism. It is thus impossible for a diasporic subject like Salim to find what Hall calls "something solid, something fixed, something stabilized" ("Negotiating Caribbean Identities" 282) in any one of them to organise his identity and a sense of cultural belongingness. Salim can only perceive the individual as an anonymous and insignificant entity in a disintegrating, rootless world.

However, as Champa Rao Mohan observes, the theme of homelessness and rootlessness, most forcefully put across in *A Bend in the River*, should be viewed "as a boon rather than a bane because a whole world of possibilities opens up to people without a side" (126). Since Naipaul treats cosmopolitanism as a name for the acceptance of ever-shifting identities, his oblique representation of Salim's rootlessness as multiple-rooting foreshadows and opens up the new ways of understanding cosmopolitanism as knowledge of and care for other cultures. A cosmopolitan homelessness positively foreshadows the possibility of looking at the self-Other relationship as imbued by ever-shifting parameters and relating to the world through imaginative means other than those of a given identity. In a new cosmopolitan frame, Naipaul embraces the complexity of belonging.

In *A Bend in the River*, presenting the failures of three different elitist cosmopolitan models represented by Indar, Father Huismans and Raymond respectively, Naipaul carefully avoids generating another elitist one through Salim. The plebeian cosmopolitanism that Salim represents involves comprehending the specificity of his own local context in Africa, to connect to other locally specific contexts and to be open to a globalising world. To Naipaul, the recognition of reality and truth in the Third World is an essential presupposition of plebeian cosmopolitanism, that is, the existence of economic and political inequalities in the

world and thus the difficulty of "the mingling of the peoples and their bonds of union" should be admitted. It is fundamentally different from the culturally and socially encapsulated elitist cosmopolitanism.

Salim is essentially different from Indar, because his self-transplantation is not from Africa directly to England, but first within the territory of the African continent, and then to England. In his long residence in Africa, Salim has to have an immediate contact with Africa's reality, though he may be forced to become involved and deep in his heart rejects everything indigenously African. He does business with Zabeth, reluctantly becomes Ferdinand's patron, and secretly visits African brothels. He witnesses the refusal, fear and rage toward modernity of the Africans living in the self-enclosed bush, the rise and fall of Ferdinand under the Big Man's tyranny, and the humiliating flight of Indar, Raymond and Yvette. He experiences the shortage of material supply, the intolerable impatience to wait for business to grow and the sudden economic boom in the town, and then suffers in the bloody rebellion and under the greed of African officials and soldiers as an outsider without protection or support. At last, he becomes a victim under the Big Man's xenophobic nationalisation, and loses all his business and property that he has worked hard to build up. Salim is even forced to violate his own morality to smuggle gold and ivory to earn money.

Still, Salim admits that he "belonged to the town" (143) while the Domain in which Indar lives is "part of the President's politics and *we* [my emphasis] didn't want to become entangled with that" (134). Visiting Nazruddin in London, he muses in his hotel room:

> Sometimes as I was falling asleep I was kicked awake by some picture that came to me of my African town—absolutely real (and the aeroplane could take me there tomorrow), but its associations made it dreamlike. Then I remembered my illumination, about the need of men only to live, about the illusion of pain. I played off London against Africa until both became unreal, and I could fall asleep. After a time I didn't have to call up the illumination, the

mood of that African morning. It was there, beside me, that remote vision of

the planet, of men lost in space and time, but dreadfully, pointless busy. (281)

Travelling back from London, Salim feels relieved "at being in the town, seeing the night-

time pavement groups, and finding myself, so quickly after arrival, something of the forest

gloom still on me, in my own street—all there, and as real and as ordinary as ever" (298).

Salim's life in the African town is a process in which he continually embeds himself into the

local landscape and space. The African town is not Salim's subjective invention of his home;

it is imposed on him by space and time. In Eyal Chowers' view, "a space-based home…is a

familiar place (even if not always an enjoyable one) that allows the self to get reacquainted

with itself by evoking certain memories, emotions, and evaluations" (235). It is natural that

part of the human soul is drawn to the location-specified sensuality. In the dull life repeating

itself there day after day, Salim becomes familiar with Africa's reality, and integrates into the

local society. The longer he lives, the stronger the feeling of familiarity and attachment with

Africa is bred. To quote Chowers again: "This bond between persons and space establishes an

investment: humans care for the future of the place, since its preservation is a precondition for

everything they are." (235) In *A Bend in the River*, Salim's experience in Africa enables him

to get closer to the reality that the elite cosmopolitans like Indar, Father Huismans and

Raymond cannot or refuse to see. Salim is concerned about Africa's future and Africans'

suffering, so is Naipaul. Such a realistic perspective allows Salim's plebeian cosmopolitanism

to sympathise with the powerless and rootless. It tallies with not only Ferdinand's, but also

Naipaul's, belief in humanity.

More significantly, plebeian cosmopolitanism that Naipaul clear-sightedly recognises

(if he does not advocate) as a trend from below is not by choice but as a condition of survival.

It explains why he does not deny that the context in which immigrants and refugees move is

not contradictory to the inclusion of kinship that continues to confirm the significance of

homeland connections. People on the move often rely on these ethnic networks to move, and

to find accommodation and employment once in destination. For Naipaul, plebeian cosmopolitanism should be rooted somehow. In *A Bend in the River*, Salim's final escape to London to be with his fiancée's family is a proof. After all, his future father-in-law Nazruddin has done perfectly well in balancing rootedness and mobility. Nazruddin migrates from his home in the east coast of Africa to a far-off African town in another country, then to Uganda, later Canada, finally England. But no matter where he lives, Nazruddin "remained bound to our community because he needed husbands and wives for his children" (23).

Kerry McSweeney highly praises Nazruddin as "the most attractive character in the novel, who knows how to survive, how to function positively in alien societies, and how not to take himself too seriously" (194). Happy and vivacious, Nazruddin can always find the better sides in every country that he adopts, no matter how bad the political situation is in Uganda, or how big the sum of money he loses in an investment by which he is tricked in Canada. In London, he clearly knows that he has to live not so nobly. He has to charge ridiculously low rents to break even for his six flats providing private accommodation, but only attracts strange people, who may dump the rubbish outside the flat door, or piss in the lift, or even refuse to pay every kind of bill by locking the door from inside. Nazruddin has to match wits with every kind of cunning tenant from all around the world, but he does not seem to care, because his experience of migration around the world tells him that "we've come here at the wrong time. But never mind. It's the wrong time everywhere else too" (280). He is clearly aware that as "one of the crowd" (274) pursuing the flowing of capital crossing borders, he has no choice as to whether or not to become a cosmopolitan. He has to acquire the cosmopolitan skills of adaptation and innovation, and learn to survive in another place. This proves Abbas' argument that "cosmopolitanism has been seen as an ability to acquit oneself, to behave well, under difficult cultural situations by juggling with multiple perspectives—even when these perspectives were forced upon us or adopted in indifference" (783). Plebeian cosmopolitanism is a state of readiness and a matter of competence to make

one's way into other cultures, through intuiting, listening, looking and reflecting. This is why Nazruddin can clearly realise the universal tendency of migration and calmly accept the wickedness of immigrants like himself for the first priority of survival, and at the same time, makes himself "at home" in the Gloucester Road, whose "cosmopolitan" population fills his days with "encounters and new observations" (280-1). Salim needs to learn all these from Nazruddin, his mentor, to look at the "shrunken and mean and forbidding" Europe in a more pragmatic way, and to accept the fact that a large number of people like himself who squash themselves in London, "the great city", live "like puppets in a puppet theatre" (269).

Naipaul may not yet agree with or advocate the pragmatic, or even opportunistic, cosmopolitanism that Nazruddin represents, but Nazruddin is the only plebeian cosmopolitan model that survives successfully, also relatively happily, in *A Bend in the River*. Nazruddin shows to the uneducated immigrants without the protection of nationality how to survive and cope with difference. It is a good starting point to embrace cosmopolitanism in a more realistic way. Naipaul may even project a small part of himself on Nazruddin, for at that time, he and his wife Pat happened to live in "a tiny London flat in South Kensington off Gloucester Road" (Michener 70). Seeking to tell the truth about the Third World to which he always travels back, Naipaul begins to understand that plebeian cosmopolitanism embodied in the mass immigrants in London is not the same as the elitist one that exists in academia.

Since *In a Free State*, Naipaul has criticised the danger of fusing the ideal cosmopolitanism with the real one. It is the same clear-sightedness and sensibility that drives him to seek for and tell the truth with honesty in *A Bend in the River*:

> Naipaul's Tiresian vision may appear unnecessarily bleak, but the reality upon which his sensitive intelligence plays is our reality, and we profit from his insights. For his aimless, disillusioned characters, there are numbers of real men; for his themes of hypocrisy and misguided schemes, there are sufficient examples in actual events. He is subjective and is as much the product of the

> world he describes as any of his most unsavory protagonists, which is to say
>
> only that he knows the territory. (Hamner 74)

To Naipaul, the discourse of elitist cosmopolitanism does not pay enough attention to the fact that there is a lived, realistic cosmopolitanism that he observes in his world travels, and it is of growing importance. A peculiarity exists in the fact that cosmopolitanism can occur as unintended and unseen side effects of actions that are not intended as cosmopolitan in the normative sense. Naipaul is a pessimist regarding the really-existing cosmopolitanism in the real world. In his eyes, it is ridiculously naive to think that people, organisations and governments are becoming open to the ideal of cosmopolitanism. But it does not mean that his bleak vision is not needed. On the contrary, Naipaul's cosmopolitan outlook is helpful to understand the really-existing cosmopolitanism in the world.

Through the Indian diaspora in *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul rejects the claim that cosmopolitanism is a conscious and voluntary choice, and too often the choice of the elite. His attention is drawn to the fact that the emerging cosmopolitan reality is also a function of coerced choices or a side effect of unconscious decisions. Elitist cosmopolitanism fails to offer some kind of moral anchorage to those who lose the older moorings of home, family, community and nationality. He sets out the failures of different types of elitist cosmopolitan models in the novel, to announce the decline and infeasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism, especially in a xenophobic situation. As Resnick points out, cosmopolitanism "thrives best where values such as tolerance, pluralism and cultural diversity take centre stage; but such values are often those of affluent/liberal/democratic societies" (247). Naipaul cautions that elitist cosmopolitanism is the claimed prerogative of the educated and professional elite, secure in their class position and transnational subjectivity, but culturally and socially encapsulated. Naipaul criticises elitist cosmopolitanism as imperialism and hegemony under another guise in its civilising attempt to transform the values long associated with European empires.

Naipaul also notices that nationalism, which subsumes society under the nation-state, makes the cosmopolitan task almost impossible. He lashes out at the antique, archaic and primordial African nationalism directed against the universalism of modern citizenship under dictatorship and tyranny in *A Bend in the River*. The backward-looking African nationalism severely threatens the forward-looking cosmopolitanism. Its preservation of its people's own lineage and destruction of the Other's lineage is an extreme caution to cosmopolitanism. At the very least, his ethical option for homelessness means a refusal of the mono-cultural claim of an ethnicised nation. Naipaul is just scathing about humanity.

No matter what, Naipaul still has hope for humanity. By exploring the theme of homelessness and rootlessness as a consequence of the (post)colonial experience in *A Bend in the River*, he questions the psychological and social feasibility of the absolute detachment that the old, elitist cosmopolitanism celebrates. He regards plebeian cosmopolitanism that may actually exist as a reality of (re)attachment and involvement. After all, human beings are made by their language, literature, culture, science, religion and civilisation; they owe a debt of provenance to the social bonds that have formed them. It is an urgent need for the transnational immigrants and refugees who depend on attachment and community available for their survival and constitution of the individual. He sees plebeian cosmopolitanism as a name for the ever-shifting and ever-vibrant space in which common people fuse reflective openness to the new with reflective loyalty to the known. The plebeian bodies within which cosmopolitanism is located are capable of learning to be more or less at home anywhere and to accept being fully at home nowhere, as the bottom-up tendency of the mingling of peoples becomes an inevitable aspect of life in the global village. Naipaul feels sympathetic about the powerless, cares about their struggle for survival, and believes in their humanity.

The new cosmopolitanism is often equated with some degree of reflexivity and self-transformation. Naipaul's literary representation of the cosmopolitan homelessness suggests that the texture of those affective social relationships is not given or fixed, but experienced as

an oscillation and re-conceptualisation between belonging and disorientation. Naipaul takes a big step of translating and re-configuring the old, elitist cosmopolitan ideal into concrete social realities in *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River*, in a self-reflexive manner. Cosmopolitanism should also reorient itself to reconsider how to cultivate mankind's ability to cope with legitimate difference in a more pragmatic, realistic way under its myriad challenging, threatening fronts, as Naipaul does.

Chapter IV

"Not Being at Home Anywhere, But Looking at Home": The Embrace of Plebeian

Cosmopolitanism in *The Enigma of Arrival*, *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*

The Enigma of Arrival marks the beginning of a new phase characterised by greater

maturity and comprehensiveness of vision in Naipaul's growth and development as a

cosmopolitan writer. In comparison with his earlier fiction, his protocol is more individually-

engaged and inward-looking. Suman Gupta obverses the reflective and regenerative direction

of Naipaul's literary efforts since the late 1980s:

> These books [*The Enigma of Arrival*, *A Turn in the South* and *A Way in the*
>
> *World*] seem to me to be linked by their sense of retrospection, and by their
>
> self-conscious revisiting of themes which Naipaul had dealt with before. The
>
> return to previously discussed themes is not, however, merely a reiteration of
>
> observations Naipaul had made already. These books indicate an advance on
>
> his previous observations, usually by addressing the gaps and omissions which
>
> had been manifest in his earlier writings. (54)

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul continually rectifies and reinterprets his personal past with

the geopolitical and socio-cultural history of the diversely-structured and globally-centred

world in a different light. His outward-looking impulse is replaced by a desire to look inwards

and to integrate his immediate microcosm in his encompassing world vision. The exploration

of the theme of change and death enables Naipaul to alter his way of perceiving human

conditions and to arrive at a more balanced, realistic perspective on life that helps him

participate in the process of life and arrive finally at self-definition.

From the opening epigraph dedicated to Naipaul's younger brother Shiva who died at

the age of forty in 1985, to the ending section of a farewell to his younger sister Sati who died

at the age of fifty in 1984, *The Enigma of Arrival* is pervaded by intimations of mortality. It is

an elegy of Naipaul (afflicted by gloom and melancholy in his mid-fifties) for the

vulnerability and transience of any particular individual and community. *Half a Life* and its sequel *Magic Seeds*, his last two novels, are his responses to another form of death—the death of the novel. In a 1995 interview with Alastair Niven, Naipaul says that the true novels that he looks to are those within the realist mode in the nineteenth century that "get at certain aspects of truth that earlier forms like narrative poems and essays couldn't get at" (5). Although he claims that the novel is dead, his work is finished, and he will write no more fiction, he moves in and out of fiction over the years. *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* demonstrate that Naipaul's realist impulse is his most abiding artistic motive to "follow difficult instincts about the truth" (Niven 5).

In his Nobel Lecture "Two Worlds", Naipaul says: "I will say I am the sum of my books. Each book, intuitively sensed and, in the case of fiction, intuitively worked out, stands on what has gone before, and grows out of it. I feel that at any stage of my literary career it could have been said that the last book contained all the others." (182-3) He makes a coherent summary of his literary career by carrying his earlier realist literary creation of *A House for Mr Biswas* and *A Bend in the River* further in his last two novels. *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* make no clear use of the author's autobiography, but rely on dialogue and the telling of multigenerational lives, stories and histories of Willie Somerset Chandran and his family crossing multiple borders through compressed anecdotes. Though in a different form, there are allusions to and recapitulations of major concerns of *The Enigma of Arrival* (for example, border crossing, diaspora, exile, migration and citizenship of the world) in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* in a new manner coming with a confidence in technique and vision formed by age and experience. The revisiting themes of the three novels suggest Naipaul's courage to "express the movement of one's soul and of the world" (Niven 5), not only from his own perspective, but also from the point of view of other people, even his opposite or reverse image like Willie. It is Naipaul's humanistic value that frames the imaginative universe that he, as a responsible realist novelist, creates in the three novels, in the process of finding the

correct form to "capture something of the changes in the world, the changes in empire, the changes in the colonised" (Niven 5).

Though labelled as "a novel in five sections" on the title page, *The Enigma of Arrival* is actually a combination of fiction and non-fiction. The first-person narrative contains a strong autobiographical resonance. Naipaul himself acknowledges this in an interview with Andrew Robinson: "The book has this autobiographical element, which I have long wanted to do, for a very simple reason. The neutral personality would not really be true enough." (107) Indeed, the novel, about a man indistinguishable from Naipaul in virtually every detail of his background and history, fits into a pattern established by Naipaul in which his own experiences and travels lay the groundwork for his fiction such as *Miguel Street*, *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, events and settings are drawn directly from Naipaul's life, and the result is a narrative that portrays the author in the past and at the narrative present. It describes selected incidents from Naipaul's youth, but focuses most closely on his residence of over a decade in the Wiltshire countryside in England. It discusses the circumstances surrounding the production of many of his books, and describes the comfort and despair involved in pursuing the writer's vocation. His travels are also well documented, particularly his first journey from Trinidad to England, several return visits, and latest journey back to Trinidad upon the sudden death of Sati. As Naipaul himself proclaims that "the writer, the observer, that is scrupulously myself…It's closer to the truth" (Gussow 16), most readers would read the book as a "thinly-veiled autobiography" (Thieme, "Thinly-Veiled Autobiography" 1376).

The autobiographical crust of *The Enigma of Arrival* makes it natural for the reader to see the unnamed narrator as Naipaul himself. Sten Pultz Moslund reads the narrator as "a migrant figure, uprooted, wandering, traversing the globe physically and imaginatively" (175). In my opinion, Naipaul's character in his own work is a new cosmopolitan. Hardly distinguishable from Naipaul (a cosmopolitan intellectual), the middle-aged narrator, from

Trinidad of Indian ancestry, is also a writer who has written several books and achieved some international recognition. Since his graduation from Oxford University, he has mainly lived in London and travelled extensively to Africa, Asia, and the South and North America. Willie in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* is also a cosmopolitan figure, but more like the plebeian migrant characters in the dilemma of belonging in *In a Free State*. In *Half a Life*, Willie, the son of a Brahmin father and a mother of the lowest caste, runs away from India because he feels ashamed of his mixed-caste background. After a college education in London, he drifts with his wife Ana to her Portuguese colony in Africa, abandons it eighteen years later when it is on the brink of a new war, and goes to Berlin to take temporary refuge with his younger sister Sarojini who marries a German. *Magic Seeds* opens with Willie contemplating the fact that his German visa cannot be renewed after his six-month sojourn. Following Sarojini's advice, he goes back to India to join an underground guerrilla movement, which is thought to be serving the cause of the poor. After confusing, at times terrifying and ultimately futile years in the movement, he surrenders to the police and gets imprisoned. Finally, with the help of Sarojini, Willie returns to London under terms of a special amnesty, and takes up his first real job in an architecture firm after half a life of hiding and passivity. Unlike the elite cosmopolitan narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* who is supposed to feel at home everywhere thanks to his physical mobility, Willie is "not being at home anywhere, but looking at home" (*Magic Seeds* 74) since he is always compelled to move within and between national borders. Objectively speaking, his experiences in different geographies comprise a single narrative of migration and identity politics, delineating a stark trajectory beginning with the brutalisation and dispora of peoples as a result of colonisation and decolonisation; subjectively speaking, the multiple border crossing becomes his means of resisting the obligation to the locality to which he finds himself attached and detached curiously at the same time. Willie's dilemma does not simply reflect a personal tragedy of dislocation and displacement; it shows the challenge of achieving globality in the new millennium.

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the embrace of the idea of crossing borders and travelling in the global world entails the narrator incorporating his provincial colonial gaze with a temporal dimension that considers the vertical distribution of difference, heterogeneity and hybridity across the time. The narrator uses the particular landscape of Wiltshire to signify the global as a whole and invites comparison between different places, humans and non-humans. He explicitly compares, blends and hybridises the landscape of Wiltshire with the landscapes and geologies from other parts of the world. In Moslund's words, the narrator "sees or *senses* the English landscape *through* other, radically different topographies—alpine and tropical" (185). The narrator makes close observations of how snow, asphalt crusts and rivulets "created, in small, the geography of great countries", and likes to think that "this geography in miniature was set…in a vaster geography" (46-7). The flint slopes and chalk valleys remind him of "a Himalayan valley strewn in midsummer with old, gritted snow" (18), the shape and texture of drifting snow of "a Trinidad beach where shallow streams—fresh water mingled with salt, salt predominating or lessening according to the tides—ran from tropical woodland to the sea" (46), the sound of a great fire from a burning-pit of the same overpowering noise of a big waterfall in South America that he heard more than twenty-five years ago, a muddy footpath of a mire of animal excrement in Kigezi in Uganda, and a collapsed boat house of a tropical river ruin "somewhere on the Orinoco or Amazon or the Congo" (225). He even admits that working on an African story (similar to "In a Free State"), he "projected Africa on to Wilshire. Wiltshire—the Wiltshire I walked in—began to radiate or return Africa to me" (187). Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry have argued that "the language of landscape and of cosmopolitanism is thus a language of mobility, of abstract characteristics and comparison" ("Visuality, Mobility and the Cosmopolitan" 127). Cosmopolitanism is conceived as a quality of the mind that allows the cosmopolitans to successfully navigate the presence of the non-homogeneous landscape of different places in a globalising geography. The global mobility of

the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* enables him to develop a capacity reflexive on

landscape; his cosmopolitan outlook and global consciousness are more meaningful.

What attracts the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* in the Wiltshire manor is rather the

people participating and interfering in the landscape than the landscape itself. It is a typical

feature of a cosmopolitan who is supposed to have a deep interest in human beings, especially

those of different backgrounds. As Horace Engdahl comments, in *The Enigma of Arrival*

Naipaul "visits the reality of England like an anthropologist studying some hitherto

unexplored native tribe deep in the jungle" (xii). Jack and Les the farm workers, Jack's father-

in-law ("the subject of a poem Wordsworth might have called 'The Fuel-Gatherer'"), the farm

manager, dairymen, Bray the car-hire man, the Phillipses the manor servants, old Mr Phillips

who used to be a courier boy, Pitton the gardener, the unnamed reclusive landlord and his

associate Alan the writer—all of them are intently observed and studied by the narrator. In an

interview with Mel Gussow, Naipaul claims that he "felt sympathy for the people in *The*

Enigma of Arrival", and "it wouldn't be worth my while to write about people if I were not

sympathetic to them" (16). Naipaul's major concern in *The Enigma of Arrival* about not

highly-educated characters doing unfavourable jobs is consistent with his plebeian-oriented

cosmopolitan perspective in *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River*.

The ancient, multi-layered English landscape in *The Enigma of Arrival* in which the

narrator lives is compared to Egypt and India concerning its numerous sacred sites including

Stonehenge and Winchester (a candidate for King Arthur's Camelot). Moving into a rented

cottage in the pastoral Wiltshire manor, the narrator recalls that his knowledge of Salisbury

initially comes from a reproduction of the Constable painting of Salisbury Cathedral in his

third-standard reader before he was ten in Trinidad, "which I had thought the most beautiful

picture I had ever seen" (5). Iain Chambers argues:

> Symbolically transformed into an empty landscape in the canvases of
>
> Constable and Gainsborough, the countryside provided a suitably placid

metaphor, once the potential disturbance of agricultural labourers and the rural

poor had been literally removed from the picture, for an abstractly conceived

national culture. It offered a world neatly separated from the dirty, utilitarian

logic of industry and commerce; a world in which it became possible to

imagine the lost community and real nature of 'Britishness'. (32-3)

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the narrator's gaze and imagination, through the discursive

framework from his colonial education in Trinidad and the filter provided by his cultural

baggage, initially amount to "nothing more than the authentication of an idealised imagination:

a reiteration of the very shaping of an image of a national, healthy English race out of rural

landscapes" (Moslund 177). When the rain of the first four days stops, he goes out to look for

the walk that takes people near Stonehenge, the ancient wellspring of precisely the culture

that he regards as immutable, that of England. In the eyes of the narrator who newly arrives in

the countryside, the quintessential English landscape, objectified in the prehistoric

Stonehenge, seems like "an unchanging world" (3). Feeling Englishness in terms of certainty,

fixity and homogeneity, the narrator has to struggle with his alienation of being "in the other

man's country" (6) and feeling of being "unanchored and strange" (13).

An immigrant may exert much effort to adapt and assimilate to the host society, but

the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* is rather a new cosmopolitan living among the English

locals in the Wiltshire manor. His cosmopolitan position situates him outside of the local

arena with a cool distanciation, scepticism and reflexivity together with a care for the locals.

In "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture", Ulf Hannerz distinguishes the

cosmopolitan-local dualism in relation to a world culture made up of interconnecting and

varied local cultures:

Perhaps real cosmopolitans, after they have taken out membership in that

category, are never quite at home again, in the way real locals can be. Home is

taken-for-grantedness, but after their perspectives have been irreversibly

affected by the experience of the alien and the distant, cosmopolitans may not view either the seasons of the year or the minor rituals of everyday life as absolutely natural, obvious, and necessary. There may be a feeling of detachment, perhaps irritation with those committed to the local common sense and unaware of its arbitrariness. (248)

Occupying the opposite end of a continuum consisting of various forms of attachment, the cosmopolitans and locals diverge with respect to the degree of attachment to the specific locales, places, states, countries, cultures, economies, institutions and traditions. Compared with the locals who are usually bound by their territorial and cultural attachments, cosmopolitans possess a more open attitude toward the world. Cosmopolitans, because of their perceptual global perspective constructed from their global trotting, are more conscious that the strength of transnational connections increasingly transforms the everyday life of the locals.

With his cosmopolitan view, the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* concerns himself with the dynamic relations between the local and the global. He gives priority to change and flow rather than fixity—"change was constant. People died; people grew old; people changed houses; houses came up for sale" (32). There is "no fixed community" (33) in the rural Wiltshire, since the English locals have become as "rootless" (241) as the immigrants. Many English locals, without "the true vocation" associated with a legitimate education, "in this agricultural, non-industrial part of England were curiously unanchored, floating" (261). Some dairymen are "itinerants, wanderers" (33), frequently moving to new places where they can find a temporary job. The new farm workers, city people "with a new kind of job and skill", are "almost migrant agricultural workers" or "people on the move" (62). Not coming to the valley to stay, they are not very friendly. The dairymen, the farm workers and the Philipses have no plan to buy a house of their own; instead, all of them see houses "as belonging to other people" (59). Les and his wife Brenda treat the manor cottage "as a place of shelter, not

as a place to which you could transfer (or risk transferring) emotion or hopes—this attitude of the new couple to the thatched house seemed to match the more general new attitude to the land. The land, for the new workers, was merely a thing to be worked" (59). The English locals are different from Mr Biswas, a local Trinidadian who has a daring desire for a house of his own and in the last months of his life stupendously "found himself in his own house, on his own half-lot of land, his own portion of the earth" (Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas* 6). In *The Enigma of Arrival*, even the narrator's wealthy landlord who has inherited a large estate has to sell off some cottages on his land to maintain the rest still owned by him. The attachment or confinement to the rural land does not remain a symbolic foundation of Englishness; the nomadic English locals no longer have a sense of belonging to a place, not to mention to a nation.

The English countryside, a central role in the imperialist discourse, used to be viewed as the source of essential Englishness. According to Chambers, it represents "a national, and prevalently nostalgic, myth of 'Englishness'…tied to the stable logic of tradition and community" (33). The intimate connection between the English countryside and the construction of English national identity is often characterised both in visual and written forms. However, in Naipaul's subversive representation in *The Enigma of Arrival*, the rural Wiltshire is occupied by "workers, people looking for employment…people for whom in England, even in this well-to-do part of England, there was no longer room: people coming down from the Midlands and finding themselves dispossessed, without lodgings or security" (333). Naipaul uses the English population in movement and migration to question the accepted view of Englishness, and to deconstruct the cultural camouflage of the former Empire, represented by the rural landscape imagined to be archetypal, enduring and static. It is worth noticing that for the English locals (especially the young ones), moving to the countryside is no longer for the same reason as a gentleman in a Victorian novel roaming the countryside with love for the land. Their existence in the countryside is a materialist, realistic

one—a job that does not require too much education or skill. It is purely about a means for survival. This explains why whenever there are new people moving into the manor, their label as "town people" or "city people" is always emphasised. Les, Brenda and the Philipses, all moving from nearby towns, intentionally "separate from the life of country people" by frequenting pubs and outfitters in the town "with their special style and pride" (69).

The narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* moves to the Wiltshire manor from London after a painful blow to his writing career; he even has to worry about the high cost of heating for the cottage. He finds a terrible similarity between himself and an old racehorse sent to the valley to die. He muses: "So famous, so pampered, earner once of so much money; and now alone in a small, roughly fenced paddock, waiting for death, without crowds or acclaim." (40) His notion of Englishness begins to crumble. He realises that the image of a timeless, unchanging English countryside is only a historically-situated social construct. The predominant rural image is in constant movement; it is part of and subject to social changes. Altered by intensive industrialisation and modernisation (farm machinery, a mechanical barn, trucks, a Land-Rover, a military base, military aeroplanes and a highway), the rural life is crumbling and decaying. While the city begins to represent progress and civilisation, the countryside is considered as primitive backwardness. Formerly associated with peace and tranquillity, it is now seen as a place that escapes the contemporary world's problems, problems constructed as being essentially urban. Among all the problems, the narrator pays special attention to the intensifying pressure on job opportunities in the city. Finding a young English vagrant from the city camping in a non-used house in the manor, he verifies his realisation that fierce competition in the city is highly responsible for the great extent of in-migration experienced by the rural Wiltshire. Even Jack, a diligent farm worker highly praised by the narrator, "might have sunk", if put "in another setting, in a more crowded or competitive place" (30).

Oddly but significantly, it is the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival*, "a man from another hemisphere, another background, coming to rest in middle life in the cottage of a half neglected estate, an estate full of reminders of its Edwardian past, with few connections with the present" (13), that attaches himself to the land of Wiltshire. He presents how he is actively engaged in learning about the landscape "like learning a second language" (30), how he gradually recovers from the blow to his writing career in his "second childhood of seeing and learning" (93), and how he creatively changes the natural place into the setting of his books. Unlike his wandering English neighbours, he buys two derelict agricultural cottages and converts them into his own house. The narrator announces that "now I, an outsider, was altering the appearance of the land a little" (96).

England's rural areas are typically understood as signifying essentially white characteristics of Englishness. Residing in the English countryside that is popularly perceived as a space of dominant whiteness (echo of colonialism and imperialism), the narrator clearly knows that in the Edwardian manor, "in that perfection, occurring at a time of empire, there would have been no room for me. The builder of the house and the designer of the garden could not have imagined, with their world view, that at a later time someone like me would have been in the grounds" (54-5). But he also muses soberly: "I felt that my presence in that old valley was part of something like an upheaval, a change in the course of the history of the country." (14) The "change", in Bruce King's words, is "an energetic, new post-war lower- and middle-class order that includes foreigners and former colonials" (145). The narrator himself is part of the new order, reflected by his migration "within the British Empire, from India to Trinidad", giving him "the English language as my own, and a particular kind of education" (55).

Willie, though part of the migration flow as well, is the opposite of both the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival*. Drifting in three continents, he "never takes root, never builds a house, or becomes morally or financially independent" (King 180). In *Half a*

Life, Willie marries Ana only because he is afraid that the college will throw him out when his scholarship is at an end and he has to look for a place to stay and a job. He lives in Ana's estate house in Africa, and finds shelter in Sarojini's apartment in Berlin. In *Magic Seeds*, in India, in hotels, in the guerrilla camp in the teak forest, in the street of the tanners and in the peasants' huts, Willie counts the different beds in which he has slept since he was born like doing yoga, purely "to keep track of things" (59), and never has the slightest idea of going back to visit his parents. It is only the second day when he, released from the Indian prison, returns to London after almost thirty years, awakening in Roger's house that he thinks for the first time in his life about his homelessness:

> Then a new thought, issuing from the new person who had possessed him,
> assailed him: "I have never slept in a room of my own. Never at home in India,
> when I was a boy. Never here in London. Never in Africa. I lived in somebody
> else's house always, and slept in somebody else's bed. In the forest of course
> there were no rooms, and then the jail was the jail. Will I ever sleep in a room
> of my own?" And he marvelled that he had never had a thought like that before.
> (177-8)

Despite this, Willie still sojourns in Roger's house. If home is constructed as a notion and a set of practices, rather than a place, against the modern condition of displacement, exile, migration and rootlessness, his cosmopolitan predicament is less the spectre of homelessness than the discomfort that home is the virtually unbearable existential condition into which he is thrust as a human being. As Willie firmly rejects any available site as his ultimate home, he cannot be "at home" at home.

Defining the new cosmopolitanism in relation to globalisation, Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider point out:

> Cosmopolitanization should be chiefly conceived of as globalization from
> *within*, as *internalized* cosmopolitanism. This is how we can suspend the

> assumption of the nation-state, and this is how we can make the empirical
> investigation of local-global phenomena possible. We can frame our questions
> so as to illuminate the transnationality that is arising inside nation-states. This
> is what a cosmopolitan sociology looks like. (9)

As any global process can dominantly impose itself on the local, the local and the global are blending together in real life in new forms that require conceptual and empirical analyses. Since people's everyday life is transformed as a result of interdependency to and interaction with the global, the new cosmopolitanism concerns how dynamically the local and the global are related. A new cosmopolitan vision hence views people's local histories and situations as part of a global world. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, it is exactly the narrator's cosmopolitan outlook that transcends the local-global opposition. His personal experience of migration, representing the global flow initiated by the transnational immigrants, explains that his seemingly odd presence in the Wiltshire manor is "more than accident" (55). It not only illustrates how the smallest local place hosts a complexity and heterogeneity matching the global, but also makes him always conscious that the global phenomenon outside the mastery of the locals irreducibly changes the core of the imperialistic discourse of English national identity. The population movement and migration in rural England reflect the relentless competition, intensified by the flowing-in of a large number of immigrants (including the well-educated narrator who might be a threat to the less-educated English locals in the personnel market), in the metropolis. The narrator's cosmopolitan vision enables him to see what may not be easily perceived by the locals with their limited world view. More importantly, his attachment to England shows that cosmopolitanism does not have always to be rootless; the only condition for the validity of such a kind of rooted cosmopolitanism is a critical and cool distanciation. The narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* is a more mature cosmopolitan figure, compared to the migrant characters in *In a Free State* and Salim in *A Bend in the River*. Because of the novel's autobiographical feature, it also can be seen as the

most explicit illustration of Naipaul's understanding and advocacy of a realistic

cosmopolitanism that can possibly exist in the world.

However, neither the narrator nor the author of *The Enigma of Arrival* arrives at such a

cosmopolitan perspective to view the changing world all of a sudden. Autobiography is

usually characterised by its capacity to explore the inner life of a person and to externalise

that inner self to show it to others. Karl J. Weintraub has pointed out: "Autobiography

presupposes a writer intent upon reflection on this inward realm of experience, someone for

whom this inner world of experience is important." (823) The writer, reflecting on the past

life, constructs in autobiography the image of his/her self through the unfolding drama of

consciousness. The reflexive construction of the writer's identity is accomplished through the

continuous elaboration of narratives of the self that makes sense of past and present

experiences, and arranges them into a coherent story. Therefore, by virtue of its inward-

experiential and self-retracing marks, autobiography is a mode of self-representation and a

practice of self-definition in the understanding of life as a process. In *The Enigma of Arrival*,

equal attention is given to the outside world under Naipaul's scrutiny and the development of

his inner consciousness that marks mainly the autobiographical side. It seems to Naipaul that

there is an urge to ruminate so that he can establish a relationship between his past and

present, especially after the death of Sati and Shiva. Feeling melancholy and facing mortality,

he needs to convey the true understanding of the mystery of the world to define himself as a

man and writer, prior to a cosmopolitan. A mature Naipaul looks back on his youthful days

and tells the celebratory as well as melancholic side of his coming to middle age. The inward-

looking, self-conscious awareness that underlies the reflexive, confessional and revisionist

mood of *The Enigma of Arrival* enounces Naipaul's need for self-reassessment.

In fact, the cosmopolitan vision of both the narrator and the author does not clash

against the inward-looking autobiographical feature of *The Enigma of Arrival*. The new

cosmopolitanism is dialogic and reflexive. A way of thinking about the relationship between

human beings, the new cosmopolitanism is about treating both ourselves and others, because "otherness of the other is included in one's own self-identity and self-definition" (Beck, "Rooted Cosmopolitanism" 17). The new cosmopolitanism is reflective not just of its own standpoint, but also the standpoint of others vis-a-vis oneself. David A. Hollinger claims: "Cosmopolitanism urges each individual and collective unit to absorb as much varied experience as it can, while retaining its capacity to achieve self-definition and to advance its own aims effectively." (239) How can we know how our identity connects us with certain particular others without retaining a strong sense of who we are? The new cosmopolitanism, viewed as a question of identity and identity formation, concerns self-definition in relation to and in relationship with the world. Individual-oriented, it is liberal in style. The realm of the new cosmopolitan vision inevitably involves the adoption of a degree of self-reflexive engagement, that is, we must mediate our own personal mode of being among various attachments in the world through a sense of distance. In the discourse of the new cosmopolitanism, an individualist embracing of the cosmopolitan experience requires individuals to make deliberative and reflexive judgments in relation to both the local and global domain. Therefore, the new cosmopolitanism entails an individual reflection and self-critique of one's prejudices, as well as a confession and disclosure of one's own epistemic standpoint. This is an inner process of confronting and questioning toward a basic understanding of cosmopolitanism that is outwardly dialogic. The engagement with and development of the inward reflection of human beings meet the new cosmopolitanism's requirement of a cool capacity to distance from and interrogate one's own culture in an era of global fragmentation and hybridity of mixes, mergers and representations.

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, to quote José Piedra, Naipaul "exposes the mutual discovery of Self and Other as a game of arrival" (36). The title of the book, as the narrator explains to the reader, is inspired by Giorgio de Chirico's painting "The Enigma of Arrival". The word "arrival" may be geographically, culturally and psychologically allegorical, but no matter

what, it is a process. There first should be a departure and then a journey. The questions are: from where has the narrator departed? What kind of journey has he experienced before his arrival? The second part of the novel, "The Journey", gives an account of the narrator's first arrival in London from Trinidad as a scholarship student at the age of eighteen, and his stay in London, interrupted by his travels around the world, in almost two decades after his graduation from Oxford. Reflecting upon his encounters in and attitude toward London, the narrator reveals how he finally arrives at the embrace of a realistic cosmopolitanism that is more plebeian-inclined, through revision and writing.

When the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* first arrived in London in 1950, he stayed in a boarding house in Earls Court before he went to Oxford. This reminds the reader of a quite similar picture described in *The Mimic Men*—the Kensington boarding house where Ralph Singh, also a West Indian scholarship student in London for the first time after World War II, stays. Because of the highly autobiographical feature of *The Enigma of Arrival*, the Earls Court boarding house can be regarded as the raw material for the fictional Kensington boarding house. Even the disillusionment with London is shared by Ralph Singh, the 18-year old narrator in *The Enigma of Arrival*, and by implication the young Naipaul. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, realising that his fellow lodgers in the Earls Court boarding house are "Europeans from the Continent and North Africa, Asiatics, some English people from the provinces", the young narrator feels that "we were all in a way campers in the big house" no longer used "as the builder or first owner had intended" (141).

But what distinguishes *The Enigma of Arrival* from *The Mimic Men* is the direction of "the constructive, regenerative power of memory" established by the latter, "reflecting on relationships and cultural difference from perspectives no longer dominated by colony-metropolis or Third World-First World dualisms" (Weiss, "V. S. Naipaul's 'Fin de Siècle'" 112). *The Mimic Men* only explores the elite colonial's relationship with the metropolis, and the perspective of Ralph Singh, though writing his memoir in retrospection, is still more

disillusioned than self-reflexive. The narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival*, however, is able to obtain the necessary distance between his younger self who experiences the disillusionment and present self who is not afraid of acknowledging his wrongs or expressing his regrets. Only in this dynamically reflexive way can his cosmopolitan vision become realistic and convincing.

More than thirty years later, the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival*, recollecting his first arrival in London, claims:

> I had little to record. My trampings about London didn't produce adventures, didn't sharpen my eye for buildings or people. My life was restricted to the Earls Court boarding house. There was a special kind of life there. But I failed to see it. Because, ironically, though feeling myself already drying up, I continued to think of myself as a writer and, as a writer, was still looking for suitable metropolitan material.
>
> Metropolitan—what did I mean by that? I had only a vague idea. I meant material which would enable me to compete with or match certain writers. And I also meant material that would enable me to display a particular kind of writing personality: J. R. Ackerley of *Hindoo Holiday*, perhaps, making notes under a dinner table in India; Somerset Maugham, aloof everywhere, unsurprised, immensely knowing; Aldous Huxley, so full of all kinds of knowledge and also so sexually knowing; Evelyn Waugh, so elegant so naturally. Wishing to be that kind of writer, I didn't see material in the campers in the big Earls Court house. (147)

In the eyes of the younger narrator, elitist cosmopolitanism, represented by these sophisticated English writers, arises out of metropolitan residence, consumption and travel. But to the middle-aged narrator at the narrative present, the word "metropolitan" most saliently implies

a dominant position to study the Other. Associated with modernity, control and order, it invokes the imperialist hegemony and rationalist message.

Naipaul's adaptation of Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* in *Half a Life* is a further proof of his examination of the metropolitan centre's imperialistic appetite. Naipaul names his protagonist of *Half a Life* (Willie) after William Somerset Maugham, and opens the first part "A Visit from Somerset Maugham" with Willie asking his father why his middle name is Somerset. Willie's father joylessly replies: "You were named after a great English writer. I am sure you have seen his books about the house." (1) The book to which Willie's father refers is *The Razor's Edge*, and he himself becomes the refigurement of Shri Ganesha, the Indian holy man with imparted wisdom helping to bring Larry Darrell salvation.

In the first-person narrative voice bringing the importance of the subjective experience to the reader's attention, Willie's father first tells Willie that he met Maugham who went to India to "get material for a novel about spirituality" (1) in the 1930s. At that time, Willie's father was doing penance for something that he had done, and living as a mendicant in the outer courtyard of a big temple to avoid persecution from his enemies at the maharaja's office. Though saying nothing to Maugham at all because of his vow of silence, Willie's father became famous abroad eighteen months later, since "foreign critics began to see in me the spiritual source of *The Razor's Edge*" (3). Visitors from abroad went to see Willie's father, hoping to find what Maugham had seen in him—"the man of high caste, high in the maharaja's revenue service, from a line of people who had performed sacred rituals for the ruler, turning his back on a glittering career, and living as a mendicant on the alms of the poorest of the poor" (3).

But Naipaul offers a much less honourable or romantic depiction of the meeting between Willie's father and Maugham than Maugham does. Naipaul writes Willie's father as a devious man who is more condemnable than commendable. Heeding Mahatma Gandhi's call to protest casteism, Willie's father, still at the university, chooses to make "a more lasting

kind of sacrifice" (10) by marrying the lowest person whom he can find, not out of compassion for the girl, but to turn his back on his Brahmin ancestry. He enrages the school principal of the maharaja's college whose daughter he is supposed to marry, and then is accused of corruption as an auditor because of his own kind of "civil disobedience" (22) by secretly sabotaging land tax receipts. Frightened, he has to claim sanctuary in the temple where he later meets Maugham. Presenting Willie's father as a majestic image with an imperialistic notion, Maugham contributes to the idealisation and Orientalisation of India as a land of ready salvation. Maugham's metropolitan and cosmopolitan identities only seem more romantic through his exoticism of the Indian Other. It is what Maugham fails to realise but Naipaul perceives. The story of Willie's father in *Half a Life* is a canonical counter-discourse of Maugham's romanticising misconception of the Other's culture, concerning Britain's metropolitan and imperialistic assumptions.

The narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* does not simply admit his inadequate vision or even blindness at an early age. Looking back, he explicitly and affirmatively tells the reader what "the true material" for his writing should be, that is, the "flotsam of Europe not long after the end of the terrible war, in a London house that was now too big for the people it sheltered" (154). The "flotsam" refers to the large wave of migration from the margin to the metropolitan centre, a result of the empire's retreat. It explains the heterogeneous presence and intermixture of the plebeian people from different cultural backgrounds in the Earls Court boarding house. Dialectically, the transformation of the Earls Court boarding house, a small, local place in the metropolis, is part of the global flow:

> Because in 1950 in London I was at the beginning of that great movement of
> peoples that was to take place in the second half of the twentieth century—a
> movement and a cultural mixing greater than the peopling of the United States,
> which was essentially a movement of Europeans to the New World. This was a
> movement between all the continents. Within ten years Earls Court was to lose

its pre-war or early-war *Hangover Square* associations. It was to become an

Australian and South African, a white-colonial, enclave in London, presaging a

greater mingling of peoples. Cities like London were to change. They were to

cease being more or less national cities; they were to become cities of the

world, modern-day Romes, establishing the pattern of what great cities should

be, in the eyes of islanders like myself and people even more remote in

language and culture. They were to be cities visited for learning and elegant

goods and manners and freedom by all the barbarian peoples of the globe,

people of forest and desert, Arabs, Africans, Malays. (154)

In this paragraph of the narrator's reflection upon the change of London, the transnational

movement of immigrants reveals the dialectic of ethnic diversity and cosmopolitanism in the

metropolis. London used to reach out expansively into the world, but now the world shrinks

in upon London (a site of global heterogeneity). As they move in and between different

contexts through the interconnectedness of the local with the global, the plebeian immigrants

change the singular politics of the metropolis (for instance, London) and the elite

cosmopolitan identity and sensibility (represented by Ackerley, Maugham, Huxley and

Waugh). The metropolis becomes an assemblage of and exposure to a mix of many kinds of

specific cultural and social frames of reference. Transnational immigrants do not necessarily

have a cosmopolitan orientation, but the space that they create in the metropolis and their

encounters and practices in that space become indicators of a new type of cosmopolitanism.

In his first arrival in London, the young narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* fails to recognise

this. Years later, he finally realises that the ideal (literate, metropolitan) cosmopolitanism

instilled in his fantasy through colonial education blinds him from acknowledging the realistic

(plebeian) one. The paradox highlighted in the postcolonial era echoes Gerard Delanty's

argument that the new cosmopolitanism is "mostly exemplified in diasporas and in

transnational modes of belonging" and "more present in popular cultures than in high culture" (35).

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the narrator illustrates the gap lying between his yearning for the elitist, ideal cosmopolitanism epitomised by English high culture, and his neglect of the plebeian global flow of immigrants that he has experienced in reality. He recalls a Sunday lunch to which he is invited, hosted by the English manager of the Earls Court boarding house, Mr Harding. A dozen of the young narrator's fellow guests are "drifters" from Europe and North Africa, "some of whom had seen terrible things during the war and were now becalmed and quiet in London, solitary, foreign, sometimes idle, sometimes half-criminal" (154-5). However, the narrator "noted nothing down. I asked no questions. I took them all for granted, looked beyond them; and their faces, clothes, names, accents have vanished and cannot now be recalled" (155). What interests him is a passage of dialogue between the Hardings, "sophisticated, big-city, like something in a film or play or a book—just the kind of thing I had travelled to London to find" (151), only because he treats "English people purely as English people, looking for confirmation of what I had read in books and what in 1950 I would have considered metropolitan material" (165). It is "an element of great and admirable bravado" (153) that suits the metropolitan material that the young narrator looks for, not the truth that it is the Hardings' last lunch in the boarding house because they get sacked. Only years later, the narrator sees the Hardings in the same way he sees the workers in the Wiltshire manor—they are all people on the move. The ideas transmitted to the young narrator in his "abstract, arbitrary" (142) colonial education are "bred essentially out of empire, wealth and imperial security" (159). The tenets are not based on natural truth, but are culturally constructed to serve the hegemonic ideology, which claims legitimacy to the metropolis. Underlying the organisation and articulation of the metropolitan culture, colonial powers practise assimilation by marginalising the Other through the instrument of education. As the narrator writes, he "was used to living in a world where the signs were without

meaning, or without the meaning intended by their makers" (142). Discovering the inadequacy of his earlier world view and the need for revision, the narrator says: "My passion to gather metropolitan experience and material, to give myself stature as a writer, this over-readiness to find material that I half-knew from other writers already, my very dedication, got in the way of my noting the truth, which would have been a little clearer to me if my mind had been less cluttered, if I had been a little less well educated." (152) The "truth" refers to the (trans)national border-crossing and belonging deconstructing the homogenous metropolitan centre. The narrator criticises the universalising effect of the hegemonic metropolitan culture. If kept metropolitan-based, cosmopolitanism cannot overcome the naive universalism, or become sensitive and open to the conflicting ambience, image and experience of the silenced postcolonial subjects.

"The Journey" ends with the narrator's celebration—"I wasn't living there [the past], intellectually and imaginatively, any longer" (196). He has departed from his old self, and arrived at a new one, in the journey of observation, reflection and revision. Whereas his old colonial self has no interest in the immigrants, this new cosmopolitan self is proud of its genuine curiosity over others:

> I had developed a lot since 1950; had learned how to talk, to inquire, and no longer—as on the *S. S. Columbia* and in the Earls Court boarding house—expected truth to leap out at me merely because I was a writer and sensitive. I had discovered in myself—always a stranger, a foreigner, a man who had left his island and community before maturity, before adult social experience—a deep interest in others, a wish to visualize the details and routine of their lives, to see the world through their eyes; and with this interest there often came at some point a sense—almost a sixth sense—of what was uppermost in a person's thoughts. (266)

More significantly, the narrator's new self makes extraordinary efforts to overcome the physical distance between the elite cosmopolitan intellectuals and plebeian people, especially those "forlorn, far from home" (140). It even drives the narrator to see aspects of himself in the "vulnerable" immigrants who do not travel "to find fulfilment—or to be abraded" (174), such as a Trinidad Negro on the way to Harlem and a black man returning to Germany from the United States, both of whom are buried in the narrator's memory for too long.

If it takes more than thirty years for the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival*, with his Oxford education and writer's vocation to which he is highly committed, to arrive at his comparatively mature cosmopolitan vision, the process is much more painful for Willie. Willie, at the age of twenty without completing his mission-school education, leaves for London "with no idea of what he wanted to do, except to get away from what he knew" (*Half a Life* 51), through the whim of a famous British lord who briefly visited the ashram of Willie's father after India's independence. Unlike the narrator or the author of *The Enigma of Arrival*, both of whom get a scholarship to leave Trinidad with an ambition of becoming a writer, Willie does not even have the fantasy of looking for a real home somewhere else in the first place. His London college, modelled on Oxford and Cambridge, is not even known by an English journalist who works under Arthur Christiansen and Lord Beaverbrook. After the failure of the publication of a collection of short stories during college, Willie pursues no any other profession and remains unemployed until he is over fifty. The last trace of the elitist background of the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival* is wiped out in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* so that Willie can be made an anti-hero representative of the plebeian immigrants. Through Willie, Naipaul suggests that a global consciousness and a cosmopolitan vision, albeit belatedly achieved, can be developed from blindness and ignorance, even for the plebeian immigrants with no education, skill or profession. The only condition is that they should ponder on the cultural dynamic of empowerment and disempowerment in the era of

globalisation beyond dichotomy between Eastern and Western civilisation but not beyond the spirit of history (especially colonial history).

Willie does not start out with the cosmopolitan vantage. His journey from blindness to insight, from monocular sight to stereoscopic vision takes place in stages. In *Half a Life*, Willie, unlike his namesake, is unable to envision a path for himself in the world, or to reconcile the three worlds (India, Europe and Africa) to which he is attached by birth, education and experience respectively, as he feels himself estranged from his own culture and removed from both colonial and postcolonial dynamics. Willie's journey only yields a vision of division and fragmentation, and the violation of his sensibility.

Though Willie feels "cast out, lost" (120) during his three years in London, he worries whether he will lose the gift of his English on the ship from Southampton to Ana's African country. Upon arrival in Africa, he already begins to consider leaving—"I don't know where I am. I don't think I can pick my way back. I don't ever want this view to become familiar. I must not unpack. I must never behave as though I am staying" (135). Holding this belief for eighteen years, under the protection of his carefully kept passport and get-away money, Willie situates himself in the marginalisation of being an outsider in Africa, which is similar to Salim's status in *A Bend in the River*. In recognition of his displacement, Willie comments: "So people couldn't place me and they let me be. I was Ana's London man, as the little housemaid had said." (145) He even relishes taking refuge in this outsider's status. He only associates with Portuguese settlers and half-Portuguese, half-African estate owners, although he has no interest in them at all. First introduced to the local child prostitute market by an estate manager Alvaro, Willie reflects: "And really in ten years I had never looked in that way at the villages and the Africans walking beside the road. I suppose it was a lack of curiosity, and I suppose it was a remnant of caste feeling." (181) Though Willie's migration from England to Africa is already his "second translation" as the section title describing his African life suggests, he never has or displays an awareness of cultivating cosmopolitan curiosity or

openness about other people's lives, practices or traditions. Basically, he takes no interest in knowing the Other. In *Magic Seeds*, chiding Willie for being a passive outsider, Sarojini explains that his detachment from his cultural milieus is part of "the colonial psychosis, the caste psychosis" (6). As the new cosmopolitanism identifies itself with the cultural politics of anti-colonialism, to exercise a cosmopolitan outlook that combines the local concerns with global relevance becomes an attempt to expel the colonial self-view from one's psyche. Both the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival* succeed in doing this, but Willie in *Half a Life* fails.

Like Bobby in "In a Free State", Willie in *Half a Life* engages in many sexual adventures and feels sexually liberated in Africa, though he never feels comfortable in his encounters with African society and its people. In his first experience with a child prostitute, Willie exorcises his passivity with London women to induce a sexual climax. His newly-found sexual freedom creates a revolutionary change. He announces: "I began to live with a new idea of sex, a new idea of my capacity. It was like being given a new idea of myself." (189) Because of this new adventure, he feels a sense of fulfilment, but pitifully, his change is purely sexual. Willie just develops a stereotypical fantasy of overly sexualised and immoral Africa, and fails to probe its social reality (for instance, the sexual exploitation of African children by foreigners), in which he himself is partly responsible for the deterioration of Africa.

After engaging in sexual relationships with prostitutes, Willie continues his moral deterioration by unashamedly having an affair with a married woman Graca, who introduces him to diverse violent sexual practices. He takes great pleasure in sexually experimenting with Graca and the invigoration that it provides. The only reason that he ends the affair with Graca is because she goes mad. Her mania comes when she has to offer all her property to the looming African socialist government, when the Portuguese troop begins to leave the country and the guerrillas and new insurgents encroach upon the surroundings. Though Willie

mentions a pervasive fear of the insurgents' raiding and killing, he doubts whether his affair with Graca ever meets his expectation because of her precarious state. He asks himself: "I was making love to a deranged woman. Can it be true, what I felt I had with her?" (226) Without an objective view of Africa's political and social reality, Willie has no sympathy for otherness. But sympathy is an important stepping-stone toward not only self-criticism but also benevolence for the whole of humanity.

Half a Life ends with Willie leaving Ana and Africa in fear of the impending doom. With the freedom to depart whenever he wishes, he becomes like the fleeing Portuguese who forgo any commitment to Africa where they have lived for a long time. Willie only despairs over wasting his life there rather than mistreating Ana, the child prostitutes and Graca. He says to Ana: "I am forty-one. I am tired of living your life." (227) Willie's dilemma throughout the novel is in his inability to identify with the localities that he traverses and his looking at them always from the outside. His transnational experience does not provide him with a cosmopolitan outlook, even though he is exposed to other cultures brought into close proximity to his own on a daily basis. Still a colonial with no openness to others, Willie is not yet a cosmopolitan who possesses the same low degree of attachment to a locality but a distinct ethical orientation toward other places and cultures.

The key to understanding Willie's plebeian cosmopolitan shift in *Magic Seeds* lies in examining his stereoscopic insight of the global and the local and self-reflexive vision of a multiply-situated yet globally-homeless stranger, yielded "through cultural dialogue and translation, through being receptive to encounters in the creative contact zone between 'near' and 'far'" (Pickering 216). Plebeian cosmopolitanism pervades *Magic Seeds* in Willie's vision and revision of Europe, India and Africa, though the awakening is achieved quite belatedly.

In *Magic Seeds*, after the failure in the guerrilla movement in which he stays for over seven years, Willie makes his final statement on the Indian peasants in the Indian jail. It is one of the clearest signs of his evolution from blindness to a cosmopolitan insight. Even though

Willie notes that the peasants' uncooperative behaviour clashes with the revolutionaries' attempt to empower them, he is imbued with sympathy garnered by a cosmopolitan perspective that places them in a wider global context. He writes to Sarojini:

> That war was not yours or mine and it had nothing to do with the village people we said we were fighting for. We talked about their oppression, but we were exploiting them all the time. Our ideas and words were more important than their lives and their ambitions for themselves. That was terrible to me, and it continues even here, where the talkers have favoured treatment and the poor are treated as the poor always are. They are mostly village people and they are undersized and thin. The most important thing about them is their small size. It is hard to associate them with the bigger crimes and the crimes of passion for which some of them are being punished. Abduction, kidnapping. I suppose if you were a villager you would see them as criminal and dangerous, but if you see them from a distance, as I still see them, although I am close to them night and day, you would be moved by the workings of the human soul, so complete within those frail bodies. Those wild and hungry eyes haunt me. They seem to me to carry a distillation of the country's unhappiness. (161-2)

Willie reads the moral dissolution of the guerrilla not simply in terms of crass criminality, but a tragic result of self-defeating ideological borrowing fed by abstract global ideas and mottos (Marxism and Maoism); he reads the Indian villagers not simply as victims of caste and imperial oppression, but forever marginalised characters in the global world order, due to their distance from and strangeness to global modernity. Placing the Indian interior in a wider world context, he is able to read the local situation across the global background of change and inequality, and thus to attain this cosmopolitan view. The emphasis on both a critical distance and sympathy indicates that Willie's cosmopolitan consciousness as informed by both the local condition and global configuration of power begins to sprout.

Early on in *Magic Seeds*, in Berlin, Willie has a historical sense of the coexistence of two worlds:

> One world was ordered, settled, its wars fought. In this world without war or real danger people had been simplified…In the other world people were more frantic. They were desperate to enter the simpler, ordered world. But while they stayed outside a hundred loyalties, the residue of old history tied them down; a hundred little wars filled them with hate and dissipated their energies. In the free and busy air of West Berlin everything looked easy. But not far away there was an artificial border, and beyond that border there was constriction, and another kind of person. (13)

However, after his release from the Indian jail, Willie feels "old stirrings, the beginning of old grief" when he notices "the pathetic luggage of the immigrant poor" (169) at the airport in London, upon his return thirty years after his first arrival there. He realises that there are parallels between the conditions of the plebeian in both worlds on a global scale now. He tells himself: "I must understand that big countries grow or shrink according to the play of international forces that are beyond the control of any one man. I must try now to be only myself. If such a thing is possible." (169-70) After his experience in Africa and India, Willie, caught up in the whirlpool of transnational mobility, finally accepts the fact that the kingdom of the cosmopolitans is characterised by not only the globalisation of the elite but also the exploited migrant under-classes. Cosmopolitanism in the era of globalisation is about the mobility of objects, images and ideas just as much as it is about the mobility of the plebeian people. Revisiting old places in London, Willie finds that the crowded streets are swarmed with black people, Japanese and Arabs. He realises that "a great churning in the world" (188) has altered London forever. Willie muses: "The world is now being shaken by forces much bigger than I could have imagined…Now I can only celebrate what I am, or what I have become." (188)

Willie sees a changed world with waves of multicultural immigrant population pouring into England on the one hand, and an unparalleled "property beanstalk" of capitalist development rising on the other hand. Both are found to be illusive signs of globalisation: materialism ensuing in the form of property development and financial expansion takes an extreme turn heralding its own implosion, while the plebeians are still unable to be rehabilitated in the mass migration. It explains why Willie feels not at ease with Roger's rich banker friend, who manipulates the "property caper". Willie reflects that the physical and spiritual nullity that he has experienced in the Indian forest camp and jail has shed his "materialist self" (202). With plebeian cosmopolitanism, he develops a new perspective to explore the Other—"unless we understand people's other side, Indian, Japanese, African, we cannot truly understand them" (202). In this way, Willie even begins to understand his father's life-long dilemma.

Later, in the architecture company's training centre, an epiphany comes to Willie, with some newly-gained basic knowledge of architecture:

> It is terrible and heartbreaking that this way of seeing and understanding has come to me so late. I can't do anything with it now. A man of fifty cannot remake his life…But I have a sense now that when I was in Africa, for all those eighteen years, when I was in the prime of life, I hardly knew where I was. And that time in the forest was as dark and confusing as it was at the time. I was so condemning of other people on the course. How vain and foolish. I am no different from them. (220)

The valuable "way of seeing and understanding" to which Willie refers here is a new cosmopolitan perception operating on both the global and the local level of identification, without the conflict between the two leading one to cancel the other. It helps him identify himself with the plebeian immigrants in the postcolonial, globalised world:

He [Willie] was not thinking of the people from South Africa or Australia or

Egypt, men in their forties, natural suit-wearers, high up in their organisations,

and perhaps connected in some way with one or the other of Peter's companies.

It gave these people a certain amount of pleasure to sit at desks like school

children. They were not much seen in the big low lounge after lectures; cars

very often came to take them to central London. He was thinking of people like

himself, as it seemed to him: the big black or mixed man from the West Indies,

who had worked his way up and was immensely pleased to be in this

cosmopolitan company; the very neat Malaysian Chinese…the man from the

Indian subcontinent in his absurd white shoes, who turned out to be from

Pakistan and a religious fanatic, ready to spread the Arab faith in this training

centre devoted to another kind of learning and glory, other prophets: the

pioneering nineteenth- and twentieth-century architects (some the champions

of brick) holding fast, often against the odds, to their own vision, and adding in

the end to the sum of architectural knowledge. (220-1)

Realising his former ignorance about his own history and the world, Willie connects himself

with the plebeian immigrants who are, unfairly denied for political and racial reasons for a

long time, caught in the same trap of history, and unable to break loose from its impositions

and injustices. In company of these men, contemplating the "immense history" held in "the

simplest and most modest house" (221) of the poor in every culture as the lecturer requires,

Willie thinks of "the forest villages he had been in, marching futilely in his flimsy olive

uniform with the red star on his cap" and "Africa, where the houses of thatch or straw were in

the end to overwhelm the foreign world of concrete" (222). His new cosmopolitan view

functions as a geographical marker between the landscapes of Europe, India and Africa. At

this late point, Willie finally succeeds in expelling the colonial self-view from his psyche and

exercising a critically plebeian cosmopolitan outlook, which understands the local from both a

position of belonging and distance, in order to fashion a vision of regeneration that is neither superficially global, and therefore self-defeating, nor reactionary to the global, and thereby restrictive.

Willie's English friend Roger, in the eleventh and twelfth parts of *Magic Seeds* in the first-person narrative, further exposes the façade of social progress in London's ancillary council estates, the subsidised municipal dwellings originally designed for the poor. Instead of the social independence and relief that they are intended to offer the middle- and lower-class population, these estates witness the dissolution of families and personal accountability. Women living there see themselves as "money-making machines" (235), because they can live on government benefits by having children by different men. The socialist revolution in England professes not only a cultural decline but also a nurturing of a culture of alterity, in the name of mass empowerment. Roger views the vanishing of the servant class in post-imperial England and its reappearance in the council houses not as a sign of the empowerment of the plebeians, but as a disintegration of the bond of family life and social cohesion. For Willie, India's Marxist revolution and England's socialist immigration policy and welfare culture become counterproductive measures; both of them fail to provide a true regeneration of the populace.

Willie's plebeian cosmopolitanism presented in *Magic Seeds* is self-reflexive because it is mostly expressed in his psychological activities. In retrospection and confession, his critique of cultures spanning a global landscape shows a cosmopolitan politics rather than a purely colonial ideology—a move from a static gaze upon the postcolonial world to a more dynamic, stereoscopic view encompassing both the local and global view and critiquing the parallel, interactive relationships between different locations in a globalised world. Though belatedly, Willie achieves such a cosmopolitan outlook, which upholds the plebeian immigrants' potential of a global mode of survival; though there exist obstacles standing in the way of its realisation, Naipaul still has faith in humanistic ideals, even if there are no

"magic seeds" that can do away with the problems of history. For Naipaul, the crucial point left out of elitist cosmopolitanism concerns the likelihood of the plebeians to integrate into a convivial global culture.

In "On Being a Writer", Naipaul expresses his almost obsessive interest in finding his writer's voice in *The Enigma of Arrival*: "My aim was truth, truth to a particular experience, containing a definition of the writing self." (7) Among all the stew of elements constructing the narrator's new self in the novel, "the writing self" is of first priority. The writing self can discover, to borrow a term from Julia Kristeva, "the stranger within us" (191), because there are always new or unnoticed aspects in the self. Naipaul writes in *A Way in the World*: "We cannot understand all the traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves." (9) In this sense, the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* succeeds in mediating on his growing and changing self. But if there are other people in ourselves, there also will be ourselves in other people, because the self is a social being after all. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the narrator's writing self and his observation and involvement with others become deeply intertwined and finally reach a dialectic harmony. On the one hand, writing feeds the narrator cosmopolitan curiosity to understand other people, especially the culturally and intellectually different ones; on the other hand, his interaction with others becomes the raw material for his writing, a way to check the development of his self.

In the interview with Gussow, Naipaul refers to "the novelist's gift" in relation to other people: "I could meet dreadful people and end up seeing the world through their eyes, seeing their frailties, their needs. You refer to yourself in order to understand other people." (16) This remark can explain the inscription of "a novel in five sections" on the title page of *The Enigma of Arrival*. Naipaul himself is more inclined to categorise the book as a novel, because "there's no autobiography there—no family, no wife, no friends, no infidelities, nothing. That whole bit of life is torn out. There's nothing about me apart from my writing" (Gussow 16). He further explains that the typical fictional feature of the book is the

introduction of other characters: "The minute other people are in the picture, that is where the fictive element comes in." (Gussow 16) Therefore, creating other fictional characters for the narrator to reflect upon his writing self is Naipaul's use of his novelist gift. According to Elisabetta Tarantino, Naipaul's priority of "the writer's vision" placed over "the man's vision" is a manifestation of his "*humanism*: the use of literary form to express a strong concern with the human condition, in such a way as to resist all kinds of dogmatic and essentialist attitudes" (183).

The landlord of the Wiltshire manor in *The Enigma of Arrival* is introduced as an opposite to the narrator. From a wealthy and privileged English family, having received an elitist education and travelled in the Continent, the landlord becomes a Howard Hughes recluse, withdrawing into the solitude of his inherited estate after World War II, probably because of illness, or pure accidia. The narrator never meets the landlord, and only catches glimpses of him twice in over a decade! His knowledge of the landlord comes from other people's talk and the landlord's writings and drawings. The landlord asks Mrs Philips to send the newly coming narrator his poems about Krishna and Shiva written decades ago as a welcoming sign and a show of his literary talent. Though the narrator feels sympathetic for the landlord's hiding from the outside world, he finds out immediately that the poems are only exotic fantasy about the Oriental and that fantasy is anachronistic. The narrator comments: "His Indian romance was in fact older, even antiquated, something he had inherited, like his house, something from the days of imperial glory when—out of material satiety and the expectation of the world continuing to be ordered as it had been ordered for a whole century and more—power and glory had begun to undo themselves from within." (231) The landlord's imagination and representation of India as a marginal periphery come from the colonial bias supported by the empire. His gesture of presenting the poems to a writer with a postcolonial background long after the physical disappearance of the empire reflects his nostalgic lament for the traditional Englishness epitomised by his aristocratic lifestyle. To the

narrator, if the landlord "could have taken friends and social connections, the knowledge in others of his social worth, everything that protected him, he might have moved. But he stayed in his house, which was his setting, and dreamed of being elsewhere, dreamed in his own way" (231). Separated and detached from the reality of the world, in which the elitist metropolitan culture is overwhelmed by border-crossing, the landlord can never arrive creatively in the field of literature. Literature is only the best pastime of the landlord's wealthy and leisurely life. Similarly, in *Half a Life*, Roger's "powerful" and "high-born" English friends "pay a vanity publisher to bring out their books", just because they "want their name on the back of a book", not because they "actually want to write" (108). In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the landlord's literary fantasy, standing for "morbidity, accidia, a death of the soul" (309), can only construct "the joke knowledge of the world" (308). The failure to keep in touch with reality and to explore truth is the biggest harm to a writing self. It should be overcome with the greatest effort of a responsible writer, instead of the landlord's "non-doing and nullity" (209). The inheritance of English literature and culture is not entitled, but requires a conscious and studied search for originality with a critically realistic vision. It is what both the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival* learn from Charles Dickens.

Though Alan (the landlord's only associate) and Pitton (the manor gardener) are both dependent on the landlord, their fates are drastically different since their way of handling the dependency contrasts. Alan, a literary man pursuing the writer's vocation, exclaims: "Isn't it nice to have rich friends?" (280) The rich landlord may have a "literary value to Alan as 'material'" (315), but the upper-class origin and sense of superiority as a member of the elite belong to the landlord, not Alan. Though a distant relation to the landlord, Alan grows up in a totally different background, as the narrator notices that "there was something in his childhood or upbringing or family life which had deeply wounded him, had committed him to solitude, uncertainty, an imperfect life" (314). Alan's experience of living in post-war Germany is also an indication of his opposite position to the landlord. Unfortunately, Alan

fails to overcome the separation between the raw material for his writing and his true self. Like the young narrator who never finishes "Gala Night" on his first arrival in London, Alan constantly takes down notes, but not a single book comes out of him. Worse, while the landlord adopts the strategy of "non-doing" in withdrawal, Alan cannot face his actual inadequacy to meet his expectation of being a writer in his cursory "doing". He drinks, parties, and at last commits suicide. From Alan, the narrator realises that a man's true self and his writing self cannot be divided, and the harmony of the two makes a fuller man and writer. The narrator has been "hiding my experience from myself, hiding myself from my experience, to that extent falsifying things" (314). But now he confesses: "Concealing this colonial-Hindu self below the writing personality, I did both my material and myself much damage." (159) As Timothy Weiss observes, this writing self "more readily acknowledges its diversity, its hybrid, constructed nature—a notion particularly germane to West Indian and Caribbean writers whose societies have been creations of the mixing of cultures" ("V. S. Naipaul's 'Fin de Siècle'" 114-5). It is Naipaul's confessional gesture to reattach himself with Trinidad by embracing his diasporic, hybrid roots.

Pitton, a secret admirer and mimic man of the landlord in *The Enigma of Arrival*, however, is able to gain independence and rebirth after getting sacked from the manor. It is quite hard for Pitton to accept the fact that he has to leave, when the landlord decides to sell the cottage in which he has lived for twenty-five years. Like Alan, Pitton mistakenly regards the nobleness of the landlord and the dignity of the manor as his own—"he didn't want to be a gardener again, he told me. He could do the job at the manor; but he couldn't do it anywhere else and for anybody else—it was too undignified" (306). In an anachronistic way, he still sees the rural life as real Englishness—"the country gentleman in him, or rather the free country labourer in him, feared the anonymity, the nothingness of the town worker" (306). It is under the pressure of livelihood that he "quietly, ashamedly" (306) becomes a driver of a laundry van and lives in a shabby council flat in the town. Complaining a lot, he gets used to

it somehow. The third part of the novel "Ivy" ends with Pitton not "seeing" or acknowledging the narrator in the street of Salisbury. But to the narrator, such action is celebratory: "Pitton, in this last decade of active life, grew out of what he had been. He got to know more people, at work, and on the council estate where he lived. Where he had feared anonymity, he found community and a little strength. He saw his former life as from a distance." (310) This echoes the narrator's arriving at a new self at the end of "The Journey". The narrator recognises the plebeian tendency of global migration through the deconstruction of the metropolitan culture. Similarly, Pitton deconstructs his old notion of the countryside in his contact with a large number of working-class people. Unlike the parasitic image of ivy in the manor, Pitton attaches himself with a sense of belonging, looking for the support of community, and simultaneously retains his independence and individuality in a healthy manner. Pitton is one of the narrator's alter egos. The narrator used to be a mimic man of the metropolitan culture; in order to be a writer, he alienates himself from his native Trinidad. Nonetheless, it is after he finally becomes a cosmopolitan writer with a humanistic concern about the similarly diasporic that he finds the necessity of the supporting power of attachments. A complete writing self should not be ungrateful to the creative contribution of the model of nation-state, because "the island had given me the world as a writer; had given me the themes that in the second half of the twentieth century had become important; had made me metropolitan, but in a way quite different from my first understanding of the word, when I had written 'Gala Night' and 'Life in London' and 'Angela'" (167). This is a further manifestation of Naipaul's reconciliation with Trinidad and his embrace of a kind of rooted cosmopolitanism.

Through the decay of the landlord, the death of Alan and the rebirth of Pitton in *The Enigma of Arrival*, the narrator acknowledges the dignity and individuality of the plebeian people and identifies himself with them instead of staying detached. Among all the characters in the novel, Jack is the central figure carrying the theme as well as the yardstick measuring the existence of human beings. At the beginning of the novel, newly arriving in the scenery of

the Wiltshire countryside, the narrator, with his literary eye, sees Jack, "solid, rooted in his earth" (99), as a central image standing for the romantic English tradition. Nevertheless, his view of Jack changes in the process of deconstructing Englishness. The narrator finally becomes aware that "Jack was living in the middle of junk, among the ruins of nearly a century; that the past around his cottage might not have been his past; that he might at some stage have been a newcomer to the valley; that his style of life might have been a matter of choice, a conscious act" (14). It is during Jack's sickness when the garden goes wild that the narrator realises clearly how much energy and money that the garden has cost Jack. He begins to admire Jack's heartiness and dedication to the land in the way of growing and looking after many different things at different times. Though owning neither the land, the cottage nor the garden, Jack manages to come to terms with the philosophically dialectic concept of change and decay in renewal, by creating a flourishing garden in "an especially happy condition" (31). Once an outsider, he makes himself at home at the heart of England in his own creative way. According to Weiss, Jack is "a basic symbol of the underlying human condition at the end of this century of extremes and the individual's responsibility to construct a self-identity and sense of belonging" ("V. S. Naipaul's 'Fin de Siècle'" 115). To both the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival*, an ex-colonial/immigrant/cosmopolitan, such creative cosmopolitan competence is very helpful for finding a psychological anchor in flow and flux.

Jack's death is quite moving, too. Knowing that he is dying soon, Jack takes a great effort in unbearable pain to drive to the pub in town to be with his friends for the last time, embracing the last pleasure that life offers him, on Christmas Eve! In the face of the inevitable annihilation, Jack makes the most of his life with a heroic effort to taste life. The narrator praises Jack: "The bravest and most religious thing about his life was his way of dying: the way he had asserted, at the very end, the primacy not of what was beyond life, but life itself." (100)

While the first part "Jack's Garden" celebrates Jack's creativity and praises Jack's heroic manner of handling mortality, it is in the last part "The Ceremony of Farewell" that the narrator unravels why being a "doer" like Jack is important. In the interview with Adrian Rowe-Evans in 1971 after the publication of *In a Free State*, Naipaul already expressed his wish to be "a doer" (57). But at that time, Naipaul still had his worry that "as a man of action one would be continually weakened by harking after the truth, by too-honestly reassessing the situation all the time" (57). In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the word "doer" appears twice, each time accompanying the narrator awaking from a dream of his own death. With a more affirmative tone, the narrator emphasises that "men must be, every day of their lives" (375) a doer. For years, the narrator has planned to write a book responding to Chirico's "The Enigma of Arrival". Finally, faced with Sati's death, the narrator senses life's unpredictability. If death, "the nullifier of human life and endeavour" (112), suddenly occurs, the "doing" life of a man immediately stops, no matter how many ideas of contributing to the world still exist in his head. So the most important feature of a doer is the treasuring of time. With "this new wonder about men", the narrator "laid aside my drafts and hesitations and began to write *very fast* [my emphasis] about Jack and his garden" (387), as if in a race with time and aging. The narrator also wants to be a doer like Jack, not an inheritor like the landlord or Alan.

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the concept of "a doer" fits with the narrator's embrace of plebeian cosmopolitanism. At the end of the novel, the narrator muses: "But we remade the world for ourselves; every generation does that, as we found when we came together for the death of this sister and felt the need to honour and remember." (387) Through Jack, he has learnt to place belief in ordinary men who possess "the capacity to touch an authenticity and to transform the spark of life into some act, into some manner of being in the world, that gives life to others" (Weiss, "V. S. Naipaul's 'Fin de Siècle'" 114). Every life is valuable; it is much more valuable if it wants to actively participate in the world and to make its contribution in its own way. The narrator's use of the collective pronoun "we" suggests his

final reconciliation and acceptance of his Trinidadian and Indian roots, previously

marginalised by the metropolitan centre. Accordingly, every small contribution of Trinidad

and India in history should be admitted and valued, just as Jack's creation and honouring of

life inspires the narrator's artistic and literary creation. This emphasis on cultural diversity as

a matter of personal access and choice allows plebeian cosmopolitanism to include more

contributors, common people especially, to devote themselves to humanity in diversified,

personal ways. In this sense, plebeian cosmopolitanism can accommodate hybridity to the

greatest extent.

As for both the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival*, writing may be their

only talent, but the act of writing the book itself is their own creative and unique way of

making contribution to the world in a doer's way. Nonetheless, Naipaul has realised that not

everybody would choose writing to come to terms with their existence in the world. In *Half a

Life*, Willie writes for the BBC Overseas Services at college, but is ultimately frustrated by

the poor reception of his published collection of short stories. He muses in anger and despair:

"Let the book die. Let it fade away. Let me not be reminded of it. I will write no more." (123)

Even though in *Magic Seeds* he is released from the Indian jail because of his former status as

"a pioneer of modern Indian writing" (168), he never thinks about taking up writing again.

For Willie, writing fails to be a way of giving structure and meaning to his personal, colonial

experience.

In fact, half of Willie's life in *Half a Life* is a story of doing nothing, even in the face

of significant historical events. He is part of the wave of overseas students pouring into

England from British colonies after World War II. He is in London at the time of the Suez

Crisis, the mythic Notting Hill meeting of black immigrants, and London upper Bohemia that

contributes to the Notting Hill race riots. He is in Africa at the time of the guerrilla warfare,

the collapse of the Portuguese Empire, and the subsequent independence of large areas of

Africa. He is in Berlin just before the fall of the Wall where, once more sharing in the major

event of recent decades, he is one of the many immigrants and refugees. By the standard of many people, there are enough interesting events and places in the forty-one years of Willie's life. However, not knowing what he wants to do, he wastes many of his opportunities and only drifts aimlessly. Therefore, King reads Willie as "someone like Naipaul but his opposite, a reverse image of what Naipaul might have been and become" (180). With a lack of will, Willie does not try to disturb, not to mention change, the world in *Half a Life*; he is the opposite of Jack, the narrator and the author of *The Enigma of Arrival*, all of whom know what they want and are willing to take risks for becoming a doer.

Naipaul, in an ironic tone, treats Willie's non-doing in *Half a Life* as "colonial Hindu habits of passivity, fatalism and withdrawal from problems when challenged by the need to change" (King 180) on the one hand; on the other hand, in a larger sense, he is worried about the predicament of globalisation. In *Among the Believers*, Naipaul claims that "history becomes an organic whole: the affairs of Italy and Africa are connected with those of Asia and Greece, and all events bear a relationship and contribute to a single end" (6). This remark reflects his realisation of the process of globalisation that connects the world more and more closely. Globalisation may promote the creation of transnational social spaces, however, its reality is more responsible for the transformation of people's everyday life at the micro level irrespective of whether they are transnational or not. While there are new possibilities for strengthening the role of the local, regional politics through linkages to global processes, ordinary people's life is profoundly shaped by events taking place far away from where they live and over which they have no control. Morton A. Kaplan has pointed out: "When the identifications of the individual appear to be subject to social or natural forces over which he has no control, he perceives himself as alienated from important aspects of his personality." (120) In this sense, *Half a Life* offers a critique of globalisation in terms of the failed possibility of the forty-one year old Willie. Willie's doing-nothing passivity points to Naipaul's deepest concern: no matter how convenient and easy globalisation makes travel and

migration, the sense of alienation from their self and meaninglessness of life of the immigrants will inevitably become stronger, as they have no power to control external events or to change the happenings around them. Ultimately, *Half a Life* demonstrates that globalisation, while appropriating discourses concerned with access, diversity, acceptance, mobility and upliftment, is experienced by the migrant population that inevitably becomes hybridised and acquires fluid identities as exclusionary, racist and imperial. The possibility of identity, expression, resistance, reflection and critique within the global village is increasingly reduced and withdrawn, even within supposedly established democracies.

From Naipaul's perspective, it is indeed sympathetic that Willie in *Half a Life* loses control of his own fate in the era of globalisation, but this cannot be an excuse for his abandoning the ideal for the world and adopting the strategy of doing nothing. At the opening of *Magic Seeds*, Sarojini criticises Willie that he never understands that "men have to make the world for themselves" (6). Willie's non-doing functions as a contrasting foil to Jack's "doing" in *The Enigma of Arrival*. If globalisation denies the plebeian people's power to control external events and happenings at the macro level, it becomes much more important and necessary to be committed to what interests them, what is important to them and what they are good at, at the micro level. Jack sets up a perfect example in his own doer's way of building a beautiful garden and dealing with death heroically. Even Willie, at the age of over fifty at the end of *Magic Seeds*, finds out that architecture interests him the most, and begins to consider becoming qualified in about eight years first and then spending "ten or twelve of fifteen *active and satisfying* [my emphasis] years in the profession" (271), when he finally realises that "the happiest and most successful people are those who have very precise goals, limited and attainable" (272). Therefore, Naipaul's plebeian cosmopolitanism becomes significant in terms of its real-world applicability. It admits diversified accesses, choices and developments of individuals (the uprooted plebeian in particular) in hope of not only coming to terms with a personal existence in the world but also contributing to the world in the

process of globalisation out of their control. After all, to quote Marianna Papastephanou, globalisation "signifies an empirical phenomenon" whereas cosmopolitanism "denotes an ideal" (75).

Naipaul further illustrates his plebeian cosmopolitan concept of a doer concerning the idea of political action, liberation and revolutionary justice through Sarojini in *Magic Seeds*. In a parallel way but on the opposite extreme, Sarojini represents a self-defeating cosmopolitan activism in relation to Willie. Sarojini's cosmopolitan identity is gained through her marriage to Wolf, a German photographer making documentary films about revolutions. She travels with Wolf to many Third-World countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, India, Jamaica, Jordan and Peru) to study the politics of revolution by filming documentaries. With cameras and documentary narratives, she finds in all proletariat revolutions an ideal form of correcting history's wrongs and celebrating the subaltern. At the beginning of the novel, Sarojini tells Willie that revolutionary activism is part of the cosmopolitan identity: "If everybody had said that, there would never have been any revolution anywhere. We all have wars to go to." (7) In a cafe in Berlin, she insightfully observes that it must have cost a young Tamil man who sells roses in Berlin's restaurants a lot, including false papers and visas and hiding, to get to and then try to assimilate into the host country. Sarojini thinks that the Tamil who supports the revolution back home is worth far more than Willie who does nothing in Africa's "great" and "glorious" (6) guerrilla war, since she deems guerrilla warfare a miracle, a sign of the Indian "servile" races confronting imperial history and righting its wrongs.

Urged by Sarojini, Willie goes back to India to join Kandapalli's guerrilla. Unlike Sarojini, an outside critic of a system that she herself does not work to change, Willie participates in the revolution. However, as his journey deeper in the forest and into the Indian interior shows, the local reality of the revolution is far from Sarojini's global view of it. As Willie gets more involved, he witnesses stage by stage the descent of the revolution into pure criminality. Though there is a renewed emphasis on the old Marxist and Maoist idea of

liquidating the class enemy, there is, strictly speaking, no class enemy left in the villages, because the feudal people have long ago run away. The people to be liquidated become the better-off peasants. A revolutionary madman whom Willie and Keso meet speaks of the philosophy of murder as his revolutionary gift to the poor, the cause for which he walks from village to village week after week. Violence and destruction are repackaged as revolutionary gifts. A means of historical retribution, the revolution becomes a breeding ground for a radical alterity. Willie's negative experience in the revolutionary camp becomes a critique of Sarojini's version of cosmopolitanism.

When Willie is thrown into the Indian jail and sentenced to a ten-year imprisonment, Sarojini comes to regret her armchair cosmopolitan activism. She confesses to Willie: "I am not too happy with what I have done, though everything was always done with the best of intentions. It is awful to say, but I believe I have sent many people to their doom in many countries." (153) She returns to their dead father's ashram, only to be frustrated by its impossibilities. Abandoned by Wolf, she returns to Berlin to live on the dole. While Sarojini is disenchanted by her meaningless life, Willie insightfully points out that she is running "from one extreme to the other" (161). Willie has learnt not to "strike foolish postures" (275), and finally survives with a realistic cosmopolitan view through retrospection and reflection.

In "The Journey" in *The Enigma of Arrival*, the narrator comments on the Trinidadian anarchy: "Two hundred years on, another Haiti was preparing, I thought: a wish to destroy a world judged corrupt and too full of pain, to turn one's back on it, rather than to *improve* [my emphasis] it." (175) As this part of the novel is the most autobiographical one, this claim can be regarded as the closest to Naipaul's own world view. In *Magic Seeds*, Ramachandra, a revolutionary in Kandapalli's guerrilla, says: "We must give up the idea of remaking everybody. Too many people are too far gone for that. We have to wait for this generation to die out. This generation and the next. We must plan for the generation after that." (125) Not seeing any regenerative potential in a people's revolution, Naipaul criticises the global

revolution of the middle- and lower-class for not truly speaking for the plebeians and not having a viable regenerative vision. To him, this is the most dangerous ideological, intellectual blind-spot of revolutions. The idea of revolutions leads to massive killings to cleanse society and culture of aliens, hybridity and their influences. The historical awakening only produces revolutionary subjects who fall prey to history, forever rising and falling, evolving only to collapse again in their quest for historical retribution. Though fiercely criticising the real world, Naipaul still believes that improvement within, instead of total destruction, is a humanistic way of changing the world positively. This is why Naipaul finally embraces plebeian cosmopolitanism—everyone remaking his/herself by retrospection and reflection in the spirit of a doer to find out and then devote what is important to him/her, no matter how trivial it is, to the improvement of the world.

Naipaul views cosmopolitanism as a standpoint suitable for the global life. He prefers to speak about cosmopolitanism as a progressive humanistic ideal that continues to be embedded in the structural condition of modernity. A degree of reflexive engagement is required to move into the intricate realm of this developing cosmopolitan vision. The last phase of Naipaul's novel-writing, characterised by a recapitulation of major earlier concerns in an unusually new manner that comes with a confidence in technique and vision formed by age and experience, shows his transition from an alienated, displaced point of view to a culturally diverse, plural cosmopolitanism, and from a poetics of cultural loss to multicultural celebration. *The Enigma of Arrival*, about the man's and the writer's search for self-definition achieved through a sensitivity to change as a way of seeing the human condition, is a turning point in his oeuvre. Unlike the political-oriented *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River*, *The Enigma of Arrival* is highly self-reflexive. The narrator's own vision is continually questioned, insufficiency of discourse is mirrored and the need of constant revision is discovered. It is a novel that, through the process of writing, explores the writer's growth and turns his inward knowledge into a written text that looks forward by looking backward. It is about the process

of belonging, of the bridging of gaps, of finally being at home and of being accepted. *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*, Naipaul's final return to realist fiction, sum up all his previous novels in critical retrospection and reflection. They further demonstrate Naipaul's turning from unforgiving critique of the crippling cultural traditionalism of the postcolonial society, to a realistic cosmopolitanism that generates a global consciousness and ponders on the cultural dynamics of empowerment and disempowerment, advancement and degeneration in the era of globalisation, beyond dichotomy between Eastern and Western civilisation but not the spirit of history (especially colonial history).

Mainly set in the Wiltshire countryside representing traditional Englishness, *The Enigma of Arrival* should not be simply read as a monocultural assault against hybridity or heterogeneity, subordinating difference to the superior metropolitan culture. The novel's universal vision, transcending the disillusioned perspective of the colonial and the assimilating outlook of the immigrant, is more mature. It sees human movement in itself as a key determinant of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is understood as a more general, historically deep experience of living in a state of flux and uncertainty, and as an encounter with difference that is possible in both the urban and rural setting. The novel represents cosmopolitanism with reference to cultural, economic, political and social features of the modern globalised era, an era defined by an unprecedented interconnectedness in which local identities, ideas, cultures and politics are embedded in the global.

If *The Enigma of Arrival* suggests that the very nature of globalisation increasingly calls for cosmopolitan gestures and sensitivities, *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* focus more critically on the possibility of achieving the cosmopolitan position, from a global point of view of a participant rather than that of a detached observer. The central question raised in these two novels is: does transnationalism lead to a greater level of cosmopolitanism in the era of globalisation? Though Naipaul conceives the contemporary cosmopolitan as a person who is able to transcend the local-global opposition and to live in a global cultural universe,

he warns us that it is historically and empirically flawed to see globalisation as a necessary or sufficient condition for the emergence of cosmopolitanism. Through his depiction of Willie's wasted half a life, Naipaul exposes the dark side of globalisation. Globalisation does not guarantee the expression or uptake of cosmopolitan dispositions, although it surely provides much of the raw material for this possibility. It demands a critical, historical attention to the expansive global identification, since people all may become globalised but they lose the power to control not only the world but also their own fate.

Naipaul's ongoing concern about cosmopolitanism is its class basis—whether a cosmopolitan outlook is associated with the privileged elite who possess higher educational level, income and capacity for physical mobility. Whereas *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River* implicitly allude to the threats to cosmopolitanism, Naipaul unravels the damaging influence of elitist cosmopolitanism instilled in colonial education in *The Enigma of Arrival*. The immigrants may still view the world according to the imperial paradigm and standard. In that case, the sustaining of their livelihood in an unfamiliar, uncertain host country with openness to taking an interest in and getting involved with others will not be realistically possible. *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* further illustrate that one does not need to be a member of the global elite to (potentially) hold a cosmopolitan view. Underscoring the global predicament of the plebeian people (the poor and the disempowered who remain defenceless in the face of both global imperial forces and local revolutionary tides), Naipaul envisions cosmopolitanism as a quality manifested in people's orientations, an attitude. Plebeian cosmopolitanism refers to a set of outlooks, dispositions and practices increasingly available, yet not guaranteed, to individuals for the purpose of dealing with cultural diversity, hybridity and otherness. It should not be imagined as a soon-to-arrive superior system of social organisation, but a possibility substantially undercut by a range of everyday attitudes and beliefs about the possibilities and problems associated with globalisation. Naipaul artistically reveals that cosmopolitan reasoning exists amongst the plebeian people moving across

national borders (like the non-intellectual immigrants and refugees), even though they are not necessarily cosmopolitan in orientation due to their status of "not being at home anywhere, but looking at home".

Assuming a stereoscopic stance that negotiates both the local and the global, Naipaul investigates different ways in which people engage with the intertwining of globalisation and cosmopolitanism in *The Enigma of Arrival*, *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*. He not only confirms but also praises the creativity of ordinary people. In particular, the plebeians representing difference, diversification and hybridity are capable of contributing to humanity with their unique cultural allegiance, and every form that they adopt should be admitted and valued as long as it is a personally conscious access or choice. Naipaul proposes that the plebeian cosmopolitan vision should accommodate various ways of being cosmopolitan and various possible cosmopolitanisms, protean as being rooted, reflexive and hybrid simultaneously on the condition of the adoption of a critically cool distanciation and meditation. According to Naipaul, this is the most realistic way of making cosmopolitanism a valuable self-critiquing concept, instead of a total ideology or fantasy. Compared with the radical activism of revolutions, Naipaul's plebeian cosmopolitan vision should be described as endorsing an activism from below rather than from above, favouring individual over collective self-determination. This is a typical humanistic view of Naipaul the realist novelist: improve the world; do not destroy it.

Conclusion

Predominantly a project of literary and cultural studies, this thesis examines how V. S. Naipaul modifies his elitist stance and consciously reorients his understanding of cosmopolitanism toward a plebeian direction represented in his fiction. The juxtaposition of "cosmopolitanism" and "plebeian" may seem a bit odd, as discussions about cosmopolitanism are often slanted toward elitism. Cosmopolitanism in the traditional sense is associated with the aesthetic, intellectual orientation of the mobile elite in the context of the European Enlightenment. It is popularised as an ideal of cultural sophistication, physical mobility and high social status. Cosmopolitan discourses often disproportionately appeal to the deterritorialised, trans-local experience of the elite strata of society where cosmopolitan travellers are generally implicitly thought of as dwelling.

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is the reconceptualised cosmopolitanism that appeared in cultural studies, sociology and anthropology in the late 1990s. The new cosmopolitanism criticises the old cosmopolitanism's Stoic, Kantian and Enlightenment roots as being hierarchical and imperialistic. It breaks with the Eurocentric trajectory of privilege and the old cosmopolitanism's elitist model, and recuperates the term for novel critical uses, especially as a way to describe our increasingly globalised reality. What makes it new is its determination to fashion tools for understanding a variety of voices and acting upon problems of global scale. In a counter-elitist trend, the new cosmopolitanism considers and responds to diversity in the increasingly hybridised global context.

Following Gerard Delanty's sociological categorisation of cosmopolitan thought, I confine my focus on the new cosmopolitanism to the cultural instead of moral or political dimension in this thesis. This is because postcolonial theorists like James Clifford and Homi Bhabha provide a new cultural framework or vocabulary for the new cosmopolitanism to focus on the concrete, historically-defined postcolonial experience. Postcolonial theory emphasises forms of minoritisation derived from the experience of the exilic and diasporic

people. Accordingly, the new cultural cosmopolitanism highlights new cultural, social configurations emblematic of the increased intermingling of peoples, customs and practices in the world. It sees alternative readings of history and the recognition of plurality rather than the creation of a universal order as the goal. It enables us to see how different cosmopolitan projects by which the local and the global are combined in diverse ways exist despite Westernisation. The new cosmopolitanism in the cultural dimension positively diverges from the Western, liberal worldview, and foregrounds a certain type of identification and transnational mode of belonging stemming from the (post)colonial experience and central in contemporary globalisation.

Aligning myself with theorists like Bruce Robbins and Pnina Werbner, I think cosmopolitanism should avoid the elitist stance on the one hand, and stress the need to recognise multiple modalities of cosmopolitanism (especially the marginal ones) on the other hand. Reconceptualised in a multicultural light, the new cosmopolitanism is highly aware of the complexity and diversity of forms of human life, so it can interrupt and dislocate the absolute claim of the local and the enforced unity of the "superior" European culture. In this thesis, I view cosmopolitanism as a possibility substantially undercut by a range of available cultural outlooks, which any individual can selectively deploy to deal with the new possibilities and problems associated with globalisation.

Critics like Rob Nixon attack the kind of cosmopolitanism that Naipaul represents, but their theoretical assumption is framed by the old cosmopolitanism rooted in elitism. This is why most criticism on Naipaul is confined mainly to two elements: his stance as an elite cosmopolitan and his rootlessness generalised as a demonstration of his cosmopolitanism. His Brahmin ancestry, middle-class background, Oxford education, profession as a writer and transnational mobility are considered as key determinants of his cosmopolitanism, a manifestation of the mentality of the occupationally and experientially privileged. His ability to command cultural, intellectual and social resources and then to dabble rootlessly in a

variety of cultures and lifestyles across wide territories is overemphasised, among other constituent elements of cosmopolitanism. I see conspicuous problems arising from here. If the old cosmopolitanism that sings praise to the mobile elite with the intellectual orientation but without the lasting attachment to any community is used as the theoretical basis, why is Naipaul's elitist cosmopolitanism judged harshly? Does this contradiction imply that the cosmopolitan subject is still invariably seen as a citizen of the First World?

In this thesis, I argue that the contemporary re-conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism in the cultural dimension necessitates a rereading of Naipaul. I seek to challenge the simplistic generalisation of Naipaul's cosmopolitanism as an elitist mode of being and his advocacy of a homogenising drive toward universality. I reject both those readings of his works that adopt a universalist cosmopolitan lens and those that look at them from a purely postcolonial perspective. Framed in the conceptual matrix of the new cosmopolitanism and confined to the cultural dimension, my definition of "cosmopolitanism" refers to a subjective attitude or outlook toward self, others and the world, associated with a conscious, reflective openness to difference. I understand Naipaul's slant toward plebeian cosmopolitanism as a dynamic way of seeing the world, rather than a static identity.

The study of Naipaul's novels in the chronological order shows clearly how his elitist cosmopolitanism has changed to plebeian cosmopolitanism as his outlook, thought and vision have matured. His fiction writing is divided into four phases in this thesis. I argue that Naipaul's early, comic phase is characterised by his yearning for elitist cosmopolitanism. *Miguel Street*, in which Naipaul presents the lived cosmopolitan experience arising at a local, micro level, can be read as a Trinidadian example of Bhabha's "vernacular cosmopolitanism". However, while vernacular cosmopolitanism points to the active practice of the subaltern individuals who operate and struggle primarily alone, Naipaul sees cosmopolitanism as a managerial design, or a project in which every individual is readily categorised and defined. Drawing on his own elitist path, he regards literacy by education as the only claim to

legitimacy. This is why a defining element in his early fiction is his characters' romantic desire for the idealised metropolis, the centre to which all things from the colony gravitate. Naipaul's early obsession that only the elite intellectuals of the Anglo-American artistic coterie can access and hold a cosmopolitan worldview is a reinstatement of the familiar structure of privilege from the Enlightenment. His distorted representation of Trinidad reveals his colonial fantasy that only the support of a satisfactory culture and society based on the shared understanding of abstract ideals can impose the elitist mode of being downward from on high, to give perfection to the individual. Naipaul's yearning for elitist cosmopolitanism, a kind of cosmopolitanism from above, reflects his colonial mentality.

I see Naipaul's second phase as a phase of disillusionment with metropolitan-centrism of elitist cosmopolitanism, a result of his sense of uprootedness and alienation as a colonial outsider in exile in England. He begins to reflect on the damaging effect of colonial education, to confront and question his colonial fantasy about the reassuring metropolitan purpose and desirable elitist cosmopolitanism seen from afar. A recurring theme in this phase is that the perceptual, lived reality of the heterogeneity of immigrants and the coexistence of their disparate cultures have shattered and transformed England's monolithic nature. The elitist cosmopolitan ideology, however, is in stark contrast with this reality of coexistence, intermingling and hybridisation. In *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* and *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul reveals the fraudulence or infeasibility of elitist cosmopolitanism. As hedonistic consumption of global products and luxurious stylisation of metropolitan life are superficially understood as the signals of access and openness to difference, elitist cosmopolitanism cannot be associated with the uptake or expression of genuine cosmopolitan openness. Its consumer orientation may only demonstrate a parochial lens or an imperialist outlook, or even conceal xenophobia toward others. Naipaul criticises elitist cosmopolitanism's lack of close contact or involvement with the colonial milieu and the migrant population from the Third World. His emerging concern with the necessity of and difficulty in cultivating cosmopolitan dispositions

at the individual level is a signal of his reoriented perspective of viewing cosmopolitanism

from below.

In his third phase, Naipaul consciously extends his cultural critique and historical

observations to a more cosmopolitan arena. He breaks from elitist cosmopolitanism's arrogant

affiliations with the West, but casts his writer's net over a multiplicity of underprivileged

peoples and poor regions. He foresees the inevitability of cosmopolitanism transforming from

a prerogative enjoyed by a select few into a non-elitist mode encountered by all mankind in

the global world. I read *In a Free State* as a marker of Naipaul's reoriented perspective.

Through the political, psychological and pathological study of displaced people like

immigrants and refugees, he begins to consider what can make cosmopolitanism socially

viable, as what elitist cosmopolitanism stands for seems to be in violent collision with the real

world. His view that every relation between different elements in cosmopolitanism is an

interpersonal relationship per se becomes much clearer in the book. Naipaul further rejects the

claim that cosmopolitanism is a conscious and voluntary choice of the elite in *A Bend in the*

River. Elitist cosmopolitanism is revealed as imperialism and hegemony under another guise

in its civilising attempt to transform the values long associated with European empires. Much

of Naipaul's attention is drawn to the fact that the emerging cosmopolitan reality is a function

of coerced choices or a side effect of unconscious decisions. By exploring the theme of

homelessness and rootlessness as a consequence of the (post)colonial experience, Naipaul

questions the psychological and social feasibility of the absolute detachment that elitist

cosmopolitanism celebrates. From a more down-to-earth perspective, he gives the

transnational subject's survival top priority in the construction of his cosmopolitan vision. He

sees plebeian cosmopolitanism as a name for the ever-shifting and ever-vibrant space in

which people fuse reflective openness to the new with reflective loyalty to the known. He

takes a big step of translating and re-configuring the elitist cosmopolitan ideal into concrete

social realities in his third phase. In my opinion, Naipaul's concern with the danger of fusing

the elitist, ideal cosmopolitanism with the lived, realistic one is in accordance with Robbins'
call for "actually existing cosmopolitanism". Naipaul's writing in this phase foreshadows the
late theories of cosmopolitanism.

I examine Naipaul's embrace of plebeian cosmopolitanism in his last phase of fiction
writing in the context of globalisation. His standpoint turns from unforgiving critique of the
crippling cultural traditionalism of the postcolonial society to a kind of realistic
cosmopolitanism, which generates a global consciousness and ponders on the cultural
dynamics of empowerment and disempowerment, advancement and degeneration, beyond
dichotomy between Eastern and Western civilisation but not the spirit of history (especially
colonial history). *The Enigma of Arrival* represents cosmopolitanism with reference to
cultural, economic, political and social features of the modern globalised era, and suggests
that the nature of these features urgently calls for cosmopolitan gestures and sensitivities. But
in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*, Naipaul warns us that it is historically and empirically flawed
to see globalisation as a guarantee of the uptake or expression of cosmopolitan dispositions.
In this self-reflective phase, underscoring the global predicament of the plebeians, Naipaul
envisions cosmopolitanism as a quality manifested in people's orientations, or an attitude. He
emphasises the cosmopolitan's ability to transcend the local-global opposition; one does not
need to be a member of the global elite to develop a cosmopolitan view. His plebeian
cosmopolitanism refers to a set of outlooks, dispositions and practices increasingly available,
yet not guaranteed, to the individuals for the purpose of dealing with cultural diversity,
hybridity and otherness. It should not be imagined as a soon-to-arrive superior system of
social organisation, but a possibility substantially undercut by a range of everyday attitudes
and beliefs about the possibilities and problems associated with globalisation. Naipaul
proposes that the plebeian cosmopolitan vision should accommodate various ways of being
cosmopolitan and various possible cosmopolitanisms, protean as being rooted, reflexive and
hybrid simultaneously on the condition of the adoption of a critically cool distanciation. At

this point, his understanding of cosmopolitanism is consistent with the new cosmopolitanism in theory. I contend that Naipaul's realistic, pragmatic cosmopolitan vision endorses an activism from below rather than from above, favouring individual over collective self-determination.

What this thesis emphasises is: it is after a really long process of conscious reflection and self-reflexive correction that Naipaul becomes a writer with a realistic cosmopolitan vision, observing the reality knowing very well what an ideology theoretically means but standing outside it, not becoming part of it. His internationalist consciousness but encompassing scepticism is in accordance with the new cosmopolitanism's goal to bring the abstraction of cosmopolitan ideals back down to earth. Hopefully, my rereading of Naipaul's realist novels can extend the theoretical premise of cosmopolitan thought so that more variable circumstances and forms of cosmopolitanism actually existing in our globalised world will be included and a "true cosmopolitanism from below" will be made more easily available.

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