

# Crossing the Water: Fanon in Naipaul and Rushdie



MA Thesis Literatuur en Cultuurkritiek

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27 August 2013

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## Introduction

The politics that came to the colony made people aware of their pain. Later they came to see their helplessness.

Naipaul, *Mimic Men*, ix.

In his preface to *Mimic Men*, V.S. Naipaul rejects the notion of an immigrant's feeling of nostalgia towards the former colonies. His protagonist prefers the "calm of England", even as an exile. Labelling the former colonies as "helpless", Naipaul seems to turn his back on his past in Trinidad. The novel that propelled Naipaul to fame, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, depicts a frustrated individual who struggles to flee the suffocating Hindu scene towards a life like the decent English lead.

Naturally, Naipaul's tendency to disregard the former colonies as "helpless" and his assimilation to English culture caused some heated arguments in the postcolonial literary scene. Some of those feuds were a delight for the public. For example, when Naipaul sold Paul Theroux's (his former protégé) books that were dedicated 'with love' to him, for \$ 1,500 each, the media revelled in the boldness Naipaul displayed (*The Independent* 30 May 2011). His reputation as a witty and quite arrogant writer is entertaining, but in the amusement it is often easy to overlook certain aspects of Naipaul's treatment of his own past and the pain of the colonies.

A more relevant quarrel for my investigation is the one between Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. Both writers are of Indian descent and have enjoyed an excellent British education, albeit in quite different times. Naipaul seems to have adapted himself fully to English culture and the characters in his novels struggle to move away from their Indian heritage, whereas Rushdie's characters seem to find fulfilment in their hybrid-like status as Indian immigrant (*After Empire* 148). Rushdie considers the fate of the former colonized immigrant as full of possibilities and their identity as hybrid. In Naipaul's perspective however, the future seems more grim and the colonial past too fragmented beyond repair for the former colony to make sense of (148). Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* centres around two types of Indian immigrants. Connections between Naipaul's acquired Englishness and the degrading experiences of Indian-turned-English Saladin Chamcha are tempting to make. Naipaul, as a result, is seen as a postcolonial writer who is still colonial, forsaking his cultural heritage in the approval of the politics that the British Empire has brought.

In my thesis I wish to examine these two writers of Indian descent, who both wrote highly appreciated novels about the former colonies from English ground. I will question the assumption that Naipaul simply discards his Indian past as backwards and inferior to the culture of the British Empire and see how his actual writing does or does not support this assumption. If in the post colonial era, Naipaul is deemed incorrect in regard to writing against the Empire, it might be practical to enlarge upon anti colonialist theory. In an attempt to determine the historical and cultural origins of Naipaul's and Rushdie's opposing treatment of the colonial past and its post colonial present and future, Frantz Fanon's work on the psychology of the colonized subject and its means of subversive action will prove to be particularly helpful. In what follows, I will provide an answer to how anti colonialism presents itself in the Indian Diaspora narratives of Naipaul and in Rushdie's reception of Naipaul.

The first chapter will be mainly theoretical, concentrating on Fanon's two works *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the first work, Fanon analyses the phenomenon of colonized people who assimilate to the culture of oppression. He describes the notion of the "black man" as a "white" construct and describes the possibilities for a black man to realize his potential in a white world. In his second famous essay, Fanon, as a black writer in Algeria writing against the French regime, explains with great psychological insight the anti colonial revolution. This national revolution was realized with the same violence that the colonizers used to take control, but it seemed to be the only way out of the passivity of the natives. How problematical this anti colonial movement exactly was, becomes clear when the new national consciousness needed a spokesperson, who was familiar with the oppressor's manners and how to oppose them. The fact that the required spokesperson was educated in the oppressor's system made them suspect and complicit, however, and the whole new consciousness seemed to be based on western constructs, due to the native lack of a history of his own. Even though Fanon describes a different group and a different colonizer than Rushdie and Naipaul, his psychological treatment of the subaltern's behaviour and the difficulty of breaking free from this construct is well applicable to Rushdie's and Naipaul's themes.

In the second chapter, I will give an image of how Rushdie and Naipaul receive each other's work and how their disagreement has been treated in the press. The assumed incorrectness of Naipaul as a postcolonial writer, leads me to examine how correct Rushdie is, aside from the Fatwa that was issued against him. An important difference between Rushdie and Naipaul is that the latter grew up in a seemingly poor Hindu family in Trinidad. a while

before decolonization took place, and was lucky to get a scholarship for an English education. However Rushdie, born in the year of independence, grew up in a rich family in Bombay and followed his father's footsteps in enjoying an English upbringing. In comparing the two writers and their lives, I will argue how the discussion about their political correctness overlooks their different identities as immigrants of Indian descent.

The third Chapter will be a literary approach to two novels of Naipaul. In *A House*, several scenes and passages show a certain contempt for the confused and noisy world of the colonies. However, nostalgia and compassion for the Hindu society is not absent. The autobiographical aspect of the novel can further explain Naipaul's view on Trinidad. The ironic presentation of Mr. Biswas also implies some criticism of his desire to be English, considering his everlasting frustration, which I will look further into. *Mimic Men*, from the perspective of an Indian immigrant, almost literally describes what Fanon fears: the copying of the white culture after independence. The protagonist forces himself to be like the culture he moved to, only to daydream about mythical images of the country of his ancestors. His final resolution, that he would rather stay and be an outsider in the ready-made culture of the British, represents the inability for the former colonized subject to feel at home in his native country, in Singh's case Isabella, since he has been formed by the foreign domination of his country's past.

Rushdie's opposing characters of Gibreel and Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* is the focus of the fourth chapter. After analyzing Naipaul's literary work in the light of Fanon, Rushdie's view on Naipaul is even more visible in the presentation of the slightly ridiculous Chamcha, who only finds peace when, in the end, he embraces his Indian heritage in the classical image of the father and a new hysterical Indian girlfriend. The survival of Chamcha in his newly acquired Indian-after-being-English disposition, implies a belief that there is something like 'home' for the immigrant. In Rushdie's representation, Naipaul's public character and his literary characters are criticized for their reluctance to endorse some of their Indian heritage.

Fanon's theory is based on the psychological results of Western domination and I will argue that these psychological results are to be found in both Rushdie and Naipaul as Indian English writers and their literary works. Their Diaspora narratives put Fanon's theory to the test, and Fanon's theory provides a perspective on Naipaul's writing and the accusations of mimicry that have been levelled against him.

## 1. Fanon: Anti Colonialism and Psychology

As a doctor of medicine and psychiatrist during the Algerian War, Frantz Fanon experienced the results of colonization and the process of decolonization at first hand. Fanon's treatise about the Algerian uprising *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) has a ferocious character in, in this work he delineates the role of the colonizer and, more importantly, the role of the native during his revolt. Prior to his placement in Algeria, Fanon analyzed the problems for a black man who has to live in a white society, which is the society of the black man's former master. His analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is written from a personal perspective and focuses more on the existence of a black race in white society and vice versa, even though the black society turns out to be white in the end.

Fanon grew up as one of the few black Martiniquais to enjoy a French education in Martinique in the 1930's. Raised and educated with the belief that he was French, the racism that he experienced from white Frenchmen shook his identity to the extent that he had to reconstruct this identity in the eyes of whites to that of a black West Indian. (Ahluwalia 341-42). Discovering that the colonies and their inhabitants were not a mere extension of the colonizing country, Fanon described the psychological causes and results of alienation. Moreover, he argued that notions of "black" or "white" need to be eliminated, for these are constructs that have the ability to destroy one's sense of self. As a result of his personal painful discovery, Fanon joined Algerian forces in order to oppose France, the country that educated him.

Fanon's notion of the black man as a former slave and the white man as the former master can be seen as applicable to the role of the South Asian and West Indian colonized subject and the psychological damage suffered under the British Empire. In *Black Skin*, as we shall see, Fanon provides several causes for varying cases of black and white encounters. My focus, however, will not be on every single case that is presented and analyzed, but on the cases that can clarify Naipaul's and Rushdie's literary works about the former colonized Indian in the world of the British Empire. Fanon states in *Black Skin* that "[W]e shall attempt to discover the various mental attitudes the black man adopts in the face of white civilization" (*Black Skin* xvi). These mental attitudes are traced back to the experiences of childhood in a colony and the eventual immigration to, in Fanon's case, the French Empire.

*The Wretched of the Earth* puts the focus on race in a broader perspective from which Fanon criticizes colonial attitudes (Ahluwalia 341). His criticism of the colonial practices of the French lead Fanon to describe the psychological effects on the resisting natives, who have

no other means than to imitate the white use of military force to free themselves. The problems that arise when a “national consciousness” has to replace the former colonizer are traced back by Fanon to the impossibility of historical recuperation, since the native’s history is formed by the colonizer. The “pitfalls” of this national consciousness that Fanon speaks of are partly caused by the importance for a colony fighting for decolonization to have a spokesperson.

### 1.1.Black Skin, White Masks; *mimicry and assimilation of the colonizer*

Fanon states in his introduction “that there are too many idiots on this earth. And now that I have said it, I have to prove it” (*Black Skin xi*). *Black Skin* is Fanon’s attempt to analyse two certainties in a psychoanalytic manner:

Fact: some Whites consider themselves superior to Blacks.

Another fact: some Blacks want to prove at all costs to the Whites the wealth of the black man’s intellect and equal intelligence. (xiv)

According to Fanon, these facts create a vicious cycle that cannot be broken easily. From a personal perspective, being a doctor and a black man himself, he discusses a number of cases that expose racial prejudice and a distortion in the consciousness of the black man, who becomes painfully aware of his appearance in the white civilization.

In Fanon’s perspective, all identity is relational (Ahluwalia 343). His first step is to tackle the issue of language. As a black Martiniquais educated in French, Fanon is aware of the appeal that the colonizer’s language had for the colonized student: “A man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language”. He continues to say that, “[T]he more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush” (*Black Skin 2*). A rejection of the colonized “blackness” or status as “native” is inevitable in this process of assimilation. Fanon argues that this rejection produces a crack in the colonized sense of being: the native intellectual is no longer a black man among the black men, also he will never be a white man who can move unnoticed in a white civilization. This crisis of identity as a result of colonization and the importance of language can be found in post colonial literature, as we shall see in the fictional lives of Mohun Biswas, Ralph Singh and Saladin Chamcha the following chapters.

The problem of language is not only apparent in the educated Black man. Fanon portrays the White man who patronizes the Black man by talking to him as if he is an

imbecile or child. This paternalistic attitude of the colonizer forces a simple, childlike response from the colonized who is spoken to. In this manner, the colonizer creates what he longs to see and feels himself justified to think of the colonized as inferior in language (14). “Whether he likes it or not, the black man has to wear the livery the white man has fabricated for him” (17). Fanon blames western cultural works for this stereotype, in which the black man just “has to be a good nigger” (18). Fanon calls this an imprisonment; “a *visible appearance* for which the black man is not responsible” (italics in original 18). After being subjected to this, what else is there to do for the colonized man (black or Indian) but to prove himself more worthy than this insulting image? As Fanon once more stresses: “To speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture” (21). In this case, if the colonized masters the colonizers language, he will have a chance to escape his ridiculous image that the colonizer’s imposed on him. However, in Fanon’s view of the world, the colonized educated man will find himself disillusioned in his dream of becoming white i.e. becoming an integral part of the colonizer’s culture, for his appearance betrays him.

Fanon’s mentioning of the colonized, coloured woman and their desire for the white man is not relevant for my research, for the literary works I will discuss narrate the lives of (former) colonized *men* in regard to the crumbling of the colonial empires. However, the aspect of *recognition* (‘recognition’ as a form of acknowledgement) forms an essential part of the colonized longing to be white and be recognized as such. “Lactification” (to make something more milky) is the (quite visual) term Fanon uses for this female desire to be acknowledged as a woman who can be married by white men.

The day the white man confessed his love for the mulatto girl, something extraordinary must have happened. There was recognition, and acceptance into a community that seemed impenetrable. Gone was the psychological deprecation, the feeling of debasement, and its corollary of never being able to reach the light. (40)

Recognition in the eyes of a white woman bears a similar urgency for the black man. In the case of the black man in the 1950’s, however, this urgency is accompanied by the recognition he will receive as an educated black man. His transformation is not complete, according to Fanon, if he cannot make love to a white woman:

I espouse white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these white breasts that my wandering hands fondle, white civilization and worthiness become mine (45).



Fanon exemplifies longing as stated above with the case of Jean Veneuse, who is a black character in a white society in a novel by René Maran. Jean's attitude to assert his place in French white society is influenced by the fact that he cannot escape his race. Fanon discusses a scene in which we see a white man reassuring Jean that he can marry his white lovely sister, because he is not "an authentic Negro": "You have nothing in common with a real Negro. You are not black; you are very, very dark" (50). Fanon explains that in the white friend's eyes "The Negro" is the savage, whereas "the student is civilized" (51). Here again we see how the colonized man hopes to escape his image with the help of education, the only problem is that this plan backfires, since the constructed image was created in the first place to keep the 'savage' in his place. Jean is painfully aware of himself being different, no matter how hard he tries. Fanon calls his attitude similar to that of an abandonment neurotic, who lives according to a self-fulfilling prophecy of being unloved: by making himself unloved, he proves himself right. This neurosis is not particularly common in the black man, but it can occur, according to Fanon, when an educated colonized man realizes he does not belong among the other colonized, just as he will not belong among the colonizers.

A similar neurosis occurs in Naipaul's characters, who feel hopelessly dragged back and forth between societies, to none of which they can find unconditional access because of their constant awareness of the native or colonizer society, in which they remain outsiders. This neurotic demands proof that can never be realized, for he will always feel (and grudgingly prove) his "otherness"(58).

However, the case of the neurotic should not be ascribed to the case of every educated black man according to Fanon, for the neurotic is trapped in his own prophecy, whereas the colonized have other options. The feeling of inferiority is created by the racist (73), who needs to feel superior in comparison. Fanon stresses the importance of the unconsciousness and how the inferiority complex appears in dreams. After a coloured patient dreams about a weary journey ending in a room full of whites, where he comes to the realization that he himself is white, Fanon concludes (among other things) that: "it is to the extent that society creates difficulties for him that he finds himself positioned in a neurotic situation" (80). This leads Fanon to argue that the problem lies in the social structure of the patient's world, and that the patient needs to be aware of this social structure to find a way to exist. The unconscious need for "lactification" is not an individual one, but one of the whole society that has been structured by trade with and exploitation by colonists. Fanon hereby refutes the notion that the inferiority complex existed before colonization.

From a more personal painful perspective, Fanon illustrates how racial prejudice can be a form of recognition (the black man recognized as the “black savage” from Western cultural products) that will produce feelings of inferiority in the recognized subject:

‘Dirty nigger!’ or simply ‘Look! A Negro!’

I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origins of the world, and here I am an object among other objects (89).

Fanon’s experience of the shock of being objectified in a world (I assume the white man’s world) where he expected to find recognition in another positive way, hurt him to an extent that he feels nausea (in Sartre’s sense). He becomes unwell, for he himself recognizes the stares and name-calling as an integral part of the society he is moving in to; “the recognition that he has no control over the [...] gaze illustrates that the gaze is not neutral” (Ahluwalia 346). This experience Fanon undoubtedly shared with many immigrants from the colonies: “[t]he white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating” (*Black Skin* 94). Fanon’s participation is hindered because of his appearance, and here he diverts slightly from his earlier claim that all racism is the same, for a Jew can go unnoticed. The problem for the colonized is his skin. “The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am *fixed*” (italics in original 95). From the moment his skin is recognized as “black”, the link to savageness is immediately made. The objectified colonized recognizes this gaze in an instant, but cannot prevent it with rational deliberation.

Fanon states that when confronted with the irrational, the man first solely armed with reason can only retort with irrationality; “Since there was no way we could agree on the basis of reason” (102). The irrational but almost inevitable reaction according to Fanon is the sudden hysterical exclaiming of, in Fanon’s case, his negritude. Fanon uses “negritude” in the sense of characteristics that are imposed on the black man, who is labelled as “beautiful” and in touch with “mother nature”. The problem is that this negritude is a myth created by white settlers, as Fanon is fully aware of: “Yes, we niggers are backward, naive and free” (107). And again there is no originality the colonized man can prove to the colonizer. Fanon describes this frustration for the educated black man from a personal perspective:

I wanted to be typically black – that was out of the question. I wanted to be white – that was a joke. And when I tried to claim my negritude intellectually as a concept, they snatched it away from me. (111)

This is what Fanon calls his, and that of many others, *sickness*; being a colonized object in the prejudiced gaze of the colonizer.

from a psychoanalytic view, Fanon further examines the black man's feelings of inferiority and his desperate attempts to overcome prejudice (in himself as well as in the eyes of white men and women). Certain behaviour in a specific group can be understood when one takes a look at the family and how the family represents the behaviour (120). According to Fanon, normally, "There is no disproportion between family life and the life of the nation" (121) In the case of the colonized child, however (in Fanon's case the black child), however "normal" his family may be, a disproportion is noticeable when the child enters the colonizer's world. The colonized child becomes an abnormality upon entering, and this is the result of a "collective catharsis". What Fanon means by catharsis is that every society needs an outlet for aggression in cultural works. The disproportion starts here, because the children of the colonies read the same comics that colonizers children do, whilst these comics are actually written for and by white men and their offspring. (124)

And the Wolf, the Devil, the Wicked Genie, Evil and the Savage are always represented by Blacks or Indians; and since one always identifies with the good guys, the little black child, just like the little white child, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, and a missionary "who is in danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes."

[...]

The identification process means that the black child subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. He invests the hero, who is white, with all his aggressiveness. (124-6)

What happens to the child when he enters a white society, is a reconstructing of his own identity, for he is formed by his childhood aggressiveness against "natives". Now that he is recognized as a "native" or "negro" by the white man's gaze, very likely he will reject his family because of the image they have in the white men's eyes (128). Only the encounter with the colonizer's white society will make the colonized aware of how he *himself* is presented in cultural products as comics and movies. More importantly, he will realize that he is perceived as the antagonist to civilization and will struggle to prove himself different from the colour of his skin. In order to break down the myth, he turns to the white man to "give him self-esteem at the ethical level" (132). This vicious cycle is a result of the fact that the colonizer and the colonized "have the same collective unconsciousness" (168). The cultural imposition, as Fanon names it, makes the black man a "negrophobe". The only possibility of climbing up the social ladder in civilization (which is white for the black man who shares the collective unconsciousness with the white man), is to prove he is not evil, wicked or savage, i.e.: not

black. In order to prove this, he needs to excel in language, sophistication and intellect and reject his family. By rejecting his family, the black man mystifies his background as evil himself, and is likely to suffer from a superiority complex in his carefully acquired “whiteness”.

Identity is always relational, especially in the case of the colonized man according to Fanon. The colonized man in the society of the colonizer “is constantly preoccupied with self-assertion and the ego ideal” (185-6). The colonized man, in the presence of “the Other” (another colonized person or group), has to determine whether he himself is less or more intelligent and white in comparison: “It is on the ruins of my entourage that I build my virility” (186). The colonized must devalue his own native environment in order to assert his own superiority. This neurotic behaviour is the product of the social structure that is constructed by cultural imposition (188). Fanon adds a third dimension to Alfred Adler’s personality theory, which is based on the Ego in comparison to “the Other”. The third dimension takes place because it is not only the Ego of, in this case, the black man, who has to compete with “the Other”, but also the Ego who has to maintain this competition in the society of the white man. So yes, as Fanon makes clear, the colonized has a dependency complex regarding the white man, who for years tried to make a white man out of the black man with white education and cultural works. Education and cultural products that present the colonized as inherently inferior.

Like Marx, whom he often quotes, Fanon applies Hegelian dialectic theory to the psychological results in the colonized object of living in a white social structure. The master-slave dialectic is noticeable in the oppressed colonized man who seeks his personal value in the oppressing colonizer:

Each consciousness of self is seeking absoluteness. It wants to be recognized as an essential value outside of life, as transformation of subjective certainty (*Gewissheit*) into objective truth (*Wahrheit*). Encountering opposition from the other, self-consciousness experiences *desire* (italics in original 192).

This desire finds its origins in the colonized man’s uncertainty whether his self consciousness *an sich* is recognized, and results in a neurotic obsession to find his self-consciousness opposed by the white man. Colonization and racism have resulted, in Fanon’s theory, in a self-destructive attitude of the black man, in an attempt to find his respected place in a mystified and mystifying white society (200).

## 1.2. The Wretched of the Earth; *violation of native passivity*

Following Fanon's analysis of racial prejudice and its psychological results in the colonized object, we now have a clear view of what colonization entails for individuals living in a colonized world. More importantly, it is eminent that the colonized man, in his desire to be recognized, wears a colonizer mask. In *The Wretched*, Fanon's focus lies less on racial identity and more on the broader implications of colonization and how these affect the process of decolonization.

It is in Algeria that Fanon recognizes the paradox of French colonialism with its civilizing mission and desire for exploitation which meant that the line between the 'master' and the 'slave' could never be crossed. In his articulation of a new humanism, Fanon sets for himself the task [...] without succumbing to the antinomies of the Manichean structure of colonialism. The task is not only to end colonial rule but to also liberate both the colonizer and the colonized. (Ahluwalia 351)

A Manichean structure (in Fanon's use) means that the perspective is dualistic; with clear oppositions of good and evil, savage and civilized, black and white etc. The danger of this Manichean perspective is that the colonized, the native intellectual, simply takes the place of the colonizer during the process of decolonization (Gibson 339).

I want to examine how Fanon explains the native passivity and violence from a psychological perspective. This perspective in *The Wretched* is not particularly based on Fanon himself being a black man, but on evidence gathered from a social structure on edge. It is interesting that Fanon now uses the term "Manichean" in describing the structure of the colonizers. This provides a new perspective on the attitude of the colonizer, and the retaliation from the colonized. The process described in *The Wretched* leads to a national consciousness that imitates the former settler's consciousness.

The Manichaeism of binary oppositions is maintained in the national revolution: "That is to say that the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown" (*The Wretched* 39). As a result, the native intellectual in his revolt, will find a sort of means of his own identification in the mystified past in which the colonizer was not present. In *Black Skin*, Fanon describes a similar reaction of the former oppressed with the example of a black man endorsing his negritude. In *The Wretched*, the process of seeking identity in a past where the colonizer was not yet present, seems different from continuing to mimic the colonizer. It is a form of mimicry however, since this native "past" is constructed

under imperial rule as “exotic” or “natural” as opposed to “white modernization”. By endorsing this past, the colonized partly continues the colonizer construct. This form of mimicry is not done on purpose, as is the case when a colonized subject deliberately mimics the cultural characteristics of the colonizer.

Fanon’s treatment of the native intellectual and his choices during the process of decolonization will prove to be helpful to determine the perspective of the literary works during and after the process of decolonization. The literary works I will approach, however, are not written by typical ‘native’ intellectuals. But the problems the native intellectual in Fanon’s analysis stumbles upon can clarify the issues that postcolonial writers tend to deal with.

Fanon discerns a separation between the *lumpen-proletariat* (landless peasants) and the townsmen who, during decolonization, form the national party. The first group is suspicious of the latter, who collaborates with the colonizer (89). The political parties do not seek to integrate the peasants and work within the realm of the colonizer’s social structure. This means that the “new” national party has no “national” credibility to speak of, for the masses are not invited to this national movement. Eventually the bourgeoisie takes over, and the attitude of this middle class is the crux of the problem, since their sole objective is to “Replace the foreigner” (127). By replacing them, the native middle class adopts their inherent racism: “By its laziness and will to imitation, it promotes the ingrafting and stiffening of racism which was characteristic of the colonial era” (130). So after decolonization, prejudice against and oppression of the ones that do not have the means to replace the foreigner, remains.

To return to the notion of the masses who remain unheard in this Western bourgeois social structure, Fanon calls for intellectuals who are willing to come into physical contact with the masses, who are not “incapable of governing themselves” (151). The pitfalls of national consciousness, in Fanon’s opinion, exist mainly due to the lack of collective movement and mutual understanding. This gap between specific groups finds its roots in Western bourgeois ideology that masks its racism by proclaiming human equality and dignity (131). This imitation of Western ideology stems from fear that was instilled in the colonized during centuries of colonization. Colonialism deliberately destroyed the pre-colonial history of the colonized (169), by distorting this history to uncivilized evilness, so horribly different from the enlightened sophisticated history of the colonizer:

When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to

chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the native's heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality (169).

This idea of helplessness, reminds us of how Naipaul infuriates the post-colonial literary scene by agreeing to the colonizer's paternalism as I quoted in my introduction: "The politics that came to the colony made people aware of their pain. Later they came to see their helplessness." It remains to be seen whether Naipaul actually agrees or simply admits the psychological results of the colonial domination. But to stay with Fanon's *Wretched* for now, the native intellectual who chooses to break out of this bourgeois (according to Fanon) fear in order to prove his nation's worth, encounters similar problems to those of the black man who needs to prove his worth in a white society, as we saw in *Black Skin*. Educated by Western civilization, the native intellectual seems incapable of penetrating into his "native culture". "His inevitable, painful experience only seems to be a banal search for exoticism"(178). And this native intellectual tends to ascribe solely positive attributes to his fellow native in comparison to the oppressing attitude of the settler.

After decolonization, 'national' cultural products have to be created in order to resist the cultural imposition Fanon describes in *Black Skin*. In case of the native writer, Fanon describes three phases:

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power.

[...]

In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember who he is.

[...]

Finally, in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on contrary *shake* the people. (emphasis added 178-9)

Only after this third phase, says Fanon, can national literature exist. But still, the native intellectual, in his desire to produce something "authentic", uses techniques "which are borrowed from the stranger in his country" (180). Such as the very form of a novel. And, Fanon argues, the native intellectual should be wary of trying to revive old traditions, for

these do not *represent* the actuality of his nation in the process of decolonization. On the contrary, this would oppose the social reality that is undergoing “radical changes” (181).

Fanon’s solution for the native intellectual, wishing to express his people’s environment, is to *integrate* in this environment:

You may speak about everything under the sun; but when you decide to speak of that unique thing in man’s life that is represented by the fact of opening new horizons, by bringing light to your own country and by raising yourself and your people to their feet, then you must collaborate on the physical plane (187).

By integrating with the population the native intellectual wishes to represent, he can demystify and battle colonial assumptions.



## 2. Naipaul versus Rushdie: their Differences and Characteristics

The phenomena of mimicry and assimilation Fanon describes in the 1950's, during the global process of decolonization, still prove to be topics of discussion in the 21st century literary field. After decolonization, the term "postcolonial" is utilized for literature dealing with the former colonies. The fall of the European colonial empires following the end of the Second World War gave rise to many literary works that sought to "write back" to the Empire now that these works could be published without the former colonizers' consent. With the birth of this new literary field, postcolonial criticism sought to deconstruct imperial grand narratives. In "V.S. Naipaul and the Political Correctness Debate", Graham Huggan observes that "[t]he problem with so much postcolonial criticism is its obvious lack of specificity" (Huggan 203). This lack of specificity arises due to postcolonial theory, which seeks to oppose existing hegemonies (in postcolonial literature) and accordingly postcolonial criticism expects the opposition to the existing hegemonies in postcolonial literature. The power that is expected to be overthrown or at least exposed, however, is not so clearly visible any more after decolonization.

Fanon argued that the era of colonization affected the colonized countries and the inhabitants to such an extent that the pre-colonized countries cannot be re-introduced authentically after decolonization. Every culture is subject to change and this is the case with the native culture under foreign domination as well. So to oppose existing hegemonies with pre-colonized cultures, would be to claim that the native culture has a static character, which remains unaffected by centuries of colonization. Postcolonial literature itself is inspired by colonization and the time following that occupation. This is not to say that colonization is a good thing in itself. Binary oppositions such as West-East, black-white, good-bad, feminine-masculine and so on are oppositions deconstructed by postcolonial criticism. What I do wish to make clear is that the term 'postcolonial' is quite bothersome to deal with in a literary analysis of novels written about the (former) colonies. Because of its lack of specificity, postcolonial literature and criticism deal with many layers and can be like crossing a minefield when analyzing a literary work. Critics dealing with novelists and their works in the postcolonial field are obsessed with the question if a text is politically correct.

As is the case with most forms of criticism or cultural terms starting with 'post', the search for an essence or a meaning in a text is easily obstructed by countless theories that are associated with the text after (and sometimes before) its publication. Especially when the given text deals with the things the 'post' Second World war intellectual critic or reader wants

no complicity in whatsoever, things such as fascism or imperialism. The sky seems to be the limit when it comes to interpreting any given text, since *anything* can be argued. In the case of novels dealing with the life of the colonized, postcolonial literary criticism searches for the opposition of existing hegemonies, but also questions the authenticity or originality in that opposition. Writing against the empire (writing in itself for that matter, but that is another thesis on its own) from an authentic or original perspective is difficult to realize, let alone to be criticized for this difficulty. It is troublesome for the critic, to do so fairly, and hard for the writer.

To determine whether a text is subversive is to determine whether a text can be subversive or opposing at all. In Fanon's view, this would be possible if cultures and what they are subjected to are not taken for granted as determined or 'set', so that they allow resistance and alteration. Furthermore, the psychological effects of living under colonialism in the repressive society are considered. Fanon's warning for colonial practices and the risk of them being repeated after the colonizers' departure may have made critics in the postcolonial scene cautious when analyzing and discussing novels such as those written by the two great Indian Diaspora novelists in English literature: Naipaul and Rushdie.

So following my interlude considering the problems of writing under the weight of terms such as 'postcolonial', I wish to focus on the reception of Naipaul and Rushdie and provide a possible explanation for their differences as writers and public personalities. About each other they say little directly. When they do comment on the other as a writer and a person on rare moments, it is usually negative. The reception in the media and by fans or critics is interesting, because it seems impossible to find a positive opinion or interpretation of Naipaul or Rushdie that does not hint to a negative reception (or one that does not exclude) of the other writer. This Naipaul 'versus' Rushdie tendency in the media suggests that both writers represent diametrical opposites in the postcolonial debate. Apparently these two styles or fashions in English literature about India and associated colonies cannot be reconciled, or perhaps it is more interesting for the media to make them irreconcilable.

My goal in this chapter is to see how both writers appear in and are presented in the media. What do Naipaul and Rushdie say themselves about each other's capacity to write about the colonial afterlife? How do critics receive them as writers and how are their differences as English writers of Indian descent explained by their background?

## 2.1. In the Media

Naipaul, quoted in Michael Gorra's *After Empire* (1997), said the following about postcolonial literature:

There is a way currently in vogue of writing about degraded and corrupt countries. The way of fantasy and extravagance. It dodges all the issues. It is safe, empty, morally and intellectually; it makes writing an aspect of the corruption of the countries out of which it emerges. (Gorra 144)

Above statement was made by Naipaul in 1987. In the 1980's Rushdie emerged as the new English Indian writer after the publication of his successful *Midnight's Children* (1980). Apparently, the extravagant style of writing that became in vogue during the 1980's (twenty years after the publication of *A House for Mr. Biswas*) did not appeal to Naipaul. According to Gorra, Naipaul's statement seems to be meant for Rushdie's colourful style of writing. Rushdie's style of magic realism blurs the boundaries between myths, dreams and social reality. The myths and dreams in his novels are extracted from Indian folklore and intertwined with political realities. Compared to Naipaul's fiction which deals more with individual loss in a social reality where rituals and Indian folklore seem a pathetic longing for a past never known, Rushdie appears more positive about Indian culture after decolonization and expresses this favour in an indeed extravagant (sometimes almost incomprehensible) style. Gorra carefully observes that "indeed one imagines a sense of rivalry between them, the English two most important writers of Indian descent"(145). As the two most important writers in the literary scene, Naipaul and Rushdie practice a different style whilst approaching comparable subjects.

Rushdie himself expressed his disappointment in Naipaul and his travel books that are set in Third World countries: "He ceased to be comic and affectionate and has become nihilistic." In his short article "Naipaul or Rushdie" Gorra quotes Rushdie as saying that Naipaul is "diminished as a writer and a person, by his allegiance to the West" (374). Rushdie apparently considered Naipaul to be "comic and affectionate" *before* the time of Naipaul's travel recordings. In his later work Naipaul expresses his disgust for the poverty he encounters in the country where his ancestors came from. The novels I will focus on were written in a much earlier stage in Naipaul's career. His more recent travel books infuriated many, among Rushdie, because Naipaul did not highlight the positive traits or mystic beauty of the former colonies, but described them as "degraded and corrupt". In describing the former colonies as such, Naipaul is accused by Rushdie of an 'allegiance to the West'. So Naipaul accuses

Rushdie and his fantastic style of ‘dodging all the issues’ that the Third World countries struggle with. Rushdie on the other hand accuses Naipaul of colonial paternalistic practices, since Naipaul presents the former colonies as in desperate need of civilization.

As I said in the introduction to this chapter, critics dealing with postcolonial texts seem obsessed with determining if a text is politically correct. The same obsession is noticeable when critics discuss postcolonial novelists such as Naipaul and Rushdie. The rivalry between Naipaul and Rushdie, even though this does not mean public clashes and throwing with mud, seems an entertaining topic of discussion in the media. Apart from the aspect of amusement, the rivalry between these authors appears symbolic for the troublesome approach to literature dealing with the former colonies. Moreover, the critics, the ones I will discuss, come from the West, like Huggan and Gorra. In this case it is understandable that the question whether there is proof of any ‘allegiance to the West’ is compelling. The ‘West’ that Rushdie refers to, however, is the colonial and imperialistic West. Not the ‘West’ that the critics wish to be associated with. Also, there are critics such as Anil Ramdas, who was brought up and educated under similar circumstances to Naipaul and Rushdie.

In one of his many *NRC Handelsblad* columns about his literary idol Naipaul, Ramdas said he had the privilege to dine with him on one occasion:

Met zo’n man naast je krijg je geen hap door je keel, maar het is een belevenis, vooral als hij op anderen afgeeft. De man kan zo mooi en gezaghebbend schelden dat je god op je blote knieën dankt dat jij niet het slachtoffer bent. Tijdens het diner was er een optreden van traditionele dansers uit centraal-India en Naipaul zei: als dit hier de traditie is, is hun achterlijkheid heel begrijpelijk.  
( Ramdas “Roem” *NRC* 27-09-2004 9)

Ramdas’ fear of being the object of Naipaul’s insulting comments seems part of the admiration he feels for him. Ramdas himself came from a situation similar to Naipaul’s. Born and raised in former Dutch colony Surinam, Ramdas immigrated to The Netherlands and became a writer, dealing mostly with postcolonial issues. Surinam, not unlike Trinidad, was a colony (until 1975) of Diaspora with Hindus and African descendants. I do not wish to further compare Surinam to Trinidad, but writers like Ramdas can apparently identify with writers like Naipaul. Novels such as *A House* and *Mimic Men* focus on the Hindu loner, whose ancestors migrated within the realm of the British Empire from one colony to the other. Western education seems the only escape from the displaced Hindu society, an escape which entails a loss of family in the end. For Ramdas, as a Hindustani writer, who mastered the Dutch language and system in order to become an acknowledged cultural figure in The

Netherlands, Naipaul's chosen themes must surely ring a bell. The extent to which critics like Ramdas can relate to Naipaul cannot be determined by me, but it is safe to say their similar situation in postcolonial times influences Ramdas' reception of Naipaul's personality and novels.

In a portrait of Naipaul in the NRC entitled "Waarnemer zonder Verwachtingen" (12-01-2001), Ramdas remembers an encounter with his great Naipaul, who approached him, probably for his skin colour Ramdas believes. On the question where he came from and what he wished to do in the future, Ramdas responded that he desired to go back to his country to help rebuild it. Naipaul mocked him by saying: "Je wilt dus terug naar de jungle? Neem dan in ieder geval je trommels mee." (31). In the same text, Ramdas states that it is more than justified that Naipaul received the Nobel Prize for Literature, even though he is a horrible person: "de mens Naipaul is rechts, conservatief, racistisch. En wat betreft de Nobelprijs voor de schrijver: er is gerechtigheid." (31). Ramdas makes a distinction between Naipaul as a person and a writer, but these two aspects easily get intertwined when critics attempt to determine whether Naipaul is a literary henchman for the West. The fact that he himself is dismissive towards any sentimental expression about the former colonies, does not necessarily mean that his writing is complicit with or a continuation of the colonizers' way.

Naipaul's behavior in public provides sensation however, as he ridicules any mentioning of the beauty of Eastern traditions, especially if the mentioning is done by a female (not just any female, the wife of the Ambassador of India): "Mevrouw, u irriteert mij. U hebt zulke onnozele meningen." ("Mevrouw, waarom bederft u mijn feestje?" NRC 01-03-2002 19). Ramdas reports the escalation of a dinner party that was held to honor Naipaul. Naipaul behaves uninterestedly and even a little bit bored as he insults anyone who addresses him. Still, Ramdas observes: "Alle rancune en jaloezie ten spijt begint iedereen harder zijn best te doen dan anders." (19), for maybe the infamous Naipaul will deem them worthy of attention. Ramdas enjoys Naipaul's arrogance and is fully aware of the fact that he idolizes someone who discards the colonies and their inhabitants as a waste of time, space and energy. "De grootste fout van het kolonialisme is volgens hem, dat het heeft gefaald." ("Portret" 31). Naipaul seems to mean, however, is that colonialism set out to bring Western civilization to the world, but instead created disorder and never achieved this "world civilization". How painful these words must be for Ramdas, who harbored the dream of returning to his country to rebuild it after decolonization, similar to what Ralph Singh attempts in vain in Naipaul's *Mimic Men*. "Beseft men wel wat het is als je helemaal nergens op kunt terugvallen?" Ramdas wonders in his column "Roem". Naipaul's status as Indian Diaspora makes him feel not a

victim, not a perpetrator, but part of a society that he seems to loathe for their perpetual homelessness in the world. Ramdas, whose background was influenced by Indian Diaspora, seems to relate to this grim fate.

The paternalistic promise of the British Empire was civilization. This promise and example has motivated Naipaul to speak with a perfect Oxford accent and to discard the parts of the world where civilization failed. However, the parts of the world that are a failure in his eyes, always form the setting of his literary works and his observations of these settings propelled him into fame. This reminds us of what Fanon described in *Black Skin*: “It is on the ruins of my entourage that I build my virility” (186). The black man who denounces his fellow black men in order to acquire white success, denounces himself in a way and remains utterly alone in a white world, according to Fanon. In this light it is understandable that Naipaul is considered a colonial mimic in the eyes of postcolonial critics. Few writers matched him, so it seemed. So what happens when Naipaul, who suffered the necessary losses for his fame, is finally paralleled by another ego who attempts the opposite which turns out to be successful?

“Rushdie is een generatie jonger, energiek en optimistisch, en blufte de gevestigde Naipaul bijna omver,” Ramdas states about the rivalry between the two (Portret 31). Naipaul had to suddenly share his position with another Indian writer who was also an immigrant, but one who did not share his negative attitude towards the colonies now left behind by the colonizers. Naipaul sees the migrating back and forth as a dehumanizing ordeal, an eternal search for a home that cannot be fulfilled. Rushdie provided some relief for the audience by presenting decolonization and migrancy as part of a world full of possibilities. It is almost logical that Naipaul was not too pleased with the praise that Rushdie received. Nor did he really seem to mind the fact that there was a fatwa on his rival’s head: “Hij wilde toch beroemd worden? Dat is hij nu” (31). However, Naipaul was not blown away from the literary scene, on the contrary, the emergence of a rival for Naipaul increased the public interest in topics such as ‘postcolonialism’ and its associated writers.

In “The Postcolonial Exotic” (1994), Graham Huggan responds to Rushdie being awarded the “Booker of Bookers” for his novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981). As I already said, Naipaul is mostly criticized for his assumed allegiance to the West. Rushdie paints a brighter picture of the former colonized subject migrating into the West. However, as Huggan argues, Rushdie is not necessarily less “colonial”. By winning the Booker of Bookers, Rushdie is one of the many English writing “exotics” who are nominated. The Booker Prize seems to praise the new plurality in English literature and is willing to take these formerly oppressed stories

into the canon of English literature. The term “postcolonial” is not, however, only applicable to “writing back” to the former Empire’, but functions as an appealing “sales tag for the international community culture of late (twentieth-century) capitalism” (Huggan 24). With the assimilation of former colonial literature into the English canon, the postcolonial writers face an impossible demand for authenticity :

Contradictions inevitably emerge: writers wish to strike back against the center, yet they also write and are marketed for it; they wish to speak from the margins, yet they are assimilated into the mainstream; they wish to undo the opposition between a European Self and its designated Others, yet they are pressed into the service of manufacturing cultural Otherness. (24)

Fanon describes a similar problem for the native intellectual who wishes to be a spokesperson against the former colonizer. the native intellectual is also ‘pressed into the service of manufacturing cultural Otherness’. In *The Wretched*, the native intellectual spokesperson is unknowingly assimilated into the culture of the colonizer, because he has no other means to express himself than the means provided by the dominant culture. This intellectual struggles to express his native culture and how it differs from the dominant culture.

The risk of becoming partly responsible for what they wish to overthrow has troubled writers since the dawn of literary times so not only postcolonial writers face this risk. When the horizon of expectations is expanded due to an unexpected work of art, this work is absorbed in the horizon of expectations and becomes part of the canon. In the case of postcolonial literature however, as is described by Huggan and Gorra, this risk of becoming part of what the author wishes to oppose has an extra dimension. Postcolonial literature is now *expected* to shock in the first place, but the shock of such literature does not have an impact in, say India or Pakistan: there social reality remains as it is, and people there disregard what migrants say about them, far away... In this way, the subversive power is lost in consumerism and capitalism, and as a result, “postcolonialism” seems a trend that can be bought.

“Exoticism sells” Huggan declares (26). The Western audience is tired of “a literature that reflects the realities of a society [i.e. Western society] from which they barely need release” (26). More importantly, Huggan argues, postcolonial literature provides “an outlet for indefinite liberal guilt” (26). So post colonial literature gains its popularity because it combines ‘multicultural celebration’ with a reason for ‘self-critique’ (26). The actual ‘learning’ about other cultures never takes place in this exoticism, because exoticism excludes ‘knowing’. Rushdie caters to this longing for exoticism according to Huggan, for the style of

magic realism fits the celebration of multiculturalism, and at the same time it is not so un-European “that it can’t be assimilated to a European tradition of literary excellence” (28). Though it may seem as if Naipaul is a traitor to the postcolonial cause, Rushdie its champion, in actual fact *both* can be seen as playing to a Western audience.

## *2.2. From India to England*

In his chapter “A Redefinition of Englishness,” Gorra compares Naipaul and Rushdie and evaluates them as writers. Gorra admits it is “tempting to see Naipaul’s sensibility as a colonial one and Rushdie as post colonial” (Gorra, 170). But what is easily overlooked is the fact that Naipaul was born almost thirty years before Trinidad became independent. Rushdie was born in the very year of Indian independence. Another difference is the class in which they grew up. Naipaul “got to England only after winning a fiercely competitive scholarship. Rushdie, in contrast, grew up in a rich Westernized family and was sent to an English public school before going on to Cambridge, as his father had before him. The one comes to England as a suppliant, the other almost as a matter of course” (171). Naipaul had to struggle his way up the social and literary ladder in a still partly colonized world. Rushdie grew up free from the rule of the British Empire, therefore his departure from his Indian heritage seems less like a forced rupture and more of an uncompromising choice. For Rushdie there seems to be more reason to embrace both worlds, India and England, and to celebrate multiculturalism.

This is not to say that Naipaul embraces England or that Rushdie agrees with everything that is Indian. Huggan labels Rushdie a ‘postcolonial exotic’, since Rushdie’s novels display the exotic mystery that the Western audience desires to see. Aligning Rushdie with the East and Naipaul with the West would be too simple. Aligning Rushdie with the West disguised as an East-supporter is also uncalled for. In the media, there is a tendency to place these two writers either East or West, but the rivalry and the friction lie more in their style and background. Of course, considering Naipaul’s character in public, their assumed rivalry partly exists because they address the same themes and Naipaul’s literary success was unparalleled in the scene for decades.

Taking Gorra’s notion into account that Trinidad is not India and colonial life in the 1930’s is not the postcolonial life in the 1950’s (170), it seems that history and social status determined these two writers. Naipaul as a poor Brahmin boy had to surpass his Hindu environment. His family, his friends, and most painfully, his father were to be left behind by means of Western education and success, as Ramdas describes in his *Portrait of Naipaul*.



Naipaul's father had literary aspirations and achieved some minor successes in the local newspaper in Port of Spain. However, he could be considered a failed writer who in the end of his short life supported his son, Naipaul and forced his own literary escape from Trinidad on him. In his column "Behaag niemand en schrijf wat je wilt" (NRC 10-12-1999 37), Ramdas discusses Naipaul's *Between Father and Son: Family Letters* (1999). These letters were written between Naipaul and his father during his first lonely years in England. Naipaul's father comforts him, but also urges him to publish his father's work now that he is in London. Naipaul ignores him because he knows his father's work will not be approved in England. His father dies and Naipaul is left alone in London, with his own and his father's literary ambitions to be fulfilled. "I don't want to break your heart, but I hope I never come back to Trinidad", he writes "[...] Trinidad, as you know, has nothing to offer me" (37). In this letter, Naipaul tells his father he has been severely depressed and that he "had looked upon himself as a failure" (37). Now, whilst writing the letter, he lets his father know that in the act of realizing that he was suffering from a fear of failing, he was suddenly cured. Moreover; he decides never to live in Trinidad again.

Naipaul's personal road to success entailed a rupture from his background and family. His literary strength lies in the absence of an exotic and mystic homeland, and in the presence of genuine feelings of loss in this lack of a home. Naipaul transformed his inevitable homelessness into a literary success that remained, as others stated before me, unparalleled for decades. Naipaul's mentor, his father, had to be left behind, and the same goes for his whole Indian heritage. In becoming the success his father wanted to be, free from the huge meddling Hindu family, Naipaul mastered English culture and language. His rude remarks in public about exotic fancies seem to come from a personal and urgent need to escape the exotic island where he could not fulfil his and his father's ambition. As Fanon also explained, during colonization the colonized child is raised under the belief that the empire is good and that the coloured natives are uncivilized and bad. It is tempting to think that Naipaul is a perfect example of this child, since he assimilated into English culture and rejected his roots.

Naipaul's sense of roots remains debatable, however, considering the fact that even though he was of Indian descent, he never laid eyes on India until he was an adult. His family was distinctively Hindu in a colony where the Africans were looked down on as former slaves and the English were seen as the fulfilment of civilization. So in the place where he grew up, he was never 'at home' because his family were already immigrants from India. When he got to England, he was 'another Indian', who could only sustain himself by becoming more and more 'English'. In his chapter on V.S. Naipaul, Gorra includes a passage from Naipaul's *An*

*Area of Darkness* (1964) in which Naipaul finds himself in Bombay in the 1960's, where nobody notices his difference. "I entered a shop or a restaurant and awaited special response. And there was nothing. It was like being denied part of my reality. Again and again I was caught. I was faceless" (Gorra 93). Naipaul has become used to being "different" and now people do not recognize him as such. "[R]ecognition of my difference was necessary to me. I felt the need to impose myself, and didn't know how" (93). So the fact that he always had looked different from most people around him in Trinidad and England had become his special trait. As Gorra says: "he is not an Indian, he only looks like one" (93). So Naipaul also does not want to *look* like an Englishman, only in manners and language. He needs the response to his eternally different exterior, as to not blend in with a society.

Rushdie grew up in India, so he would be comfortable when seen as an Indian. His shock of coming to England might have been greater than Naipaul's if it was not for his father and other relatives that already went before him. Naipaul was already used to being noticed as somebody with a different skin colour and perhaps felt less of 'an Indian in England' and more of a homeless immigrant, not belonging anywhere. In Naipaul's case "education confers prestige and privilege upon its recipients only to distance them further from their native society" (Huggan "Political Correctness" 203). Growing up in a colony, Naipaul was aware of the double-edged sword that British education in the colonies was for the natives: education provided means of working and making more money. At the same time, it demanded a break with the uneducated family. For Rushdie, born in one of the biggest cities of a free state, education seem to come more naturally as his family was relatively rich and educated as well.

Thus looking at both writers' backgrounds, Naipaul and Rushdie are not as similar as one might believe. In the media, they are often compared in terms of their colonial background and success in the West, whilst they both must have had a completely different experience. Naipaul was born as a colonial, Rushdie in the very year of Indian Independence. Naipaul was already the son of immigrants during his youth, whilst Rushdie was raised in India. In terms of mimicry and assimilation of the British Empire, they are comparable because they both write about themes of migrancy and decolonization. Naipaul and Rushdie's style of writing could not be more apart. Naipaul's more realistic approach to social and individual circumstances is almost not to be compared to Rushdie's magic realism. It could be said that critics use them to defend certain theories regarding the difficult field of post colonialism, and perhaps because they have the same skin colour, in the West they are still easily considered the same. As the two most prominent Indian Diaspora writers, their

differences represent to what extent colonized cultures were scattered among the former British Empire.

### 3. Naipaul and the Abandoned Island

In the previous chapters, I explained Fanon's psychoanalytical and social theory regarding the colonial subject and discussed Naipaul's and Rushdie's representation in the media. Both Naipaul and Rushdie seem to have opposing ideas about the (post) colonial subject and their appearance in the media make them seem literary rivals. To determine which of the two is more subversive or aligned to imperialism or more colonial or post colonial is a strange task, since both have such different styles of writing next to the fact that they do not share one typical Indian English background.

In this chapter, I will discuss several passages from Naipaul's earlier work: *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *Mimic men* and see how these works illustrate Fanon's theory. These two works are less debated in terms of political correctness than Naipaul's later travel books, in which he directly criticizes the former colonies. I have chosen *A House* and *Mimic Men* for their more ambiguous style. *A House* is considered Naipaul's most autobiographical work of fiction, since the life of his father is narrated from Trinidad at the beginning of the twentieth-century. The novel is written in third person and follows the life of the stubborn Mr. Biswas, who was born as an unlucky child. He feverishly attempts to escape the Hindu society in Trinidad, only to find himself incapable of realizing the potential he considers himself to have. One of these potentials is the acquiring of his own house, a quest which runs throughout the entire novel. Another important issue for Mr. Biswas is his literary ambition, which he partly realizes but never fully to his own satisfaction. For Mr. Biswas, several aspects of the Hindu society he lives in are to blame; his own disintegrated family, his wife's suffocating family, the lack of proper education and the Hindu rituals and worship that seem ridiculous so far away from India. His ambition is made all the more difficult because he cannot escape his family, on which he is financially dependent. By educating himself with English books, he drifts further away from Hindu religion but comes no closer to the Western ideal of success. As I will point out, Fanon's notion of the colonized subject who realizes he himself and his cultural background prohibit his acceptance in the colonizer's society resonates in the character of Mr. Biswas. The son of Mr. Biswas, Anand (whose life and moving to England resembles Naipaul's own experience), actually moves to England and leaves his father and family behind.

Naipaul left for London and became a writer in Western civilization, something his father could only dream of. But, as I discussed in the previous chapter, not without personal sacrifices. *A House* shows the colonized subject before decolonization, who is still trapped in

his own society but who longs for the civilization that the colonizer seems to represent. Mr. Biswas sees an education abroad as the ticket to happiness and self-fulfillment. Naipaul's shorter novel *Mimic Men* tells the story of the rise and fall of a politician. The fictional life of this politician illustrates the pitfalls Fanon warned for in his *The Wretched*. Ralph Singh managed to enjoy an education abroad, only to be disillusioned when confronted with himself as a 'colonial'. He returns to the Island of Isabella in the hope of aiding his country during the process of decolonization. The Western education and manners he copied in order to be acknowledged in England, alienate him from his own countrymen in Isabella who cannot trust him. On top of this failure, the fantasy of the land of his ancestors, the North of India, is crushed by the realization that he has no roots there either. As shall appear from my chosen passages, Singh unknowingly tries to "[r]eplace the foreigner" (*The Wretched* 127). The foreigner in Fanon's theory is the former colonizer who, after decolonization, leaves behind a power vacuum in the former colony. This gap arises due to the crumbling of the old regime, for which a national alternative still needs to be found.

So *A House* presents the educated colonized subject as struggling for independence, to get as far away as possible from his colonial surroundings that he considers backward and reaching out to the civilization the colonizer promises. *Mimic Men* narrates the story of a colonial who has reached this civilization, but his acquired Englishness only further fragments his identity, as a colonial or a self-made Englishman.

### 3.1.A House for Mr. Biswas; *the Escape from the "Monkey House"*

In his preface to *A House* in the 2011 edition, Naipaul says this novel is his "most substantial piece of fiction" (*A House* v). It was published in 1961, the same year as Fanon's *The Wretched*, when he was only twenty-eight years old. Naipaul the author, fifty years after publication, divides the book in two parts in his introduction. He mentions that Richard Hughes had noticed at the time that the ending of *A House* "relied too much on memory and real events" (vii). But, Naipaul decides: "memory was too close to the writer"(vii). But Naipaul announces that he has no intention of altering the last part, since the ending still recounts Naipaul's departure from the British colony Trinidad and the correspondence with his father. The early youth of his father, however, portrayed as Mr. Biswas in the novel, had to be an imaginary part of the novel. Naipaul admits that he hardly had a clue what times were like in the rural past of Trinidad. Following the prologue, the first chapter is titled "Pastoral", which hints at the pastoral genre in literature. In this genre, the rural life of peasants is

presented in a romantic way. So even though the novel is based on autobiographical facts, the retelling of Naipaul's father's very early childhood in the countryside appears to be based on assumptions, and not representative of a social reality as the rest of the novel might be. As Fanon argued, the educated colonial from the bigger cities can be as lacking in having actual knowledge about the colony's distant past as any Western person.

The rituals that the Biswas family has to perform after Mohun Biswas' unlucky birth are described in an exhaustive manner, Yet also jeeringly. For example, when Biswas' father *has* to see his newborn son in a reflection, the mother suggests a mirror. The Pundit dryly states that a mirror would be "Ill-advised"(13). Of course, they would have spoken in Hindi, not in English, and the English language makes the whole affair of Biswas' birth seem a bit silly. However, it is nevertheless tragic when little Biswas loses the neighbour's calf, whom he "loved"(20) and when his father dies whilst attempting to rescue his son, who disobeyed the Pundit's orders to stay away from water. So from the beginning, the style seems to be mocking yet sincere when describing personal affairs. Another peculiar thing is that Mohun Biswas is referred to as "Mr. Biswas" throughout the entire novel. My explanation would be that as an journalist, Biswas is referred to as 'Mr. Biswas', a title which gives him an air of distance and importance instead of 'Mohun', which means "beloved".

Unfortunately, Biswas is not a "beloved" to his surroundings. He makes himself difficult to love with his scorn and cutting sarcasm, especially in the Tulsi family he was forced to married into. From the beginning of their marriage he rebels against the family and tells them he does not need them, since he will "peddle his own canoe"(108), an expression Biswas copied from *Bell's Standard Elocutionist* according to the unforgiving narrator. His marriage to Shama marks the beginning of a never-ending struggle to acquire a sense of autonomy. In the Hanuman House (Hanuman is the name of a Hindu deity that has the face of a monkey), which Biswas teasingly calls the 'monkeyhouse' or a zoo, Biswas as an individual "matters little: the house was too full, too busy"(103). He detests the family, their social control and their reverence towards the Hindu religion. The narrator shows Biswas sulking whilst looking at the rooms in his mother-in-law's house: "oppressive by the many statues of Hindu gods, heavy and ugly"(105). Mrs Tulsi portrays the perfect mother-in-law no man wishes to have; controlling, manipulating and old-fashioned.

Poor Shama, Mr Biswas' wife, has to endure all the angry rants of her husband, since he does not dare to express most insults to the Tulsis themselves:

'Family? Family? This blasted fowlrun you calling family?'

[...]

‘Careful, man. The kitchen just down there.’

‘I know that. I just hoping I spit on some of your family.’

‘Well, you should be glad that nobody will bother to spit on yours’(106).

These kind of quarrels occur often in the novel, as Biswas for decades fails to make himself self-sufficient and blames his surroundings and closest family for preventing his success as a person. Until the very end of his life, he attempts to prove his difference from the Tulsi family. In front of his own son Anand, Biswas insults Shama by calling her and her family *tough*, as if they were uncivilized beasts. Lacking toughness and hair himself, he tells Anand mockingly that it is “the sign of an advanced race boy.[...] With some of your mother’s bad blood flowing in your veins you could wake up one morning and find yourself a hairy monkey”(369). Fanon described in *Black Skin and The Wretched* that the educated colonized goes to great lengths to identify himself with the civilization, and the colour of the colonizer. Biswas displays self-loathing racism at his poor status and his wife’s “tough” family. Biswas thereby ascribes his own physical weakness (“calves like hammocks”), to be a sign of the colonizer’s race. In Fanon’s theory, Biswas portrays his “entourage” as degraded and in the need to feel superior, identifies with the assumed superior race.

That Biswas does not represent the ideal father figure (or husband for that matter), seems obvious, but after an awkward start, he creates a special bond with his only son Anand. This connection seems based on Anand’s capability to absorb knowledge and his will to please his feverish and disappointed father, and on Biswas’ urge to impose himself and his knowledge on someone, to make a difference. Biswas makes a distinction between uncivilized and hypocritical Hindus, and sophisticated men such as the historical European figures he tells Anand about: “He talked to Anand about people called Copernickus and Galilyo. And it gave him a thrill to be the first to inform Anand that the world was round and moved about the sun”(292). “Remember Galilyo”, Mr Biswas tells his impressed son. “Always stick up for yourself”(292). The pride Biswas feels at being able to interest his son is ironically undermined by the fact that the narrator lets Biswas write (or pronounce) the names wrong.

There are more flaws to be found in Biswas as an educated man. Anand and himself write an angry letter to the doctor that certified Bipti’s death. In the letter, Biswas says that the doctor has lost all humanity by converting to Christianity: “A recent superstition that was being exported wholesale to savages all over the world”(510), and refers to Hindu villains. To empower the angry letter, Anand and Biswas search through English products such as *Collins Clear-Type Shakespeare* for harsh and witty quotes, and find the play *Measure for Measure* most suitable. The irony of this event does not escape the narrator, even though it is not

explicitly mentioned that there is a certain hypocrisy to be found in Anand's and Biswas' attack on the doctor. Literary activities such as the letter writing, create a tight bond between father and son, a bond that is of course in peril when the pupil becomes the master by means of education. At the end of his relatively short life, Biswas resigns to his fate as a minor figure in society and turns to his children to become his legacy, since "[s]uddenly the world opened up for them"(619). The 'world' appears to be the Western world that seemed so far away from Biswas' world. Naipaul here paints the sad but accurate picture of the children becoming as successful as their less fortunate parents wish them to be, and in Biswas' case, the parent wishes himself to be. Biswas' reaction to his roots can be read in the light of Fanon's theories about the colonized identifying with his colonial masters. Only Biswas' identification makes him strive in vain.

Biswas' fate is somewhat tragic, because he feels he is meant for more than he will eventually achieve. The novel's prologue shows Biswas as a slightly failed man, but one who takes pride in his own house and possessions. He considers the objects he acquired throughout his life, such as the typewriter: "That has been acquired when, at the age of thirty-three, he had decided to become rich by writing for American and English magazines; a brief, happy and hopeful period" (7). But, as the reader will find out in the following 600 pages, all of Biswas' endeavours tend to end in disappointment: the typewriter remains idle (7). The narrator is unforgiving as I said, because every hope Biswas has of self-improvement is crushed under the narrator's irony. Biswas seems to have the intelligence and talent for success, but somehow lacks the means or the inner drive to actually establish himself as something.

There are several reasons for Biswas' apathy when it comes to becoming a personal success as he reads in his English novels. One of the main reasons seems to be the very fact that he reads English novels to console and inspire himself. He identifies with the characters in Samuel Smiles' novels, and like them he:

[F]ancied he was struggling. But there always came a point when resemblance ceased. The heroes had rigid ambitions and lived in countries where ambitions could be pursued and had a meaning. He had no ambition, and in this hot land, apart from opening a shop or buying a motorbus, what could he do?(78).

Biswas as a poor Hindu man in Trinidad, feels the need to be the same as the characters he reads about, even though these characters live in fictional worlds that bear no resemblance to his own world in the British colonized small island. His country's and his own unlikeness to the world he wants to belong to paralyzes and frustrates him. He is partly a victim of the



traditional society, represented by the Tulsis, which will not give him much room for self-destination: he is forced to marry after a silly love letter and forced to work for his in-law family. Apart from that, he was born with the stigma of “bad omen” on his head, and considered responsible for his father’s death. So, from a young age, Biswas had little chance of creating his own destiny outside of the Hindu conception of pre-determined “Fate” and caste.

One success he has is the fact that he manages to become a reporter, albeit a reporter for sensational stories, but he cannot seem to make himself become an actual writer. Since his adolescence, Biswas’ is impressed by the so called realistic short stories of his friend Misir. These stories were short and simple: somebody always tragically died for no purpose. Misir tells the young Biswas that “life is like that. Is not a fairy-story. No once-upon-a-time-there-was-a-rajah nonsense”(173). Biswas is impressed by this rejection of Indian epics and tries to copy Misir’s cold narration of “realistic” situations, a style of course borrowed from Western literature. Later in his life, Biswas buys the typewriter (and the reader already knows the object will not serve its purpose) and titles every attempt at a story “Escape” and repeatedly starts with: “At the age of thirty-three, when he was already the father of four children...”(362). He cannot seem to distance himself from what he writes (and reads for that matter), and this results, as usual, in the abandonment of the whole literary project.

Sometimes his hero had a Hindi name, then he was short and unattractive and poor, and surrounded by ugliness, which was anatomized in bitter detail.

Sometimes his hero had a Western name; he was then faceless, but tall and broad-shouldered; he was a reporter and moved in a world derived from the novels Mr Biswas had read and the films he had seen. (362)

The Western world is alien to Biswas, but at the same time beautiful and exciting. He only learns about this Western ideal from the cultural products that come from the British Empire. Biswas lacks a critical mind, for he cannot decide how realistic this fictional world of Western culture is. All he sees is that this promising Western world is so very different (and better), compared to his own reality. This reality of the colonies is what he wishes to escape from, but his domestic circumstances creep up on him and he is unable to lose himself in the imaginative.

Near the end of Biswas’ life, Anand and his education appear to be Biswas’ escape by proxy. He fuels Anand with literary ambition, but on a strange occasion seems critical towards the education his son receives. The children in the schoolbooks are presented as colonial and tropical, with goats to herd before they tend to their other business: “You hear the

savage?”, Biswas sneers at his son. “[...] Anand, you tie up up your goat this morning? Well, you better hurry up. Is nearly milking time”(358). Fanon describes the educated black youth in Martinique in *Black Skin*, who grow up considering themselves French and who, upon confrontation with the colonizer’s culture, realize they are presented not as French, but as still in a “natural” state of barbarism and living among the animals in the jungle. In *The Wretched*, Fanon describes the colonized child has “aggressive” towards his native culture, for this native culture is presented as backwards in the books he reads, by means of “cultural imposition”. Biswas shows a similar aggressiveness towards his native culture, and prefers the English books made for English people. Now that Anand receives an adapted form of education, one that is also based on Western imagery of the “natural” colonial herding goats like riding bikes, Biswas becomes critical for he does not want his son (or himself) associated with this image.

The situation of colonies such as Trinidad is described not only in the character of Biswas. The narrator paints a grim picture of Trinidad and its inhabitants, who are all separated because of the colour of their skin and their religion. The narrator presents the attitude of the colonized people as sometimes ridiculous or just plain ignorant. As we saw in the previous chapter, Naipaul, in a later stage of his career, was to be criticized for his negative position towards the colonies and their inhabitants. In *A House*, the ignorance and confusion of the colony’s inhabitants appears tragic, but harmless. The narrator seems to present a colony like Trinidad as inherently fragmented due to centuries of colonization, and the migration that came with it. The small festival when Biswas lives in the Chase is a good example, because the narrator shows Biswas’ frustration with the villagers. The villagers did not enjoy the minor education Biswas had, but take joy and pride in a certain dance festival, of whose cultural origins they have absolutely no clue:

Then Mungroo took the sticks to an old stick-man he knew, to have them ‘mounted’ with the spirit of a dead Spaniard. So that the ritual ended in romance, awe and mystery. For the Spaniards, Mr. Biswas knew, had surrendered the island one hundred years before, and their descendants had disappeared; yet they had left a memory of reckless valour, and *this memory had passed to people who came from another continent and didn’t know what a Spaniard was*, people who, in their huts of mud and grass where time and distance were obliterated, still frightened their children with the name of *Alexander, of whose greatness they knew nothing*. (Emphasis added 180)

Biswas' education sets him apart from the villagers who know little to nothing about the Western world. Naipaul does not seem to mind the fact that these people do not know these things, but rather he seems to express the ridiculousness of celebrating historical happenings that do not belong to one's own culture. The tragedy of the inhabitants of Trinidad is that they have little choice, since they no longer belong to the India of their ancestors, nor do they belong to whatever Trinidad is or what European practices have made of the island.

A feeling of temporality also appears to drive the inhabitants of Trinidad. Biswas' observes some old labourers on the street who "continually talked of going back to India, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the familiar temporariness"(201). Their status as "not belonging" in the country they live in makes them permanent exotics. Trinidad is considered an in-between stop for these migrant labourers, who have no actual intent of moving on. India as a homeland is now alien to them, and by not bothering to learn English, Europe is also out of the question. But the ones who do speak English and enjoyed the empire's education, such as the Tulsis and Biswas, seem to have an equal homelessness in the world. Their English education appears to be their way of being able to move somewhere else, but their idea of the Western world is based on figments of novels and movies. For the Tulsis, their status as respected Hindus seems to make them feel safe to return to any place that has Indians living in it. But, when Mrs Tulsi loses some of her retainers (who are also Hindus) by sending Owad abroad, the narrator sarcastically mocks such claims to tradition: "Forgetting that they were in Trinidad, that they had crossed the black water from India and had thereby lost all caste, they said they could have nothing more to do with a woman who was proposing to send her son across the black water"(368). Just as the Western dream is a myth, the Indian past seems impossible to rely on due to their economically-driven migration. Naipaul hereby seems to suggest that the colonies and its inhabitants seem to harbour an inherent homelessness, with no specific place with a set culture to fall back on.

That Trinidad as a colony is a society in-between the old and the new, the pastoral and the modernized world, is apparent when Biswas has had his mental breakdown. The Tulsis send for two kind of doctors; a Roman Catholic Indian doctor and a 'thaumaturge' (another word for 'magician'). The more modernized doctor prescribes vitamins and much rest. The thaumaturge, however:

purified the Blue Room [where Biswas is resting] and erected invisible barriers against evil spirits. He recommended that strips of aloe should be hung on doorways and windows and that the family ought to have known they should

always have a black doll in the doorway of the hall to divert evil spirits:  
prevention was better than cure. (310)

In the chapter that tells of Biswas' childhood, "The Pastoral", the narrator expresses a similar satiric contempt in describing the ways of the Hindu holy-men. Years later, the Tulsis refuse the mixture the thaumaturge offers them, because Biswas already received medicine from the Western doctor, but do perform all the other Hindu rituals: just to be safe. Again it appears that Naipaul does not approve of this mixture of practices, since these lose all their credibility if applied in a colony so far away from the origins of these practices.

So, Biswas was born as a bad omen and after several attempts at self-improvement, ends up surprised at having succeeded in buying his own house. It would have been horrible, he thinks on his deathbed, "to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one's own portion of the earth"(8). Even though he succeeds in getting his own house, Biswas' sense of self-worth is not what it could have been. The idle typewriter is one of the many objects that remind him of useless endeavours.

The reader follows Biswas for over 600 pages as he tries to be acknowledged, or 'recognized' as Fanon calls it, in the Western world he knows from images, novels, films and education. Simultaneously, Biswas hysterically attempts to be acknowledged by the Tulsis as a self-made man and feels compelled to insult them in order to achieve this. Fanon, in *Black Skin*, says that 'the Ego', the dark-skinned colonized, who has to maintain this competition in the society of the white man, is suffering from a dependency complex regarding the white man. This dependency complex is apparent in Biswas' racism towards his wife's family and the obsession with the "Western dream" of self-determination. Biswas struggles his whole life to prove himself different from his own race, to be acknowledged in the colonizers' society. He uses words and phrases he picked up from English books to distance himself from his own society, only to find himself unable to reach the respected status of a writer.

As an aspiring writer, Biswas attempts to portray the world around him in an imaginative manner. But his personal problems prohibit any artistic outlet. Naipaul as the author, the son sent abroad, depicts Trinidad in *A House* as a confusing in-between society. The inhabitants, migrated from all over the world, display an inability to lay a sort of "authentic" claim to a cultural background with its accompanying rites. The public's obliviousness towards this impossibility seems to annoy Biswas, for he looks at their rites with a Western vision, which he copied from Western cultural products. The repeating of rituals and traditions that are derived from an "unknown" past, comes over as "exoticism" in Naipaul's novel. The status of the Trinidadians is appears temporal; the Africans once landed

on the island as slaves and the Hindus as indentured labourers. All within the bounds of the Empire. They claim a right to India as ‘their’ country or perhaps Africa, in their desire to belong to a culture with a past outside of colonialism. The future for them can be to return to this past, which in Naipaul’s vision would make no sense. Or, they can look forward to becoming a part of the Western world, like Biswas seems to try to do.

As Fanon points out in *Black Skin*, however, the problem for the colonized is that they do not belong to a certain past because of the influence of the foreigners, just as they do not belong to the civilization the colonizer promises for them in education and cultural products. Exactly because of that ‘pre-Western’ past -- to which the colonized have no ‘authentic’ access according to Naipaul -- and the colour of their skin, they are never ‘Western’ in Western eyes. So the colonial society’s temporality seems eternal: always in-between the old and the new, never moving towards a ‘fixed’ and claimed culture. This fragmented status of the colonial subject is what *A House* seems to express in the character of Biswas, whose struggle to be acknowledged reflects the colonial situation.

### 3.2. The Mimic Men; *the Immigrant’s Mimicry and Fantasies*

In *A House*, the protagonist Biswas reflects on his life concluding, despite his literary failure, he at least managed to buy his own house: his symbol of individuality and autonomy in a colonized island. Seven years after the publication of *A House*, Naipaul continues to explore the colonial theme. In *The Mimic Men*, the reader is introduced to forty-year old Ralph Singh, a failed colonial politician who, like Biswas, reflects on his life. Singh’s life started in the fictional Caribbean island called Isabella, where he grew up as a Hindu in the small British colony. Singh, like Anand in *A House*, receives a scholarship for an education in England and is relieved to finally detach himself from the suffocating Hindu society. He finally returns to Isabella, which is at that moment in a process of decolonization, to regain some certainty in his life and this time as a well educated politician, dreaming to rebuild his country.

The beginning of the novel, however, immediately sets this dream straight: Singh lives in a hotel and expresses he “could not, like so many of my fellow exiles, live in a suburban semi-detached house; I could not pretend even to myself to be part of a community or to be putting down roots” (*Mimic Men* 9). It quickly appears so that Singh has lost all his pretenses regarding the notion of truly belonging anywhere: “I prefer the freedom of my far-out suburban hotel, the absence of responsibility; I like *the feeling of impermanence*” (emphasis added 9). Unlike Biswas, Singh does not desire his own house to put down his roots.

Acquiring a house of his own, is one of Biswas's ideas to be like the men he read about and saw in movies from Europe. Singh, however, prefers the idea that he has not settled down anywhere and probably never will. Throughout the novel, Singh realizes his inability to maintain the masks he created for himself. A English dandy, an Indian dandy, a colonial politician, a revolutionary, a husband and so on. His identity seems fragmented to such an extent that he cannot find roots in his country Isabella or in England, whilst the latter was the one country he desired to be part of. The country of his fantasies, Central India, also the country of his ancestors, eventually becomes for Singh nothing but a child's fantasy, with little actual worth.

The mimicking of the colonizer is apparent in *A House*, but Fanon's theory regarding the colonial subject seems even more interwoven in the narrative of *Mimic Men*. *Black Skin* describes, for instance, the feverish desire of the colonial subject to have a white woman as a partner, for otherwise his transformation from 'savage' to 'civilized' would not be complete:

I espouse white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these white breasts that my wandering hands fondle, white civilization and worthiness become mine (*Black Skin* 45).

As I said in my first chapter, Fanon uses the literary example of Jean Veneuse; the black man who has become a white man in manners and education, but who still has a black skin and therefore feels no comfort in his acquired French mask. When he is courting a white woman, he demands constant reaffirmation of his worth by her. In a similar fashion, Singh cannot have faith in his marriage to Sandra, who, as he expected her to, leaves him. Their relationship fills Singh initially with excitement, since he managed to mimic the idea of an English husband, but at the same time fills him with fear:

The dark romance of a mixed marriage! Think of me sitting in the Holborn bar, drinking Guinness for strength, holding an evening paper for the ordinariness it suggested – cheatingly, the greyhound edition, it being too early for the others – and being really very frightened. (*Mimic Men* 51)

Singh, for all the social and economical success he has, seems to be in a constant fear of "being unmasked". He feels an imposter with everything he does. Near the end of the novel, writing about his experiences as different characters soothes his pain over losing Sandra: "I once again see my marriage as an episode in parenthesis; I see all its emotions as, profoundly, fraudulent" (274). So even though he felt genuine pain over his divorce, he seems unable to accept these feelings as sincere. Ralph is convinced his identity as a husband to a white

woman was fake, which Fanon would describe as slightly neurotic and typical for the colonial men copying the lives of the former master colonizer.

In *the Wretched*, Fanon condemns the act of grasping in the pre-colonial past in order to oppose the old oppressing colonial regime. This native past is constructed by the colonizer to set the colony apart from the civilization that the colonizer pretends to bring. To seek identity in this past is to continue the colonizer's construct. The picture that is drawn of Isabella appals Singh, since he knows these pictures of the so-called paradise are made in order to please the tourism coming from the West: "So pure and so fresh! And I knew it to be, horribly, manmade; to be exhausted, fraudulent, cruel and, above all, not mine" (52). Apart from the fact that Singh does not feel like he can lay claim this "created" island, he considers the bright colored paradise cruel, for it is not what it seems. As a politician, he tries to stop touristic depictions of Isabelle, but his attempts to make his country less of a fake paradise appear futile: "In the recent tourist publicity for Isabella I see that the diving boys are again presented as a feature" (52). The narrator here describes the image of the tropical paradise, that is created not by the inhabitants themselves, but for touristic purposes, which makes the image more of a Western myth than something the inhabitants can identify themselves with in a sustainable manner.

"The exotic" is something that seems to infuriate Singh. But he wears an exotic demeanor himself in order to lend himself an identity the English can recognize. Not only Singh, but also his reverend Hindustani mother acts accordingly to what is expected of disappointed Indian mothers: she condemns her son for coming back altered and married to a white woman: "My mother's sanctions were a pretence, no doubt; but they were also an act of piety towards the past, towards *ancient unknown* wanderings in another continent" (emphasis added 59). He sees her actions as fake, but not entirely nonsensical. The act of piety towards something magical and unknown is something Singh knows all too well himself. When he is still a child in Isabella, unable to discern cultural images from reality, he creates an unrealistic image of his family's past: "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" (95). As Singh grows older, he realizes that outside the villages of mud and grass, there is no neat English garden to link to his mother's past. The imagination proves to be built on a picture coming from something far away. The colonial child, as Fanon describes in *The Wretched*, assimilates the colonizer's culture as it is presented in the colony as part of his own, only to be disturbed upon actual contact with the colonizer's culture, because he can claim none of its appealing images as his own.

Even though the young Singh wants nothing else than to flee from the suffocating Hindu society in Isabella and his father's eccentric but futile minor revolution, he feels compelled to return to the island which seems to embarrasses him so. He returns as a successful English educated man, with a white woman to prove it. Sadly, his ambition to be a leader to the colonial people in unrest, proves to be based on false pretenses as he feels himself forced to leave for the "calm of England" in the end.

His political failure, as described by himself, bears similarities to the theory of Fanon in *The Wretched*. The native intellectual has to confront a cultural paradox: to combine Western intellect with the needs of the oppressed inhabitants of the colony who, naturally, revolt against Western society during decolonization. Singh forms a small intellectual group in Isabella upon returning, and their cosmopolitanism means more in a non cosmopolitan state than in London itself. As we saw in my first chapter, Fanon observes a gap between the peasants and the townsmen who form the national party. The first group is suspicious of the latter, who collaborates with the colonizer (*The Wretched* 89). Singh does not explicitly collaborate with the colonizer, but copies the latter's attitude in an attempt to gain control over the disturbed inhabitants of Isabella. His political party does not seek to integrate the peasants and work within the realm of the colonizer's social structure, out of fear, according to the narrator: "They were easily frightened men, these colleagues of ours. They feared the countryside, they feared the dark, they grew to fear the very people on whose suffrage they depended" (*Mimic Men* 208). Singh and his comrades of the social party are unable to integrate with the people they want to lead.

This inability and fear for one's own people is, when we look at Fanon, partly instilled by the Western images of the oppressed that the native intellectual unknowingly endorses. The Western education Singh and his colleagues enjoyed enabled them to become colonial politicians, but at the same time rendered them unable to truly emphasize with the uneducated majority of the island. So instead of this social integration, colonial politicians like Singh seem to unwillingly, in Fanon's words, "[r]eplace the foreigner" (*The Wretched* 127).

Singh, in hindsight, is aware of the empty promises he made to the people of Isabella. "We mistake words and the acclamation of words for power" (*Mimic Men* 6). The expression of the words with which he tried to ignite a controlled (by his Western standards) revolution on the Island, appeared insufficient for an actual cause. The words did not lead to action, and Singh remembers several moments in which nothing was achieved except creating illusions: "we used borrowed phrases which were part of the escape from thought, from that reality we wanted people to see but could ourselves now scarcely face. We enthroned



indignity and distress. We went no further” (216). In *The Wretched*, Fanon divided the path of the native intellectual, whose path is similar to the colonial politician in *Mimic Men*, into three phases (as I presented in my first chapter); the assimilation phase, the crisis of identity phase, and the last phase of *shaking* the people. Singh already proved himself capable of assimilating the English culture, but is disturbed when he, as Fanon explains the identity crisis of the educated colonial, “tries to remember who he is”.

The failure of the colonial politician, Singh in the case of *Mimic Men*, could be ascribed to the fact that he attempted to *shake* the people with words and writing he felt no genuine connection to himself, *before* succeeding in resolving his fragmented vision of his own character and his connection to the island. “Borrowed phrases!”(216), Singh exclaims whilst remembering the words with which he tried to *shake* the people. The colonial politician replaces the foreigner, the former colonizer, in mimicking the colonizers words. The social party that Singh belongs to during his political days in Isabella presented itself as the intellectual, radical leaders of the poor masses; the oppressed they actually feared: “We stood for the dignity of distress. We stood for the dignity of the working man. We stood for the dignity of our island, the dignity of our indignity”(216). Singh realizes he never felt any connection to what he was preaching and therefore was not able to put his borrowed phrases into fruitful revolutionary action.

In one of his last attempts to save his political career, he suggests that British officers are still needed during the shift of power, as a slightly humiliating form of colonial aid, since there is no sense in appointing the oppressed who enjoyed little to no education: “there was to be no sudden promotion for the unqualified or for the socially unacceptable” (223). however, Singh’s proposal is, too obviously, a sign of collaboration with the colonizer in the eyes of the former colonized: “The paper made me suspect. It was dismissed as illiberal by the spokesmen for bitterness; nothing was done” (223).

Naipaul here presents one of the difficulties that arise during decolonization, for this period between the old and the new creates paradoxes; regarding the culture of the colonizer and the culture of the colony that is left behind. The inhabitants need to find a way to feel autonomous and independent after generations of foreign oppression. To realize this, according to Fanon, there must arise a leader figure who is willing to penetrate into his “native culture”, whilst simultaneously knowing the ways of the former colonizer. The native culture, as we see in *Mimic Men*, does not entail the diving boys, the simplicity of tropical delights or the religious rites from an unknown past. These aspects prove to be painful reminders of banal exoticism for Singh and only attract Western tourists. The alternative, the

integration with the oppressed class, seems impossible for Singh, because he is educated to loathe them in a certain way: “[...] a poor boy who behaved well and was attentive to his books could win a scholarship: this meant studies abroad, a profession, independence, the past wiped out” (160). Ironically, for the colonial child, independence was promised by Western education and thereby the child’s escape from the poor oppressed class. Upon returning to Isabella, Singh discovers that when he was a child “[...] it was a disgrace to be poor. It is, alas, no longer so” (89). The colonial politician’s trend of proclaiming his own misfortunes and thereby asserting his likeness to the masses he addresses, strikes Singh as painfully odd:

To be descended from generations of idlers and failures, an unbroken line of the unimaginative, unenterprising and oppressed, had always seemed to me to me a cause for deep silent shame. (89)

Singh, educated to look down upon his fellow countrymen, cannot cross the gap of which Fanon speaks: the gap between the educated and the oppressed. Fanon’s explanation, that the colonial politician tends to fail because of his own identity crisis, is applicable to Singh’s case:

A man, I suppose, only fights when he has a vision of order, when he feels strongly there is some connection between the earth on which he walks and himself. But there was my vision of a disorder which was beyond any one man to put it right. (225)

In his detached state, Singh “defiantly” creates an image of himself as the “picturesque Asiatic”(225), a character that always belongs ‘elsewhere’ (for Singh has never set foot in India) and so bears no responsibility for the happenings outside of this fantasy. Like Fanon said; the colonial subject suffers psychological damage which cannot be undone by decolonization. The process of decolonization actually exposes the extent to which damage is suffered. In the case of *A House*, an educated colonial as Biswas struggles to escape his surroundings, but still considers the West (or owning one’s own house like the Westerners do) the ticket to true self-fulfillment and independence. In *Mimic Men*, these assumptions are proved false by the failed political career of Singh. These assumptions, however, exist because of the colonizer’s influence and, in Fanon’s words, cultural impositions that shape the colonial child.

The West and its education created false images of how men should be. Colonials, in the urge to surpass their bleak surroundings, mimic these images of men. Biswas’ attempts to act like an Englishman with his outfits and cigarettes, and Singh acts like a left-wing politician. These are copied identities, and the one who copies continually feels like a fraud

who is anxious of being exposed. Singh, whilst reflecting on his encounters with other people that pretend to be like the presentations of people in magazines, novels and movies, comments: “[w]e become what we see of ourselves in the eyes of others” (20). So as long as Singh feels that his creation of himself deludes others, he can feel whole. But still, maintaining this character produces a crack in his self-being. Like Fanon says: “it is to the extent that society creates difficulties for him [the colonial] that he finds himself positioned in a neurotic situation” (*Black Skin* 80). In Fanon’s theory, the need for erasing one’s own racial characteristics (lactification) is not an individual one, but one of the whole society that has been structured by trade and exploitation by white colonists.

An insight of the society’s structure is needed to assert one’s own identity, and Naipaul provides an insight in this structure. Only sadly, his protagonists are so disturbed by colonial practices on a personal level, they cannot seem to find a positive manner to engage in the English society or the Trinidadian society, and feel whole at the same time. Singh considers himself unsuitable in the end for the role of native intellectual, because he himself is a product of colonial disturbance and feels no distance to the unrest he would need to resolve: “I am too much a victim of that restlessness which was to be my subject” (*Mimic Men* 32). That restlessness, according to Singh, exists due to the “unnatural bringing together of peoples [...]” (32). Slavery and economical migration during the British Empire created islands like Isabella, a fictional island which Naipaul uses as a symbol of individual and collective misery due to colonization.

So, in *A House*, Biswas realizes his social surroundings prevent him from becoming like the men he sees in images that are produced by the West. By sending his son abroad, he thinks he sends him into a surrounding where he can realize his literary potential by being among the English and in the English culture. In *Mimic Men*, this assimilation of the dominant culture proves to increase the feeling of inferiority and restlessness Fanon described in *Black Skin*. So the escape to England is not the escape Biswas dreams of. Singh attempts to ease his own unease by returning to his native island, but feels that the psychological damage he suffered is a part of a bigger disturbance in the world that he cannot surpass: “[t]he empires of our time were short-lived, but they have altered the world forever; their passing is their least significant feature” (*Mimic Men* 32). In a time of decolonization, Fanon as well as Naipaul saw the flaw in overlooking the extent to which imperialism distorted the self-image of individuals and whole societies. Resistance and rebuilding requires insight in these mechanisms of oppression, and therefore a painful confrontation with this trauma of colonialism is needed. The political career of Singh failed because there cannot be an actual

revolution with a cause, when the resistance is still based on borrowed phrases that undermine any subversive movement.

#### 4.1. Fanon and Naipaul in Rushdie's Hybrid Migrant

As I discussed in my second chapter, there is an assumed rivalry between Naipaul and Rushdie. Rushdie, initially an admirer of Naipaul, considered him eventually a 'diminished' figure, "By his allegiance to the West" (see chapter two). In this last chapter, I wish to illustrate how Rushdie's opinion on Naipaul possibly influenced his literary work, in this case *The Satanic Verses*. This novel, stated earlier, is mostly known for its controversy regarding the Islam. My focus, however, shall be on the character of Saladin Chamcha. Chamcha, although born in India, is very similar to Naipaul. That is, how Naipaul is perceived by certain critics, among whom Rushdie.

Rushdie's characters, like Naipaul's, struggle with their identity as former colonial or immigrant. In particular the character of Chamcha, for he completely, even exaggeratingly, copies Western manners to dispose of his father's culture. The culture in which he grew up fills him with shame, as we also see in Naipaul's characters. Chamcha is severely punished throughout *Satanic Verses* for his "allegiance to the West" and only finds a happy ending when he reconciles with India and its culture, as a perfect example of a cultural hybrid.

Initially, he considers Western civilization as something he owes his personal sophistication to, as opposed to his childhood in Bombay. Later in the novel, after encounters with self-proclaimed angel Gibreel and the hysterical India-fan Zeeny, Chamcha is confronted with his detachment of his 'old' Indian self and embraces both worlds. This celebration of hybrid forms, of embracing the old and the new, is something that Naipaul would frown upon.

##### 4.1. *Chamcha: Rushdie's Naipaul*

It seems likely that Rushdie satirizes Naipaul's assumed endorsement of Englishness in the presentation of Chamcha, whose humiliations only end after he embraces his Indian heritage. Like Naipaul, Chamcha studies hard and ferociously to escape the noisy and disordered society of his childhood, and to become a proper 'gentleman' like the English. Like magic, whilst Chamcha deems himself safe from being exposed as another Indian immigrant, his accent slips and he even turns into a monstrous goat-like figure. Rushdie's satire of the Indian mimic is empowered by his style of magic-realism, even though his description of a mimic man like Chamcha seems to lack in depth at times.

When Chamcha is tormented by a nightmare, he wakes and finds “his speech unaccountably metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently ( and so long ago!) unmade” (*Satanic Verses* 34). His carefully created English accent fails him as he returns to India for the first time in decades, and he fears that he will lose his invention of himself as a Londoner. His greatest nightmare becomes reality when, after mutating into a unintelligible goat, the British authorities consider him an illegal immigrant and treat him as a threat to the society Chamcha has courted for over twenty years. Chamcha suffers, not only from the ill-treatment, but the realization that his mask has fallen off leaves him utterly exposed and ashamed. For, As Fanon states: “[T]he more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush.” (*Black Skin 2*). And , as Fanon also explains, this belief is a result of colonial oppression. Chamcha considered himself as one of the English, but his mask is ripped off by his appearance.

Rushdie calls the mimicking behaviour of Chamcha a “mutation”, that has a negative ring to it, and explains that this “mutation” began in Bombay, “long before he got close enough to hear the lions of Trafalgar roar” (*Satanic Verses* 37). Seeing English splendor, prosperity and order in movies and books, chaotic Bombay seemed worth leaving for this old colonial promise of civilization. Fanon explains that what happens to the child when he enters a white society, is a reconstructing of his own identity, for he is formed by his childhood aggressiveness against ‘natives’ (see chapter one). India, his homeland, becomes something so disturbingly different from Western culture. After generations of colonization, India is still influenced by the British Empire and its cultural impositions. Chamcha, as a boy, finds himself even secretly rooting for the English cricket team during a match between colonizer and colonized: “[...] he prayed for an English victory, for the game’s creators to defeat the local upstarts, for the proper order of things to be maintained. (But the games were invariably drawn [...] the great issue, creator versus imitator, colonizer against colonized, had perforce to remain unresolved)”(38). The “great issue” is still unresolved after decolonization, but Chamcha wishes for a time when there could be only one champion.

The India Chamcha grows up in, is a country still in the process of finding its autonomy in a decolonized world. Chamcha cannot connect himself to this in-between state and thinks, naturally, that he can find his autonomy in the country that already secured its independence for over centuries: England. His father takes him to London for his education abroad and thoroughly humiliates and embarrasses him. Chamcha’s disappointment in his father, results in a hatred that compels him to become entirely English, something his father could never be:

[...] he would be English, even if his classmates giggled at his voice [...] and that was when he began to act, to find masks that these fellows would recognize, paleface masks, clown-masks, until he fooled them into thinking he was okay, he was *people-like-us*. (43-4)

So what Rushdie makes explicitly clear here is that Chamcha is an actor, a pretender, in its most extreme form. Chamcha wants to be a human being in the eyes of his former colonizer. And thereby, in Fanon's words, asserts his dependency complex regarding the English, for which he will pay the price later. Chamcha is determined to be recognized by the English as equal, and therefore needs to become English as well. He feels that he cannot be equal to the English if they still consider him Indian, so he makes a conscious decision not to be Indian.

However, when looking at Fanon's psychoanalytic explanation for the assimilation of the colonizer's culture, how conscious is this decision? It seems that a person like Chamcha, confronted with giggling English classmates, simply sees no alternative if he wants to be acknowledged. The narrator comments that Chamcha, in his acting, fools the English "the way a sensitive human being can persuade gorillas to accept him into their family, to fondle and caress and stuff bananas in his mouth" (44). He, the narrator, sneeringly associates Chamcha's achievement of acquiring Englishness with the mimicking of less civilized animals.

Chamcha, for the major part of the novel, holds on to his belief that England brought out his positive traits and seems to slightly mourn the English leaving India:

Empire was no more, but still he knew 'all that was good and living within him' to have been 'made, shaped and quickened' by his encounter with this islet of sensibility, surrounded by the cool sense of the sea (412)

Above passage illustrates how Rushdie can exaggerate in his portrayal of the former colonial in awe of the former colonizer. Rushdie's contempt for characters who show any allegiance to the West, presents itself in the form of satire. This satire makes one think that he directs his contempt against existing figures, such as Naipaul, whom he condemns for his negativity towards the former colonies.

Chamcha also feels the urge for, as Fanon calls it, lactification, and relentlessly pursues the affection of the English Pamela: "He was astonished by his own perseverance, and understood that she had become the custodian of his destiny, that if she not relented then his entire attempt at metamorphosis would fail"(50). Chamcha and Pamela, who is quite disturbed in her own way, finally get married and Chamcha's transformation seems complete. Even though their marriage is not a healthy one. When Pamela eventually dies, Chamcha

seems to care little shortly afterwards: he no longer needs her to secure his English identity. The relationships that Chamcha develops in his period of English assimilation seem to have little to no impact on him in the end, when he decides to give India a chance. His profession, acting, makes him survive as a ‘mutant’, but cannot make him feel a sincere person who can genuinely love another, for he is acting.

When he meets Zeeny Vakil in India, he seems slightly frightened by her extravagance and certainties that differ so much from his own: “Zeeny, eclecticism, hybridity. The optimism of those ideas!” (297). Zeeny, who behaves quite obnoxious, is not as much ridiculed as Chamcha is by the narrator. She humiliates him in public and, even worse, in front of his disappointed religious Hindu father. She demands him to stop acting like an Englishman and become Indian again: “Change back! Damn fool! Of course you can.’ She was a vortex, a siren, tempting him back to his old self” (59). The idea of an ‘old self’ that one can willingly change back to is at odds with, well, reality. Fanon describes the colonial child as shaped by the colonizer’s culture from the moment he can absorb information. Also, this notion of the ‘old self’ that can be switched on and off, counters Rushdie’s further celebrations of hybridity, which seem to endorse the old *and* the new in cultural identity.

Chamcha resists Zeeny, and her constant nagging about his acquired Englishness. After she kisses his father on the lips (something that still puzzles me) he has had enough of her, which is quite understandable. When she, naturally, bothers him again before he boards the airplane back to the calm of England, he speaks to her sternly:

You, who are without shame. As a matter of fact this may be a national characteristic. I begin to suspect that Indians lack the necessary moral refinement for a true sense of tragedy, and therefore cannot really understand the idea of shame. (73)

This reminds one of the Naipaul described by Anil Ramdas. How he, Naipaul, during a dinner linked Indian traditions to their ‘achterlijkheid’. Naipaul sees no link to himself and the Indians he describes as backward and lacking in sensibility. In the same fashion, Chamcha also expresses his distance to Zeeny, whom he hereby sees as an Indian incapable of complex emotions. Shame fueled Chamcha’s ambition to become English, and this shame seems a reference to the shame that the educated colonials in Naipaul’s novels feel.

The parallels that the portrayal of Chamcha has to Naipaul cease to make sense when Chamcha reconciles with his dying father and Zeeny. For it is hard to believe Naipaul would ever proclaim his Indian heritage next to his acquired Englishness and think: “Yes, this looked like the start of a new phase, in which the world would be solid and real” (549). This



conclusion would be considered naïve, to say the least, by Naipaul. Naipaul, in public as well as in his novels, expresses the distortion of colonialism, and does not think that both worlds can be combined or should be. The restoration of the fragmented self of the colonial subject seems unattainable in Naipaul's vision of the world.

Rushdie, however, shows similar (to Naipaul) insights into the problems of being an immigrant, a former colonial. The fear of being treated as a "savage" makes characters like Chamcha act like he always belonged to England in the first place. So when he is arrested as an illegal immigrant, he feels utterly exposed and ashamed. Without his identification papers, Chamcha looks like any immigrant. To make the problem of his appearance more explicit and grotesque, he even grows devilish horns. "This isn't England" (163), Chamcha thinks when he finds himself abused by the policemen, who simply laugh at Chamcha as he transforms into a goat-like demon. This mutation reminds one of Pinocchio in the fairy tale of the same name; When he tells a lie, his nose grows and he is exposed. Pinocchio's and Chamcha's attempt at deceiving their surroundings result in a physical mutation. Pinocchio also dreams of becoming a "real boy", as Chamcha dreams of becoming a "real Englishman".

("Pinocchio." *Wikipedia*).

This abusive England is not the England Chamcha strived to conquer for its sophistication and civilization. Chamcha is punished for his "acting", for he cannot act away his physical appearance as an Indian. It almost seems as if Rushdie refers to Fanon, who In *Black Skin* states that: "[w]hether he likes it or not, the black man has to wear the livery the white man has fabricated for him" (17). In the case of *Satanic Verses*, the livery that is fabricated for Chamcha by the English authorities is that of a monster, because they can only see him as an illegal immigrant and they, like the colonizers do in Fanon's theory, dehumanize him because of his appearance: "They describe us,' the other [ mutated immigrant] whispered solemnly. 'That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (174). "They" referring to the country the immigrants came to. Like the colonizer had the power to describe the colonized as "savage" or "wicked" and promising them civilization

If this theory of Fanon resonates in the work of Rushdie, in which Rushdie most probably satirizes Naipaul and his self-made English identity, it is plausible that Rushdie warns the likes of Naipaul: that however Western they may act and however much they look down upon the former colonies, they cannot escape their visual appearance, which links them to the heritage they are so ashamed of. Embracing this heritage, like Chamcha does in the end, seems to be Rushdie's advice for Naipaul.

#### 4.2. *Two extreme images of the Indian immigrant*

Gibreel, *Satanic Verses*' other hero, is the exact opposite of Chamcha. Their rivalry resembles in a way the rivalry that the media ascribes to Naipaul and Rushdie; the two opposing Indian immigrants. Gibreel is also an actor like Chamcha, but he takes on the roles of bewildering Hindu deities. His enormous success in India seems to matter little to Gibreel, and he displays the same indifference at his success in England. For Chamcha, who set out to conquer England and its culture, Gibreel's attitude fuels his hate: "Most especially – he bitterly reflects -- because Gibreel, London's conqueror, can see no value in the world now falling at his feet!"(440). Gibreel seems to care little for the East-West distinction and is more immersed in the mythical world of his dreams. He grows mentally unstable as these dreams seep through in his awakened state and even kills others and himself.

Gibreel, whose mental breakdowns are not known to Chamcha and the English public, is hailed by Western media as the perfect exotic. He is extravagant and looks interestingly different to the English. Chamcha, who is abused and humiliated throughout the entire novel cannot believe that Gibreel, the Indian eccentric, appears to be his successor in the end. He, Chamcha, who arranged his manners, marriage and profession so carefully as to be the same as the English. Chamcha wonders why nobody sees the pretender that Gibreel is, for he is no Hindu god, but a colonial immigrant, an 'actor' like himself.

Chamcha seems to stand for Naipaul and the colonial mimic men, whereas Gibreel appears to be the postcolonial exotic, whose religious excesses are, in the end, commercialized. It is farfetched to say that Gibreel would stand for Rushdie himself, but Gibreel does remind one of the criticism that Rushdie receives; that of being, in the words of Huggan, a postcolonial exotic. Chamcha is more clearly an example of the colonial mimic man and fits the description of Fanon also because he gets confused when he should feel some responsibility towards his own native environment: he does not see Gibreel as a fellow countryman whose success he can applaud, and he certainly does not want to be linked to his native country. As Fanon observed; the colonized must devalue his own native environment in order to assert his own superiority. It is obvious that Chamcha suffers from some egocentrism and vanity issues, and he starts to grow horns as he feels he can no longer surpass the Indian culture in intelligence and Englishness.

The narrator comments that Chamcha and Gibreel can even be seen as "two different *types* of self" (441). Gibreel is "*continuous*" (441), whereas Chamcha is "a creature of selected discontinuities, a willing re-invention; his preferred revolt against history being what

makes him, in our chosen idiom, ‘false’?” (441). And, opposed to this, his Indian rival “that angelic Gibreel he has no desire to be; -- so that his is still a self which [...] we may describe as ‘true’” (441). This binary opposition does not hold for the narrator, however, who comments that “an idea of the self as being (ideally) homogeneous, non-hybrid, ‘pure’”, is an “utterly fantastic notion!” (442). Chamcha is the one who survives, the one who is able to embrace the world of the former colonizer as well as the world of the former colonized. Gibreel seems too “fantastic” and extreme to survive, as his religious fantasies make him a dangerous fanatic. Chamcha, however, is slightly responsible for Gibreel’s madness. Out of spite and jealousy, he willingly drives the mentally unstable Gibreel to despair with his strange phone calls.

Gibreel kills himself, for he can no longer bear that what he calls his *sickness*. Haunted by ghosts and dreams, he loses control and cannot live in his continuous state: he is not a hybrid like Chamcha becomes, he represents the old that looks appealingly exotic for the new; and the new closes him in until he feels forced to destroy himself. “To the devil with it!”, Chamcha exclaims whilst saying farewell to both his Indian childhood and his colonial urge to be like the English: “Let the bulldozers come. If the old refused to die, the new could not be born” (561). And with this view towards a future full of possibilities, right after Gibreel commits suicide, the novel ends.

It is safe to say that Rushdie tackles the same themes as Naipaul does in his literary work, but has an altogether different approach. Rushdie’s characters are typical to such an extent that they lack the nuances and ambiguity of Naipaul’s art, but nevertheless, Rushdie’s confirmation of these cultural stereotypes serve as a reference to the descriptions under which former colonial subjects suffer. Gibreel, the embodiment of “the old” and exotic India, has to die in order for the new hybrid India to arise.

## Conclusion

Naipaul is accused of appreciating his former colonizers and assumedly writes about characters who do the same. Rushdie reacts on Naipaul's Western view on the British Empire and its former colonies in a literary example of post colonialism. In the media they are placed against each other as two examples of Indian English writers that approach the afterbirth of colonialism in their work and criticize its influences in each other's work.

In attempting to provide an answer to how Fanon's anti colonial theory presents itself in the early work of Naipaul and Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, I came to several conclusions. One conclusion is that *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* provide an excellent insight in the social mechanisms of colonialism, and how these mechanisms linger in the minds of the colonial, even after independence. Not only the colonial individual, but the whole social structure of a colony is distorted by repressive empires. This social structure is based on the colonizer's culture, that imposes its products on the colonies. Before decolonization, the colonial subject may think himself an integral part of the colonizer's culture, because of the education he receives. This person will attempt to be like the colonizer, in order to surpass his own environment, which is presented as inferior by the colonizer and in desperate need of civilization. The colonized will mimic this attitude of superiority by trampling on his native environment in an attempt to be the same as his colonizer.

During decolonization, Fanon presents the education colonial as torn; first he (the colonial) had to assimilate the colonizers culture, only to find himself unable to completely blend in because of his physical appearance. To turn back to the certainties of his native environment seems impossible as well, for he is educated to consider this environment as backward. In his attempt to establish a national culture, as opposed to the colonizer's culture, the native intellectual sees himself forced to integrate with the people he learned to loathe earlier. So colonialism created a fragmented idea of self in the colonial subject, a self that can be constructed and shaped in the colonizer's eyes, but still bears a colonial heritage that cannot be shaken off easily.

With Fanon's theory in mind, I set out to see how critics receive Naipaul and Rushdie and how these writers perceive each other. Even though they are both of Indian descent and both enjoyed an excellent education in England, the country of the former colonizer, their crossing of the water entailed different losses and gains. Naipaul's critics are astonished by Naipaul's contempt for the Indian culture, whilst Rushdie's critics suspect Rushdie of being a postcolonial exotic. Though it may seem as if Naipaul is a traitor to the postcolonial cause –

Rushdie its champion – in actual fact *both* can be seen as playing to a Western audience. Their novels present images of the colonial Hindu, seeking identity in the English and the Indian culture, but these presentations differ. They differ because both writers, even though both of Indian descent, have different experiences with colonialism and its demise. Naipaul's and Rushdie's different backgrounds – which can be traced back in their literary works – represent to what extent the colonial Hindus were scattered and altered by crossing the seas of the British Empire.

Naipaul's assumed preference for the Western civilization shines through in his presentation of Mr. Biswas, a character based on Naipaul's father. Biswas believes in the civilization the English colonizers promised to bring to the colonies, but finds his social reality unable to reflect this civilization. Biswas is a tragicomic character, funny because of his ironic self-deception, tragic because of the gaps between his ambitions and his actual achievements – caused partly by his own weakness, partly by social circumstances. Fanon is a guiding light throughout and proves Biswas to be a literary example of Fanon's colonial detesting his own environment and eagerness to surpass this. Biswas seems oblivious to the fact that in borrowing phrases and actions from the English novels he reads or Western movies he sees, he undermines his own "authentic" development. The narrator, however, is keen to point out, however slightly and mocking, this mimicking. Naipaul seems to present the tragedy of a intelligent colonial character like Biswas, who might have been successful if it was not for the Hindu religion that leaves no room for the Western dream of self-destination. But perhaps Biswas would have been more happy if he was not constantly confronted with this Western dream, a promise made by colonizers; a promise they had no power (or intention) to keep.

The fictional life of Ralph Singh further asserts Naipaul's presentation of the Hindu loner. *The Mimic Men*, not only as a title, also seems to be written from the anti colonial perspective of Fanon. Only Naipaul does not share Fanon's idea of rebuilding the country with the help of the naive intellectual. Singh functions as Naipaul's literary example of this native intellectual. He has assimilated the colonizer's culture, tries to lose himself in his native environment, but fails to *shake* the former colonials. Singh's political failure comes from his personal inability to connect himself with a social structure. Naipaul thereby shows his own awareness of the deceptions that the colonizers have brought. However, unlike Fanon, sees little to no possibility for the former colonial to gain his own identity after years of colonial oppression and distortion.

Rushdie quite literally presents Fanon's and Naipaul's notion of mimicking, only shows a little bit more optimism for the future of the former colonial. The character of Chamcha can be seen as Rusdhie's imitation and satire of Naipaul, as Chamcha prefers the society of England and detests his Hindu background. Like Fanon, Rushdie sees possibilities for the former colonial to assert his own identity. Rushdie, however, seems to lack Fanon's critical insight in the disappointing ending of *The Satanic Verses*. Gibreel is dead and Chamcha survives as a cultural hybrid, who easily shakes off his English cultural identity, with the same ease as he did earlier with his Indian heritage. Gibreel dies because he can no longer discern reality from the myths of ancient India, something he cannot reconcile with what he sees in the India and England during the 1980's. Chamcha cannot survive as a self-made Englishman, and Gibreel cannot survive as a figure from ancient India, which has long since passed.

Rushdie shows some flaws in his caricature of Naipaul, since Chamcha feels no fear of exposure as an backward colonial or the empty shell of a decent Englishman. Naipaul, however, shows an eternal fear of exposure in his characters. Chamcha only realizes he is exposed when his acquired Englishness is confronted with his native Indian heritage. His humiliation ends when he is ready to embrace both worlds. This embracing of both worlds is impossible in Naipaul's perspective, but Naipaul does not blindly mimic the West himself. he integrates anti colonial theory in his literary works and illustrates how individuals and whole societies are distorted in their idea of cultural identity due to centuries of colonialism. His own experience as a colonial leaves him suspicious of embracing either world.

Fanon can be found in both Naipaul and Rushdie, as well as in the postcolonial debate that is still raging. Novelists from the colonies are criticized for their mimicking of the colonizers culture, but the paradox that arises when one realizes that this criticism comes from a Western desire for exoticism (which is a form of mimicking as well), is not easily straightened out. Naipaul considers both the culture of India and England a construct (albeit that the considers the latter more sophisticated than the former), and chooses to remain "somewhere else" to be able to describe the paradoxes that arise when former colonized and former colonizer meet. Rushdie attempts to solve Naipaul's notion of the incompatibility of cultures with presenting the possibility of postcolonial plurality. The fictional lives of Biswas, Singh and Chamcha show a comparable longing for a land they can finally connect their ideas of self to, but remain in the stage of deciding in which direction they should cross the ocean.

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