

Chapter Three

Diasporans' "Homing Desires"¹

(I) Introduction

The chapter deals with the complexities of "home" in Naipaul's *BR* in terms of the interplay between the discursive and psychological levels. As Avtar Brah argues, "The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances" (192). "Home" should not only be analyzed from the perspective of macro-politics, which are embedded in particular maps and histories, but also be understood as a desirable place, in which an individual has the psychic investment. Cut off from their ancestral homeland, Salim and Indar make great efforts to assume new solidarity in their adopted countries rather than chat nostalgically about returning to India; however, they end up being excluded from Africa, from metropolises, such as London and New York, and even from their ancestral homeland. Feeling abandoned and frustrated in such an inhospitable world, they become sentimental about home, desiring a mythic place of warmth and safety in their fantasy, which elides exclusion, power relation, and hierarchical differences. They are caught between a heterogeneous present and a scattered historical inheritance. The detailed discussion about their respective uprootings and regroundings across Africa, England,

¹ Avtar Brah's concept of "homing desire" (emphasis added) particularly refers to diasporic experiences. Brah emphasizes, "The homing desire [. . .] is not the same as the desire for a 'homeland'" (197). The concept indicates that in spite of diasporans' great yearning to feel at home, not all of them sustain an ideology of return to the place of "origin." Thus, Brah's idea of "homing desire" suggests that there is no such place of origin diasporans can return to nor a destination they can declare as home since the territory-based home, subject to change in history and mediated by their desire and memory, is different from what they have yearned for in their fantasy. Diasporans still keep their psychic need to feel at home though they may be aware that their dreams of returning home and settling down can hardly, or even never, be realized.

India and America throughout this chapter is contextualized in the (post-)colonial regimes of power. It is indeed hard to have a comprehensive understanding of the process of their dislocation and relocation without taking account of the specific historical settings.

(II) Dilemma: Homelessness and Uprootedness from East Africa as a Result of the Withdrawal of the British Empire

Threatened by African nationalism and political disorder, Indian diasporans are afraid of being made homeless. “Home,” literally speaking, is inscribed in the particular physical structure of a house. It is considered a shelter which “guard[s] against the rapid changes that one cannot control” (Sarup 94) and which “stands for a safe place, where there is no need to explain oneself to outsiders” (Kondo 97). It is a place of warmth and protective security. In *BR*, the physical structure of a house can no longer guard against the rapid changes that one cannot control. With Indar’s revelation of his worries over his vulnerability during the collapse of imperial order in East Africa, Salim “saw the wall of his [Indar’s] compound as useless [. . .]the mocking quality of the grandeur, the gate and the watchman that wouldn’t be able to keep out the true danger”(BR 18). He is also aware of the impending danger coming toward himself. Looking out over his compound from his upstairs room in his family house, Salim sees his aunt still leading an ordinary and usual life without sensing that “[t]he thin whitewashed wall [. . .] protected her so little” (BR 19). Sighing with great anguish, he observes that “[t]he squalling yard had contained its own life, had been its own complete world, for so long. How could anyone not take it for granted? How could anyone stop to ask what it was that had really protected us?” (BR 19). The compound cannot protect them from the outside world, which, Salim observes, turns

to be unstable and intimidating. He notices, “To the north there was a bloody rebellion of an upcountry tribe which the British seemed unable to put down; and there were explosions of disobedience and rage in other places as well” (*BR* 16). He is afraid that similar rebellions will take place in East Africa where his family lives.

As Indar and Salim foresee, their families in East Africa end up homeless due to an uprising. The horrible scene of “the butchery on the coast” is described by Ali, their family’s slave, as follows:

At first I thought it was just a quarrel around Main’s stall. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. They were behaving as though knives didn’t cut, as though people weren’t made of flesh. I couldn’t believe it. At the end it was as if a pack of dogs had got into a butcher’s stall. I saw arms and legs bleeding and lying about. Just like that. They were still there the next day, those arms and legs. (*BR* 32)

The terrible uprising is often considered an inevitable consequence because upon the collapse of the imperial order, tribal animosities and Africans’ hatred for the outsiders are likely to result in violent conflicts. Living in such circumstances, Salim and Indar easily become the target of attack.

Reluctant to be made homeless and penniless, both Indar and Salim attribute their vulnerability to their lack of a nation of their own. Indar speaks out his worry to Salim, “We’re washed up here, you know. To be in Africa you have to be strong. We’re not strong. We don’t even have a flag” (*BR* 18). Salim later also expresses his need for a nation of his own so as to protect him from Africans: “I was unprotected. I had no family, no flag, [. . .]” (*BR* 56). It is worth noticing that they do not feel the need to claim national identities until the collapse of the Empire. The reason is that they, in spite of their lack of a nation of their own, still can lead quite affluent and

secure lives within the Indian community in East Africa under the European flag. However, with the collapse of the Empire, they begin to be conscious of the weakness and unprotectedness brought about by the lack of national identities, aware that they belong neither to Africa nor to the area of Indian Ocean. Salim says,

Africa was my home, had been the home of my family for centuries. But we came from the east coast, and that made the difference. The coast was not truly African. It was an Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, and we who lived there were really people of the Indian Ocean. True Africa was at our back. Many miles of scrub or desert separated us from the upcountry people; we looked east to the lands with which we traded—Arabia, India, Persia. These were also the lands of our ancestors. But we could no longer say that we were Arabians or Indians or Persians; when we compared ourselves with these people, we felt like people of Africa. (*BR* 11)

Salim, though having lived in East Africa since his family departed from Gujarat in northwestern India in the distant past, cannot be counted as an African because the eastern part of Africa is actually populated by immigrants from Indian Ocean and he and the community he belongs to live enclosed, self-centred lives of their own, cut off from “True Africa,” (*BR* 11) which surrounds him. The isolation of themselves from the African world may be the possible reason for their failure to be integrated into the African world; however, neither their frequent connection with the traders from Indian Ocean nor their Asian origin make them “Arabians or Indians or Persians” (*BR* 11). From this perspective, they are characterized as minority groups who are always trapped in in-betweenness and whose multiple geographies of identity exceed the boundaries of nation-states.

Salim's disclosure of the lack of his national identity illustrates the complicated meaning of "home," which is more than its literal meaning mentioned before. As Sara Ahmed argues, "The formation of a dwelling or place of residence involves a definition of who or what does not belong (estrangement)" (99); that is, the wall of a compound draws its lines, naming its insiders and outsiders. Crucially, then, "home" is not a neutral place but is embedded within unequal power relations. The notion of home is built in the basic pattern of select exclusions and inclusions, which "are grounded in a learned sense of a kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion" (George 9). Brought up in the diasporic context, Salim and Indar have to, in their own ways, grapple with the problematic of home operated in the networks of unequal power relations.

(III) Failure to Search for the Idealized Home in Interior Africa, England and America: Colonial Subjects' Imperialist Fantasy

As I mentioned above, the newly emergent national identity, "Africans," is a threat to Salim and Indar, which prompts them to have the desire for a nation of their own so as to protect them from being robbed of their property and from being left at the mercy of Africans. Thus, they pin their hope on their community. But they find out that unlike the Europeans, who "were preparing to get out, or to fight, or to meet the Africans halfway," their community "continued to lived as we had always done, blindly" (*BR* 17). He continues,

In our family house when I was a child I never heard a discussion about our future or the future of the coast. The assumption seemed to be that things would continue, that marriages would continue to be arranged between approved parties, that trade and business would go on, that

Africa would be for us as it had been. (*BR* 15)

His family members fully concentrate on their business, unwilling to detach themselves from it so as to see the world. They believe that even if they encounter difficulties, they still can gain consolation from their religious belief. People assume, “[T]hings would continue, that marriages would continue to be arranged between approved parties, that trade and business would go on” (*BR* 15). It seems that the impending threat and danger will never penetrate the walls of their houses.

Upset by the self-contained life of his community, their habits of fatalism, passivity, and withdrawal from the problems when challenged by the need to change, Salim decides to “break away” (*BR* 20), believing, “I couldn’t protect anyone; no one could protect me. We couldn’t protect ourselves; [. . .]. I had to break away from our family compound and our community. To stay with my community, to pretend that I had simply to travel along with them, was to be taken with them to destruction” (*BR* 20). Salim and Indar decide to leave his effete Indian community or they will give way to disaster. Salim asserts that “I could be master of my fate only if I stood alone” and that “I could no longer submit to Fate. My wish was not to be good, in the way of our tradition, but to make good” (*BR* 20). Salim is expected to marry Nazruddin’s daughter, which is considered “a family commitment” (*BR* 95). But he is not prepared for the marriage because he knows that the family life in his community cannot guarantee security and stability during the period of turbulence and uncertainty in East Africa.

Naipaul’s *BR* mainly invokes the predicament of the Indians in diaspora with great sympathy. They are those who are doubly displaced from the homes respectively in ancestral India and in contemporary East Africa, and are threatened by the chaos of postcolonial Africa. Rather than describing them as mindless and passive diasporans,

Naipaul endows his protagonists with desperate desire to find a place where they can feel at home and to strive towards a settled and prosperous life they used to lead during the colonial period. It is Salim and Indar that act as active diasporans, desperately seeking a place where they can make a new beginning and feel at home.

Though both of them make the same decision to break away from their dying and enclaved Indian community, the ways they create their own new life are quite different. Salim decides to take over Nazruddin's shop in central Africa and Indar decides to study in England. Nevertheless, behind their different choices lies their identical intention; that is, they desire to search for the imaginary and ideal home-nation of the British Empire of which they have felt themselves to be part and in which they will find solace and peace in the face of the rapid changes and instabilities of postcolonial Africa. As Indar confesses to Salim, "I thought when I went to England I would put all that [the past] behind me [. . .]. The word 'university' dazzled me, and I was innocent enough to believe that after my time in the university some wonderful life would be waiting for me" (*BR* 143). Salim also frankly admits, "I've never told you why I came here. It wasn't just to get away from the coast or to run that shop. Nazruddin used to tell us wonderful stories of the times he used to have here. That was why I came. I thought I would be able to live my own life, and I thought that in time I would find what Nazruddin found" (*BR* 139). Both of them try hard to get rid of the past so that they are not to be dragged down by it and thus are able to find the home modeled upon the imperial Empire respectively in the interior of Africa and in England. Apparently, to both Salim and Indar, "home," in advance of its making, has its essential meaning. But in the process of their search for it, it can be implicitly perceived that the "home" they are obsessed with should be understood as their imperialist fantasy.

Salim takes over Nazruddin's shop, greatly hoping that he can lead a prosperous life, just as Nazruddin did. Nazruddin ran his business in central Africa, sharing his exotic experiences with his friends after coming back to his community once in a while. He is depicted by Salim as follows:

He played tennis, drank wine, spoke French, wore dark glasses and suits [. . .]. He was known among us [. . .] for his European manners, which he had picked up not from Europe (he had never been there), but from a town in the centre of Africa where he lived and had his business. (*BR* 20)

Salim admires Nazruddin for his European manners very much, saying, "I like Nazruddin. I welcomed his visits, his talk, his very alienness as he sat downstairs in our drawing room or verandah and spoke of the excitements of his far-off world" (*BR* 21). Thus, it is not surprising to find that Salim is willing to take over Nazruddin's shop in the center of Africa since "[h]e made me [Salim] long to do what he had done, to be where he had been" (*BR* 21). Salim admits, "In some ways he became my model" (*BR* 21). Salim worships Nazruddin's life of European style in the interior of Africa and identifies himself with him. He expects that once he arrives in the interior of Africa, the life Nazruddin used to lead will be recreated for him.

Salim's acceptance of Nazruddin's offer reveals his desire for the idealized imperial England of his imagining. Long before Nazruddin's European manners and tales about his wealthy life leave lasting imprint on Salim, Salim has already been fascinated with such a foreign land as England as a result of the Eurocentric basis of colonial education he receives. As Salim says,

When I was a child Europe ruled my world. It had defeated the Arabs in Africa and controlled the interior of the continent. It ruled the coast and all the countries of the Indian Ocean with which we traded; it supplied

our goods. [. . .]. Europe no longer ruled. But it still fed us in a hundred ways with its language and sent us its increasingly wonderful goods, things which, in the bush of Africa, added year by year *to our idea of who we were*, gave us *that idea of our modernity and development*, and made us aware of another Europe—the Europe of great cities, great stores, great buildings, great universities. To that Europe only the privileged or the gifted among us journeyed. That was the Europe Indar had gone to when he had left for his famous university. [. . .]. (*BR* 229; emphasis added)

The foregoing quotes indicate that Salim, as an erstwhile subject of the British Empire, is the embodiment of a period of imperialist history. Respectively influenced by the dominant narratives of imperialism and the cultural and modern artifacts from Europe, Salim becomes obsessed with the “inventedness” of the Empire and treats it as his idealized homeland.

How the dominant narratives of imperialism and the modern artifacts from Europe lead to Salim’s obsession with England is respectively discussed in this and the following paragraphs. First of all, Salim’s perception of his self is shaped by means of his indoctrination with the dominant narratives of imperialism. Imbued with the idea of “modernity and development” (*BR* 229), Salim is prone to identify himself with the Britons and to distinguish Europe from Africa according to the “paradigmatic” dichotomy of the civilized and the uncivilized. Ranu Samantrai in his essay entitled, “Claiming the Burden: Naipaul’s Africa,” deals with how Africa is represented in *BR*. At the beginning of his essay, Samantrai notes Johannes Fabian’s concept of modernity, which is considered by Fabian “the trope through which the West locates itself and constructs the difference of its racial and cultural others” (qtd.

in Samantrai 50). It is Salim who looks at things through the eyes of the British. In contrast to Europe, associated with the concept of progress and modernity, “bush,” an epitome of Africa throughout the novel, symbolizes the primitive and underdeveloped past, “pos[ing] a threat to the light of the modern present” (*BR* 52). To Salim, the transfer of power from Europeans to Africans in East Africa, Samantrai argues, causes some hindrance to the march of progress and modern development. Thus, Salim decides to go to what Nazruddin describes as a European town in an attempt to “recover the past of the European empire” (Samantrai 51).

Secondly, though having not been to England, Salim invests profoundly in an idea of “Englishness” given to him as a child. The wonderful goods sent from Europe lead Salim to imagine that Europe serves as a site of sovereignty, progress, and modernity. It is the grandeur of that Europe that Salim wishes to belong to. Ian Baucom in his *Out of Place* argues that “Englishness” in Salim’s fantasy is actually constructed in the imbricated discourses of imperialism. As he asserts, “For Naipaul is one of those strange creatures that the British Empire seemed so adept at producing: a colonial subject more rigorously English than the English; a Trinidadian who, by the age of eighteen, was profoundly nostalgic for an England he had never seen” (*BR* 178). Naipaul’s Salim is exactly what Baucom describes as the colonial subject who firmly believes in the imperial fictions of “Englishness.” The temporal and spatial narrative of “Englishness” within the imperial discourses is treated by Salim as an eternal and fixed essence transcending historical and cultural contexts. It is with his childhood image of Europe that he accepts Nazruddin’s offer and later goes to London.

(A) Salim’s Quest for His Idealized Image of the Imperial Past in the Heart of

Africa

As Salim drives to the interior in his Peugeot and “got deeper into Africa,” he sees “the scrub, the desert, the rocky climb up to the mountains, the lakes, the rain in the afternoons, the mud, and then, on the other, wetter side of the mountains, the fern forests and the gorilla forests” (*BR* 4), thinking, “I am going in the wrong direction. There can’t be a new life at the end of this” (*BR* 4). The physical presence of Africa discourages Salim from seeking to prosper in the interior. The land of Africa, filled with primitive wilderness, in Salim’s opinion, precludes any possibilities of the European-style life, such as the food of Europe and the wine. The interior of Africa serves as Salim’s putative past, the past which is counted as a pre-industrial continent. Thus, his drive from his family home on the coast to an unnamed town in the heart of Africa “involves traveling backward through temporal zones” (*BR* 52). Salim’s pursuit of the idealized homeland in his fantasy by means of exploring the past does not seem to comfort and constitute his present being, which has been unsettled on the coast.

To locate what he sees as the timeless eternity of the European-style homeland in the pre-industrial past of the primitive continent seems to produce an anachronism to Salim. Upon his arrival, Salim interprets his own thoughts about this place at night: “You felt the land taking you back to something that was familiar, something you had known at some time but had forgotten or ignored, but which was always there. You felt the land taking you back to what was there a hundred years ago, to what had been there always” (*BR* 9). Being brought up in the Indian community in the costal area, Salim has been aware that at his back, there is the vast forest which he is unfamiliar with and which he considers as “[t]rue Africa” (*BR* 10). This part of Africa he finally encounters leaves an uncanny impression on him. As an ex-colonial subject, Salim is

equipped with the Western imperialist ideas of progress and with these principles and values, Salim measures this alien setting. In contrast to the European world, which is characterized by continuous progress towards the future within the Western discourses of modernity, this place exists in the past outside the flows of time. Salim thinks that the primitive, archaic, and pre-modern world is devoid of history and permanently fixed and static outside the space of historical narrative. With his hope to pursue his idealized home, he disappointedly finds out that he “[goes] in the wrong direction” (*BR* 4)—a man with his belief in the concept of progress in the spatial and temporal narratives intrudes an ahistorical and primitive world.

The village Zabeth comes from is typical of the world Salim describes above. Zabeth, an African merchant from one of the villages along the river, regularly goes to Salim’s shop in the town by dugout, purchasing supplies at his shop to satisfy the consumptive desire of the villagers. As Salim describes, “[i]t [Zabeth’s regular travel between her village and the town] was as though she came out each time from his hidden place to snatch from *the present (or the future)* some precious cargo to take back to her people [. . .]” (*BR* 9; emphasis added). The village Zabeth belongs to occupies the distant and murky past, which is free of the meditation of time. To Zabeth, the shops in the town which sells “precious cargo” (*BR* 9) relatively represent the present or even the future. Thus, Zabeth’s journey between the village and the town is actually her travel “in and out of measurable time, in and out of history itself” (Samantrai 55). As Samantrai argues, “Her movements cross the boundaries of the temporal zones of *ahistorical repetition* and *progressive change*” (55; emphasis added). Zabeth’s leap from one world to another is parallel to Salim’s drive from the east coast to the interior.

Zabeth is able to make such a journey since she “was watched from above by

[her] ancestors, living forever in a higher sphere, their passage on earth not forgotten, but essentially preserved, part of the presence of the forest” (*BR* 9). However, Salim apparently does not belong to this part of the world. Imagining Zabeth’s journey from his shop to her own village at night, Salim thinks,

Going home at night! It wasn’t often that I was on the river at night. I never liked it. I never felt in control. In the darkness of river and forest you could be sure of what you could see—and even on a moonlight night you couldn’t see much. When you made a noise—dipped a paddle in the water—you heard yourself as though you were another person. The river and the forest were like presences, and much more powerful than you. You felt unprotected, an intruder. (*BR* 8)

The reason why Salim feels unprotected, powerless, and estranged from his own self in the primitive wilderness at night is that “what may seem primordial or timeless is, [. . .], a moment of a kind of ‘projective past’” which “makes the enunciatory present of modernity disjunctive” (Bhabha, “‘Race’,” 169). Bhabha at the beginning of his essay discusses Fanon’s assertion that the figure of “Man” comes to be “authorized” within “the temporality of modernity” (“‘Race’” 168). In other words, “the humanistic, Enlightenment ideal of Man” comes into being in the continuous and progressive discourses of the Western modernity. Brought up in the imperialist context, Salim gradually identifies himself with and misrecognizes himself as this image of the sovereign subject. But this sense of his self will be threatened if the discourse of modernity, which emerges as the symbol of the continuity and progress, is disrupted. According to Homi K. Bhabha, what has been erased and ignored so as to construct the “organic” notion of modernity is always there and, if emerging, is represented as the timeless and archaic, “tethered to the myth of progress, [and] ordered in the

binarisms of its cultural logic: past/present, inside/outside” (“‘Race’” 185). Bhabha’s assertion explains Salim’s complex attitudes toward the primitive Africa; the land of the forest is what he has been aware of but tries to ignore. Once he confronts it, he regards it as timeless land. Bhabha, however, argues that what has been outside the linear and progressive time of modernity “returns to disrupt the enunciative function of this discourse and produce[s] a different ‘value’ of the sign and time of race and modernity as figured in the time-lag of representation” (“‘Race’” 181). Stepping into the primitive wilderness, Salim finds himself an intruder, who does not belong to this place in this present. The sense of his self, which is constructed in the discourses of modernity, is estranged from Salim as a result of the disruption of the linear time by the primitive forest which emerges as an powerful and unfamiliar “*excess*, a disturbing alterity” ((Bhabha, “‘Race’,” 177). Positioning himself in such a moment of temporal disjunction, Salim not only doubts whether he is capable of finding his idealized homeland but also questions who he is in this part of the world.

Though feeling threatened by his surroundings and disappointed with the underdeveloped area, Salim nonetheless keeps allowing himself to imagine that the old life will be recreated for him. He persuades himself to cling to the fragile hope by saying: “In daylight, though, you could believe in that vision of the future. You could imagine *the land being made ordinary*, fit for a short while before independence—the very parts that were now in ruins” (*BR* 9; emphasis added). The “ordinary” life Salim describes refers to the life Nazruddin used to lead during the colonial period at the bend in the river, where existed a European town. Upon his arrival, Salim finds that the town “from which Nazruddin had brought back his tales had been destroyed, had *returned to the bush*” (*BR* 25; emphasis added). The bush is the symbol of what Salim regards as the world outside history. “Bush,” as Michael Edward Gorra asserts, “also

stands for Naipaul as the natural but abhorred condition of humanity—disorderly, overgrown, and untended, unpruned by the careful shears of civilization” (99). The cultural hierarchy of archaism/modernity is Salim’s firm belief. He greatly hopes that the town he resides in can be re-sutured to the linear and progressive time of modernity so that he can find out his idealized homeland. But Salim, at the same time, cannot help doubting whether he will prosper in the midst of the primitive forest and the abandoned town.

To locate Salim’s ideal home in post-colonial Africa depends greatly on the economic and political development of the newly independent central African state. Father Huismans and Raymond, with a fabulously optimistic view of African future, respectively represent those who have great confidence in the inevitable march of European civilization in primitive Africa, understood as the guarantee of progress, and those who have a firm belief in the notion that the newly established African state, under the rule of the African President, is able to bring peace and order to the newly independent country. Both of them believe that the marginal and primitive space of Africa will sooner or later be assimilated and tethered to the progressive time of modernity.

Father Huismans, a Christian priest from Europe, runs the local grammar school. He harbors the Western imperialist ideas of progress in the land of Africa. The colonial history in Africa, Father Huismans argues, starts from the expansion of Arabs into Africa which “had only prepared the way for the mighty civilization of Europe” (*BR* 64) and then continues with European colonization. The shift of power from Arabs to Europeans indicates the linear flow of civilizing progress in the African continent, which appears to suggest that the continuity of progress will be halted upon the collapse of the imperial order. However, with his firm belief that “[h]e was of

Europe,” Father Huismans reveals his confidence in the revival of European civilization in Africa: “[T]he destruction of the European town, the town that his countrymen had built, was only a temporary setback” (*BR* 63); “[a]fter each setback the civilization of Europe would become a little more secure at the bend in the river” (*BR* 85). The setbacks, according to Father Huismans’s opinion, should not be viewed as what Bhabha calls “the interruptive temporality” (“Race” 176), which interrogates the Western discourses of modernity, but be seen merely as a transitional moment, which instead will finally lead to the linear and progressive time of modernity. Moreover, Father Huismans “didn’t simply see himself in a place in the bush; he saw himself as part of an immense flow of history” (*BR* 63). As an individual, he feels that he is in the stream of evolutionary time.

Raymond, a middle-aged European historian, teaches at a college in the capital during the colonial period. After independence, he becomes “the Big Man’s white man” (*BR* 125) because he once gave the President advice when the President was still a boy who believed that life was hopeless and secluded himself from others. Salim comments on Raymond’s motives for helping the depressed boy out,

Chance—and something of the teacher’s [Raymond’s] sympathy for the despairing African boy, a sympathy probably mixed with a little bitterness about the more successful of his own kind, the man perhaps seeing himself in the boy: that advice he had given the boy about joining the Defence Force appeared to have in it something of a personal bitterness [. . .]. (*BR* 182)

Salim’s words reveal that Raymond represents those Europeans who hope to create a better European life abroad and to find the possibility of being near power in the Third world but fail. With his ambition to succeed in Africa, Raymond felt neglected

when merely being a teacher in the colonial capital. It is “chance” (*BR* 182), in Salim’s opinion, that “had given him that extraordinary relationship with the man who became President and had raised him, after independence, to a glory [. . .]” (*BR* 182). But not long after he is brought close to the President in power, Raymond is removed from his political position of influence as the President’s advisor because “in the new direction he [the President] was taking the white man [Raymond] was an embarrassment to him in the capital” (*BR* 187). The President’s black nationalist demand for cultural authenticity results in his silent dismissal of Raymond. Though being aware that he is no longer needed and that he is exiled from the center of power, Raymond still struggles to deny it and convinces himself that the President is the most gifted leader and that “the President had something up his sleeve that would give a new direction to the country” (*BR* 195). Salim remarks, “That was Raymond—still loyal, trying hard to make sense of events which must have bewildered him. It did him no good; all the labour that went into those thoughts was wasted. No word came from the capital. He and Yvette continued to dangle” (*BR* 194). He keeps deluding himself that he will sooner or later be called back to the President’s favour, all the while afraid that he will lose his job and house.

Salim, unlike them, to a certain extent is skeptical of the notion of post-colonial Africa as a land with a promising future. Salim doubts whether post-colonial Africa will turn to be what Father Huismans and Raymond have expected. To Salim, Africa, once decolonized and far from European centre of power and law, will sooner or later be overrun with bush, and the supposed government is unable to rule. Salim thinks that it is Father Husiman’s and Raymond’s overly optimistic attitudes towards Africa that hinder them from having “real” understanding of Africa and lead them to misfortune. How they end up as a result of their psychical investment in postcolonial

Africa reminds Salim of the danger of his involvement in this land.

With “his own idea of Europe, his own idea of his civilization” (*BR* 63), which I discussed above, Father Huismans is convinced that “[t]rue Africa he saw as dying or about to die” and finds it “necessary, while that Africa still lived, to understand and collect and preserve its things” (*BR* 64). Thus, Father Huismans goes into the forest to collect all African things, such as masks and carvings, which to him were “imaginative and full of meaning” (*BR* 61) and restores them in the gun room of the lycee. Salim feels that “[h]is Africa was a wonderful place, full of new things” and that “his Africa, of bush and river, was different from mine” (*BR* 62). Father Huisman’s romantic moonshine about primitive Africa staggers Salim because the bush, to Salim, is an ever-present threat to European civilization rather than something which can easily be romanticized or assimilated by the dominant imperialist discourses. Father Huisman’s collection of African masks reveals his “certain Western viewpoint that looks at Africa as a museum” (Weiss 188). He dates the masks he collects from the forest as if he were a meaning-giver, who, according to his rational system of thought, contextualizes them, which are actually severed violently by Father Huismans from their spatial-time references. It is Father Huismans’s idealism that makes him “indifferent to the state of the country” (*BR* 62), particularly the physical presence of the African bush. His indifference results in his death. Just after the end of the second rebellion, he goes into the bush again and is found killed with his head cut off and spiked.

Raymond, like Father Huismans, “represents still another facet of the First World’s relationship with the Third World” (Weiss 188). As a historian, Raymond makes Africa his subject. Unlike Father Huismans, Raymond has never been to any places he writes about. Instead, he spends much time on extensive research on papers

and documents concerning Africa and quotes from “letters and reports in the archives” (*BR* 182). His knowledge of Africa is chiefly of boxes of documents, merely a paper reality. Salim comments that “[h]e had less true knowledge of Africa, less feel for it [. . .]” (*BR* 182). Raymond’s inadequate grasp of the world he resides in prevents him from seeing clearly the developing political crisis in Africa and from protecting himself against the nationalization of his property. His house is given to an African and his whereabouts is unknown. He just fades out of the novel.

As bearers of European culture, they either romanticize or document Africa, firmly believing that post-colonial Africa will inevitably turn to be their ideal homeland modeled upon the European discourse of modern nation-states. But the way they end up in *BR* “reflect[s] a receding European presence in the central African country” (Weiss 188) and serves as a reminder to Salim that his initial desire to experience the European colonial culture of the town in the interior Africa cannot be fulfilled.

Father Huismans and Raymond, furthermore, discourage Salim from attempting to make the central part of Africa his home and remind him of the difficulty he will encounter of living as an other and with others in Africa. As Salim describes, “Raymond was in a place that had become his home” (*BR* 188). Raymond’s loyalty to the President and his involvement in Africa do not make him firmly established and form roots in the place he has resided in for years. Instead, he ends up being excluded from the newly established country. The reason is that he is after all an outsider, alienated from Africans. Likewise, the only message of the death of Father Huismans gotten across to Salim is that “we had to be careful ourselves and remember where we were” (*BR* 85). In Africa, people like Salim who still remain in post-colonial Africa are “outsiders, but neither settlers nor visitors, just people with nowhere better to go”

(BR 85). Salim further describes,

We were simple men with civilizations but without other homes. [. . .].

We had the occasional comfort of reward, but in good times or bad we lived with the knowledge that we were expendable, that our labour might at any moment go to waste, that we ourselves might be smashed up; and that others would replace us. To us that was the painful part, that others would come at the better time. But we were like the ants; we kept on. (BR 86)

Salim feels that no matter how much effort he puts into creating home for himself, his quest for new solidarity in central Africa will inevitably be in vain. Though having lived in Africa for years, he is in Africa but not of Africa since he is of Indian descent; only Africans can be seen as those who have “natural” linkage to Africa. Salim, threatened by African rebellions and nationalism, does not have a sense of purpose and security. To him, home does not refer to the space of his inhabitation.

Metty, Salim’s half-African family slave, after his arrival in the interior of Africa, becomes outgoing and sociable. Informed by an African girl that Metty has a baby, Salim sighs, “He [Metty] had come to the place that was partly his home” (BR 105). Compared with Metty who has already started a new life in his ancestral homeland, Salim feels frustrated, thinking,

I will inherit no house, and no house that I build will now pass to my children. That way of life has gone. I have lost my twenties, and what I have been looking for since I left home hasn’t come to me. I have only been waiting. I will wait for the rest of my life. When I came here, this flat was still the Belgian lady’s flat. It wasn’t my home; it was like a camp. (BR 107)

Not only does Salim perceive the impossibility of finding the new life he has expected in the heart of Africa but he also feels estranged from the place he inhabits. He has a desire to be re-rooted in central part of Africa, revealed by his hope that he will inherit a house and pass it down from one generation to another but disappointedly finds out that this continent only belongs to Africans such as Metty and Ferdinand.

Frustrated and depressed, Salim feels homesick but “home,” as Salim describes, “was hardly a place I [Salim] could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost” (*BR* 107). The “home” Salim mentions can refer to his ancestral homeland, India, and to his home in East Africa. But neither India nor East Africa is the place Salim can return to. Though he is of Indian descent, he has lost India in the mists of lost time. The reason is that long before he was born, he had been cut off from his ancestral homeland by distance. East Africa, where he was born and brought up, is considered only the crossroads of the world he temporarily and contingently dwells at because they are not “native” to this continent but regarded as intruders. To Salim, home is a place of no return.

My analysis of Father Huismans and Raymond above is to reveal and to expound Salim’s ambivalent attitudes towards Africa. On the one hand, both of them and Salim understand Africa with the imperialist eye. Father Huismans and Raymond have more optimistic views of Africa than Salim does. Rather than believing that he can find what he has expected in the interior of Africa, Salim doubts about whether this part of Africa can become a modern and self-governed country and thinks that it eventually will turn to be a primitive, chaotic and tyrannical place, excluding such outsiders as Salim. On the other hand, he has to deny what he doubts about. The reason is that “[u]nless we believed that change was coming to our part of Africa, we couldn’t have done our business. There would have been no point [of staying here]”

(BR 86). Home, according to Dorinne Kondo, “for many people on the margins, is [. . .] that which we cannot not want” (97). Since Salim is aware that there are no such fixed and “original” homelands that he can return to, to feel anchored in the place of settlement becomes of importance. Thus, he somehow has to disavow his awareness and takes a positive attitude over post-colonial Africa so as to survive the inhospitable and threatening place. Hovering between great fears of what he has been aware of and slime hopes for progressive changes in Africa, Salim feels, “People in our position move rapidly from depression to optimism and back down again” (BR 88). With such ambivalent attitudes towards Africa, Salim grapples to assume the new solidarity in the midst of social instability and nationalist movements in Africa.

Salim witnesses the inadequacy of a modern Europeanized state in Africa after the withdrawal of the colonizers. The three recurring rebellions throughout the novel reflect the dilemma of the post-colonial Africa. The repetitive rebellions, as King argues, results from the new ruler’s tyrannical attempt to “impose order on [the] nation-[state] in which tribal and traditional village life still is the norm and in which the old animosities of tribes, [. . .], are likely to lead to violent conflict” (BR 118). With the withdrawal of the colonizers, the ex-colony is soon thrown back to the pre-colonial days when the social and political boundaries are marked by tribes. The looming threat of the second rebellion leads Salim to recall the earlier rebellion taking place at independence:

[T]he people of our region had gone mad with anger and fear—all the accumulated anger of the colonial period, and every kind of reawakened tribal fear. The people of our region had been much abused, not only by Europeans and Arabs, but also by other Africans; and *at independence they had refused to be ruled by the new government in the capital.* (BR 67;

emphasis added)

Salim provides some possible reasons for the uprising. Their violent attack on the town can be seen as the way Africans give vent to their accumulated rancor and anger at the colonizers and other Africans from different tribes. In addition to what they have suffered during the colonial period, their wrath can also be seen as their violent reaction to the imposition of European notion of the new state on their tribes. Not long before Salim stays here, the second rebellion breaks out for the sake of Africans' unwillingness to be ruled by the new state. Salim describes that such rage is "[l]ike a forest fire that goes underground and burns unseen along the roots of trees it has already destroyed and then erupts in scorched land where it has little to feed on, so in the middle of destruction and want the wish to destroy flared up again" (*BR* 67). The war between the African rebels from the villages and the town and the army sent by the new government is at once all around Salim. As an Asian of Africa in the face of people's struggles for power, Salim feels frightened of both sides. Mahesh, Salim's Asian friend in the interior, tells Salim, "What do you do? You live here, and you ask that? You do what we all do. You carry on" (*BR* 68). Mahesh buttresses the need to struggle to survive in spite of the harsh and threatening circumstances. Salim and Mahesh serve as the epitome of the foreigners, particularly Indian diasporans, whose lives are endangered by the instabilities and upheavals of post-colonial Africa. It is not until the Big Man, who sends for the whites, "the promise of order and continuity," (*BR* 79) to quell the second rebellion, that "the free-for-all of independence had come to an end" (*BR* 77) and "brought peace to this land of *many peoples*" (133; emphasis added). It seems that the tribal differences are violently homogenized under the unifying discourse of a newly established government and that the new order, under the rule of the Big Man, is established in post-colonial Africa. But this seeming

firmness of the Big Man's cannot forcefully put an end to the tension among tribal groups; instead, it intensifies the underlying turbulence. The third rebellion is the best illustration of this point. The rebellion results from the tension between the President and the Youth Guard. Disbanded and stripped of power by the President, the members of the Youth Guard feel abused by the state system and cannot endure the President's insult. They decide to form a Liberation army to fight against the President. A printed leaflet written by the Liberation army shows that their goal is to return to the pre-colonial society:

The Ancestors shriek. [. . .]. By Enemy we mean the powers of imperialism, the multi-nationals and the puppet powers that be, the false gods, the capitalists, the priests and teachers who give false interpretations. [. . .]. We do not print books and make speeches. We only know the TRUTH, and we acknowledge this land as the land of the people whose ancestors now shriek over it [. . .]. (*BR* 211-2)

The turmoil persists to the end of the novel.

Throughout *BR*, the recurring civil wars taking place thrice in the former European colonial world reflect its inability to come to terms with the cultural form of its own nation, which, meanwhile, also suggests its failure to march forwards to historical progress of modernity. According to Ernest Gellner in his book entitled *Nations and Nationalism*,

[T]he age of transition to *industrialism* was bound, [. . .], also to be an age of nationalism, a period of turbulent readjustment, in which either political boundaries, or cultural ones, or both, were being modified, so as to satisfy the new nationalist imperative which now, for the first time, was making itself felt. (40; emphasis added)

Gellner argues that the common culture and social homogeneity which are created by nationalism are needed for the complex and constantly changing division of labor in modern societies. Nationalism is “not the awakening and assertion of these mythical supposedly natural and given units” but the inevitable consequence of industrialization (Gellner 48). Another well-known scholar, Benedict Anderson, defines the nation as follows: “it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (5-6); it is “print-capitalism” that prompts the imagined linkage. Both Gellner and Anderson attempt to demystify the traditional notion that nations are natural occurrences, and Anderson’s “print capitalism” and Gellner’s “industrial society” respectively explain that the concepts of nation and nationalism have to do with the development of modernity.

The second section of *BR*, entitled “The New Domain,” depicts the President’s efforts to create “the Domain” of a modern Africa (*BR* 100), which is seen as “the success of the European graft” (*BR* 101). Many large buildings on this site have been constructed so the President can show them off to the world. It appears that post-colonial Africa is sutured to the progressive time within the Western discourse of modernity. However, Salim, though greatly attracted to the Domain, considers it “a hoax” (*BR* 124) because the President “was bypassing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages” (*BR* 100). The Domain will eventually be run over by the vast area of bush surrounding it. Indar, as a professor teaching in the Domain, feels the same way and tells Salim that “[t]o people like us it’s [the Domain is] very seductive. Europe in Africa, post-colonial Africa. But it isn’t Europe or Africa” (*BR* 139). He continues, “We believe [the Domain] because that way everything becomes simpler and makes more sense. We don’t believe—well, because of this [the bush, the fishermen’s village, the moonlit river]” (*BR* 139). Obviously, both of them are

engaged in a bitter struggle with their Western evaluation of Africa in which development is a movement backward and a return to a primitive stage identified with the bush. However, Salim's struggle proves to be in vain after he discovers that his property is confiscated by the President for the sake of black nationalist demand for cultural authenticity.

Salim's desire to seek prosperity in central Africa somehow is considered imperial. His trip from the East African coast to the heart of Africa can metaphorically be depicted as a journey from the "margin" to the "center." However, the "center" Salim arrives at is hardly comparable to the ideal "center" he has imagined but a "fake" one, which is "imported, a mimicry" (King 118). The water hyacinths, which Salim keeps mentioning, illustrate his vision of futile and meaningless change in Africa. "[B]ring[ing] transportation on the river to a halt, [and] returning the villages to their former isolation" (King 123), the water hyacinths serve as a recurring symbol of the cycles of futility throughout *BR*.

The lengthy discussion of Salim's doubts about the development of this continent obviously suggests his obsession with imperialist ideologies. But I find it more significant that Salim's attitude towards Africa somehow discloses the dilemma erstwhile subjects of colonialism may be faced with, him included. While Salim dismisses the mimicry on the part of post-colonial Africa as a pretense, he, ironically, is among those Africans who pretend to be part of the prevailing "center." As an ex-colonial subject, Salim, on the one hand, "sees his success solely in terms of his acceptance in the metropolis, for he has no standards of his own by which to judge himself" (Gorra 88). This kind of mimicry, on the other hand, fills Salim with great disappointment and despair because it reminds him of his subordination and inferiority. Salim's ambivalent notion of mimicry explains that his doubt about the

future in Africa and the contempt he treats with the mimic Africans can be considered acts of self-doubt and of self-contempt. His desire and efforts to make himself part of England and his feeling of despair in the process of doing so are particularly made specific in his entrance to England.

(B) Salim's Quest for his Idealized Image of the Imperial Past in London

Feeling excluded from Africa and finally acknowledging Africa as a wasteland for the collapse of imperial and European order, Salim decides to go to London, the “real center” of his idealized imperial England, just before the third rebellion breaks out. He wants to make another attempt to create a new life of his own and to make the “very center” his home.

Upon his arrival in London, Salim unexpectedly finds out that the England he has imagined and dreamed about is different from the one he visits: “But the Europe I had come to—and knew from the outset I was coming to—was neither the old Europe nor the new. It was something shrunken and mean and forbidding” (*BR* 229). He continues by saying, “Of this Europe I could form no mental picture. But it was there in London; it couldn't be missed; and there was no mystery” (*BR* 230). Salim perceives that there is a great discrepancy between the fantasy and the reality he sees. The London he sees is no longer as superior, pure and organic as what he has learned from books since his childhood in East Africa but is full of poor and colored people from underdeveloped countries. Their emergence in London discomforts Salim, as the bush in central Africa Salim earlier intruded into does. Their appearance in the streets of London is seen as “a form of interrogation” (Bhabha, “‘Race’,” 177), “open[ing] up a time-lag at the point at which we speak of humanity through its differentiations—gender, race, class—that mark an excessive marginality of

modernity” (Bhabha, “‘Race’,” 169) and “slow[ing] down the linear, progressive time of modernity” (Bhabha, “‘Race’,” 185). Salim’s idealized images of Sovereign Subject and of London inaugurated by the Western narratives of modernity are forced to be confronted by those poor and colored people who swarm to London partly as a result of the withdrawal of colonizers from their colonies. As King argues, “[h]is [Naipaul’s] subject is rather loss of the imperial order than its achievement and celebration” (125). The imperial order he desires for was lost and cannot be found, as in the African interior.

In addition to his demystification of the idealized imperial England of his imaginings, Salim, with his observations about those people, is also aware that like them, he is in England but can never be of England. Upset by those who run “little stalls, booths, kiosks and choked grocery shops” (*BR* 230) and who sell “packets of cigarettes at midnight” (*BR* 230), Salim comments, “[T]hey were *cut off from the life of the great city* where they had come to live, and I wondered about the pointlessness of their own hard life, the pointlessness of their difficult journey” (*BR* 230; emphasis added). Being used to imagining that “[t]o that Europe [he has a desire for] only the privileged or the gifted among us journeyed” (*BR* 229), Salim unexpectedly finds out that those he considers “the privileged or the gifted” came all the way to London to allow themselves to become nobodies. He cannot understand why they, instead of being engaged in some “honorable” jobs, take such trivial jobs as owners of shabby shops and street vendors. Journeying from the “margin” to the “center,” they end up living on the margins of the “center.” The contempt he treats with those people is actually an act of self-contempt. Deeply disturbed, Salim sees himself in those people; he is one of them who flee to a metropolitan land to make better lives as a result of the withdrawal of colonizers but fail. Back to the hotel where he stays, he feels excluded

and marginalized from the heart of England:

It [the hotel] made me feel I was nowhere. It forced old anxieties on me and added new ones, about London, about this bigger world where I would have to make my way. Where would I start? When I turned the television on, it wasn't to marvel. It was to become aware of the great strangeness outside, and to wonder how those men on the screen had had themselves picked out from the crowd. (*BR* 231)

Salim, with his English passport, comes to London and desires to be part of the “center.” But he feels out of place, alienated and estranged from the big city.

In addition to the politics of home, which is involved with the processes of select inclusion and exclusion within power relations, “home” can also be addressed in terms of “affection.” Salim suffers homesickness that attends his recognition that making himself at home in London is impossible. Salim’s failure to assume a solidarity in the place of settlement results in his feeling of “not being home” in England, which, according to Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself” (196). Salim’s great longing to belong to the “center” turns to be his disillusionment with the idealized “homeland” in his fantasy, which obscures particular race, class and gender struggles in the processes of exclusion and inclusion. Overwhelmingly frustrated by his discovery, Salim, when still in London, says that “always in my mind then was the comfort of ‘going back,’ of taking another airplane, of perhaps not having, after all, to be here” (*BR* 231). While feeling “not being home” in London, Salim at the same time has a strong desire for “being home” somewhere else, which “refers to,” Martin and Mohanty asserts, “the place where one

lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries” (196). The place he wants to go back may refer to India, East Africa or “a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination” (Brah 192) where he is able to hide himself from the inhospitable world. However, emphasizing the phrase “going back,” Salim implies that there is no such a physical place of warmth and stability he can return to but a sentimentalized space he can feel safe. No matter whether it is associated by Salim either with India, with East Africa or with somewhere else, it is a space in his fantasy, free of the mechanism of exclusion and inclusion within the networks of the power relations, which comforts him when he fails to make himself feel at home in London. From this perspective, home, to Salim, becomes impossible but necessary.

In spite of his affection for “home,” Salim is aware that he must pay for such a sentimentalized space he relies on: “It [his imaginary home which comforts him] was a deception” and that “it comforted only to weaken and destroy” (*BR* 244). Why “home,” which should have comforted Salim, turns to be a deception and even destroys and weakens Salim will be discussed in detail in the case of Indar. He is the one who warns Salim of the danger of being sentimentally immersed in the idea of home and offers him the solution. “Home,” above all, is too dangerous for people like them to be involved in.

(C) Indar’s Quest for His Idealized Image of the Imperial Past in London

Like Salim, who has dreamed of England since his childhood, Indar believes that he can easily pass for a Briton but finds himself becoming a mimic man when he is in England. Upon his arrival in England, he feels that it [the airport] is “more beautiful and more complex than anything we could have dreamed of” (*BR* 142). After living in London for several years, he “could distinguish buildings only by their

size” and “was hardly aware of the passing of the seasons” (*BR* 43). Indar is so unfamiliar with and so extraordinarily overwhelmed by almost everything in England that he hardly feels that he is part of it. He becomes an inferior stranger, estranged and alienated from the metropolitan land. To disguise his sense of inferiority, Indar always pretends that he can manage and even expect better: “And that was how I spent my time at the university in England, not being overawed, always being slightly disappointed, understanding nothing, accepting everything, getting nothing” (*BR* 142-3). His pretension, as a way to defend him against the unfamiliar, makes him a mimic man, the one who can be considered what Frantz Fanon terms as a person of “black skins, white masks.” In his *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon mentions Professor D. Westermann’s idea about the way the Negroes unceasingly struggle with their inferiority complex and quotes a passage on their naïve way of doing so from Professor D. Westermann’s *The African Today* as saying,

The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adoring the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (qtd. in Fanon 25)

By dressing and acting like the Europeans, the blacks think that they become comparable to Europeans. Likewise, it is through mimicry on the part of Indar that Salim sees London and privileges “in his [Indar’s] clothes, the trousers, the striped cotton shirt, the way his hair cut, his shoes” (*BR* 110). But Salim, meanwhile, senses that his style is not something he creates for himself and sees him “more as a man touched by the glamour of the great world” (*BR* 156). In Salim’s eyes, Indar is not a

“true” European, but pretends to be one and fights to keep up “that” European style.

Indar’s personal experience of his encounter with his motherland should be understood as a crucial part of the history of colonialism. The colonial situation, according to Fanon, is responsible for Indar’s inferiority complex and the imitation of the West on his part. Fanon uses Madagascar as his case study, arguing,

The arrival of the white man in Madagascar shattered not only its horizons but its psychological mechanisms. As everyone has pointed out, alterity for the black man is not the black but the white man. An island like Madagascar, invaded overnight by ‘pioneers of civilization,’ even if those pioneer conducted themselves as well as they knew how, suffered the loss of its basic structure. (97)

“[C]olonial racism” (Fanon 88), the hierarchical system of the binary opposition between the white and the black, brought about by the European invasion of Madagascar, is regarded by Fanon as the most single factor in crippling and deforming the “psychological mechanisms” and “the basic structure” in Madagascar. As a consequence, the Malagasy are not only positioned and constructed as the inferior other within the racial categories of knowledge of the West by imposed domination but also subject to that stereotypical representation of the blacks by “inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm” (Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 395). Fanon’s insight into the colonial experience is made explicit in Hall’s “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” Hall emphasizes that “every regime of representation” is rather “internal” than “external” (395). The native blacks are not simply labeled as the other but made to see and experience themselves as the other. They question themselves and judge themselves by the standards set by the white:

If he [the black man] is a Malagasy, it is because the white man has come,

and if at a certain stage he has been led to ask himself whether he is indeed a man, it is because his reality as a man has been challenged. In other words, I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world, [. . .]. (Fanon 98)

Above all, “[w]hite civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro. [. . .] the black soul is a white man’s artifact” (Fanon 14). The native blacks neither call themselves “the Malagasy” nor become aware of the color of their skin with negative connotations until their encounter with the West. The unequal power relations between the Europeans and the native blacks in terms of racial differences result in colonial subjects’ inferiority complex and their desire to become white men. The native blacks see their success solely in terms of their acceptance in the metropolitan land and thus the imitation of what a man should be modeled upon the white man on the part of those colonial subjects becomes inevitable.

Indar serves as the typical example of what Fanon thinks of as colonial subjects by saying,

[. . .] how incapable we had become of understanding the outside world. We have no means of understanding a fraction of the thought and science and philosophy and law that have gone to make that outside world. We simply accept it. We have grown up paying tribute to it, and that is all that most of us can do. We feel the great world that it is simply there, something for the lucky ones among us to explore, *and then only at the*

edges. (BR 142)

Faced with his motherland, seen by him as the exclusive source of knowledge, Indar feels overwhelmingly inferior. In spite of his efforts to make himself part of the metropolis, he ends up being excluded from it. For instance, after three years, he, like most students of his year, tries to find a job via “the Appointments Committee.” But he later realizes that his errand is fruitless because “[t]he committee was meant to put English boys in English jobs; it wasn’t meant for me” (BR 143). He describes one of his interviews with an Englishman: “In that quite little office full of peaceful files I began to think of the world outside as a place of horror” (BR 144). Indar acquires the knowledge that he can never be a Briton but always at the rim of the metropolitan world.

(IV) Failure to Have a Sense of Belonging to the Ancestral Homeland, India

In spite of his yearning for a sense of belonging to the current place of abode, Indar still retains a conscious or subconscious attachment to his ancestral home. Failing to find a job via the Appointments Committee, Indar is advised by a woman lecturer to look for a job as a diplomat. He says, “[T]he country I decided to serve—since a diplomat has to have a country—was India” (BR 145). He follows her advice and heads for the Indian High Commission for an interview. After his arrival at the embassy, he disappointedly finds out that the one he sees is quite different from what he has expected: “At this stage my embarrassment was acute. I was in my dark suit and my university tie, and I was entering a London building, an English building, which pretended to be of India—*an India quite different from the country my grandfather had spoken about*” (BR 146; emphasis added). Having never been to India, Indar knows nothing of his ancestral homeland except for what he learns from

his grandfather's stories. It is based on his grandfather's depiction of India that Indar creates "his" India, which is the "pure" and "original" one, unchanged throughout history. Besides, it is through his grandfather's narration that Indar gradually feels psychically connected with and emotionally attached to the elusive and semi-fictional India. However, his attachment to that India in his imagination is drastically countered by his loathing of the visible one: "I had never felt so involved with the land of my ancestors, and yours [Salim's], and so far from it. I felt in that building I had lost an important part of my idea of who I was. I felt I had been granted the most cruel knowledge of where I stood in the world. And I hated it" (*BR* 146). Indar has mixed feelings about facing himself with the "Indian House" with "all the motifs on the outside wall" (*BR* 146), an incongruous sight in the heart of England, regarded by Salim as a miniature of his lost Indian world. On the one hand, that building reminds Indar that he is of Indian ancestry and that he is a part of it. On the other hand, he feels humiliated and frustrated by his discovery that the visible India is another oriental third world country. His faith in the India of his imagination results in his unawareness that India has been subjected to transformation by hundreds of years of displacement, slavery, colonization and so on. Even the India he considers "original" and "pure" in his fantasy, not temporally or spatially specified, has always already been mediated by desire and memory. There is no such pure completeness and wholeness of India he can return to.

Indar not only hears about India from his grandfather but also learns about two great Indian figures, Gandhi and Nehru, from magazines and newspapers. Indar admires them, saying, "They belonged to me; they ennobled me and gave me some place in the world" (*BR* 148). Indar identifies himself with them and views India as a country of the independence movement and of great names, to which he belongs and

on which his conception of an Indian identity is based. However, his faith in his ancestral home and the two great men is dispelled by his encounter with those Indians working for the Indian High Commission, who do not have a sense of a country but still stick to their cast-ordered and religion-defined vision of the world. For instance, Indar comments on the first interviewer he meets: "In spite of his jacket and tie he wasn't what I was expecting. He wasn't the kind of man I would have worn a dark suit for. I thought he belonged to another kind of office, another kind of building, another kind of city" (*BR* 146). Recognizing his name as the name of his merchant cast, Indar perceives that the interviewer, though dressed like an English gentleman, is a rude Indian merchant underneath, who should have dressed himself like an Indian, selling shirtings in a small cloth shop. Indar also notices that the second interviewee's name, Verma, is not his real name but taken by him as a way to conceal his caste origins. As for the third interviewer, Indar senses that he "reeked of caste and temple," guessing that "below that black suite he wore all kinds of amulets" *BR* (149). Indar looks down on those Indians whose attempts to become modern men are merely the vulgar imitation of the Britons; they can neither shake off nor conceal what the caste system has imposed on them by means of wearing suits and changing names. Indar's disgust at their affiliation with the caste system becomes more intense when he sees the large framed photographs of Gandhi and Nehru hung on the wall. Looking at the two photographs, Indar, who used to admire these two great men, feels the opposite:

In that room the photographs of those great men made me feel that I was at the bottom of a well. I felt that in that building complete manhood was permitted only to those men and denied to everybody else. Everyone had surrendered his manhood, or a part of it, to those leaders. Everyone willingly made himself smaller the better to exalt those leaders. These

thoughts surprised and pained me. They were more than heretical. They destroyed what remained of my faith in the way the world was ordered. I began to feel cast out and alone. (*BR* 148)

Indar feels that his admiration for Gandhi and Nehru is different from those Indians' blind worship and servile attitudes towards these two great men. The forging of the national identity on the part of Indians is merely a response to the economic and political exploitation of India by the British. With the withdrawal of the colonizers, a collective sense of a nation among Indians brought about by the common experience of being a colonized people struggling for independence is lost and the undercurrent particularities of religions, castes and clans, underplayed during the nationalist struggle for independence, become foregrounded. Indians, instead of defining themselves in terms of national affiliation, are only concerned with their petty groupings arranged hierarchically according castes, clans and religions and their respect to Gandhi and Nehru turns to be the blind worship. Unlike them, Indar used to view India as a nation under the guidance of such leading spirits of the independence movement as Gandhi and Nehru, which was comparable to England, a modern, Western, efficient industrialized nation. His understanding of the discrepancy between the India of his imagined origin and the one he has experienced frustrates and pains him partly because he finds himself estranged from the India he used to be familiar with and partly because he becomes an outcast, excluded from those who do not have the strong attachment to India as a nation but only look after their clans and castes to which Indar does not belong.

Indar's interview ends in bitter disappointment. The last interviewer he meets questions his loyalty to India, saying, "But you say in your letter you are from Africa. How can you join our diplomatic service? How can we have a man of divided

loyalties?" (*BR* 149). He continues, "You people have been living the good life in Africa. Now that things have got a little rough you want to run back. But you must throw in your lot with the local people" (*BR* 149). Upon hearing the interviewer's unfair judgment and selfish remarks, Indar thinks to himself: "How dare you lecture me about history and loyalty, you slave? We have paid bitterly for people like you. Who have you ever been loyal to, apart from yourself and your family and your caste?" (*BR* 149). Indar tells Salim that the interviewer just wants to boast about "his own virtue and good fortune" (*BR* 149), showing off "the purity of caste, arranged marriage, the correct diet, the services of the untouchables" and dismissing everybody else as "pollution" (*BR* 149). The Indian interviewer makes it explicit that Indar, who is expelled from East Africa, is not the responsibility of the Indian government. Since he once enjoyed benefits of working in East Africa, now he must accept his fate from the natives of Africa. Indar's response to the Indian interviewer's arrogance and selfishness reflects Naipaul's critique of India. In an interview with Charles Wheeler, Naipaul reveals that coming from an overseas Indian community, he has been described as an Indian, "a kind of racial grouping" (41). Growing up with this idea, Naipaul anticipates that the others will do so. However, after his arrival in India, he disappointedly discovers, "there is no sense not only of a racial grouping, but no sense of a country" (Naipaul, "Every Man," 41). Instead, the Indians "just know what their little regions are, what their families are, what their clans or castes see" (Naipaul, "Every Man," 40) and merely look after their families, clans or castes. Naipaul is critical of their complete dependence on the caste and clan systems, commenting, "[t]here is no sense of responsibility of man for man outside these petty groupings" (Naipaul, "Every Man," 40). The categorical differences in terms of clans and castes foster disregard on the part of Indians for others and reduce them to narrow ranges of

perception and understanding. The interviewer's attitude towards Indar is a typical example of how Indians are blinded by their beliefs in caste and clan systems. In spite of his unsympathetic critique of India, Naipaul, in his interview with Wheeler, still hopes that Indians can "break out of these very restricted attitudes to their fellow men, and see men as their fellows" (Naipaul, "Every Man," 40).

Like Salim, whose realization that he is marginalized from the metropolis he has regarded as the cultural center makes him homesick, Indar begins to conjure up a home which provides the sense of safety and comfort he needs when discovering that he does not belong to India. After being dismissed by the Indian interviewer, Indar walks along the bank beside the river, some thought comes to him:

It is time to go home. It wasn't our town that I thought of, or our stretch of the African coast. I saw a country road lined with tall shade trees. I saw fields, cattle, a village below trees. I don't know what book or picture I had got that from, or why a place like that should have seemed to me safe. But that was the picture that came to me, [. . .]. The mornings, the dew, the fresh flowers, the shade of the trees in the middle of the day, the fires in the evening. I felt I had known that life, and that it was waiting for me again somewhere. (*BR* 150-1)

Excluded from the Indian High Commission, Indar feels himself a shipwrecked man, alone and vulnerable. To re-secure a sense of belonging he has lost after the interview, Indar tends to retreat into fantasy, comforting himself with an image that is less a terrain-based than a realm of the mind. From this perspective, a "home," as far as diasporans are concerned, refers to a mythic place of desire in fantasy, a site of warmth and protective security; it is not necessarily the geographical territory regarded as the fixed place of origin he can really go back to. The concept of diaspora,

as Brah argues, “offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a ‘homeland’” (180).

Brah’s concept of “a *homing* desire” (emphasis added) refers to one’s desire to feel at home particularly in the context of diaspora and suggests that “home” is produced in one’s longing to belong rather than seen as a place-based site to which one can physically return. Indeed, there is no such a given origin Indar is eager to return to but an imaginary place he desires since it gives him a sense of security.

Indar’s “*homing* desire,” though soothing his afflicted self, must be depressed because it prompts Indar to insulate himself from the outside world and to immerse himself in the illusion of his own fantasy. While finding solace in his imaginary homeland, Indar, however, begins to realize that his “*homing* desire” is a delusive belief: “I began to understand at the same time that my anguish about being a man adrift was false, that for me that dream of home and security was nothing more than a dream of isolation, anachronistic and stupid and very feeble” (*BR* 151). Indar is aware that his emotional preoccupation with home hinders him from becoming somebody in the world. He tells Salim, in retrospect, that without the sudden realization, “[he] would have sunk” and “would have hidden in [his] hole and been crippled by [his] sentimentality” (*BR* 152). For Indar, to sentimentalize the suffering is reactionary and self-defeating. Instead of being overwhelmed by his strong psychic investment in home, Indar decides to overcome it.

(V) Repression of “*Homing* Desire:” Trampling on the Past

In order not to sink, Indar thinks of trampling on the past as a way out. Indar’s idea of trampling on the past, in a sense, indicates foregoing the loss of his fortune and the scattering of his family as a result of African independence movements and

disowning his ties to the Indian community that “left [him] at the mercy of others” (*BR* 142). Indar’s negation of his past, either unpleasant or memorable, suggests a brand-new start of his life. He wants to be a self-made man, dependent on himself. His determination to become somebody illustrates the sentence *BR* begins with, “The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it” (*BR* 3). Living in the turbulent era, Indar deeply feels that the world is in a state of cyclical and repetitious changes; the Arabs, the powerful colonizers in Africa, are conquered by Europeans, whose authority over Africa is later replaced by the new African state. In a world where nothing feels settled, life is seen as survival of the fittest. The Arabs in Africa serve as the typical example of how their decadent behavior leads to their downfall:

Once, great explorers and warriors, the Arabs had ruled. They had pushed far into the interior and had built towns and planted orchards in the forest. Then their power had been broken by Europe. Their towns and orchards disappeared, swallowed up in the bush. They ceased to be driven on by their idea of their position in the world, and their energy was lost; they forgot who they were and where they had come from [. . .]. It [the authority of the Arabs] could be blown away at any time.

The world is what it is. (*BR* 14-5)

Rather than trying hard not to sink, the Arabs completely lose their way, without noticing that they become vulnerable, prey for others. As King argues, the opening sentence, “the world is what it is,” implies a vision of “empire being replaced by empire, of the strong conquering the weak and then themselves becoming weak and conquered by fresh blood” (123). The Arabs’ downfall warns Indar of how the world operates. To survive or even to achieve his ambition, Indar keeps sentiments at bay,

asserting, “I belonged to my self alone. I was going to surrender my manhood to nobody. For someone like me there was only one civilization and one place—London, or a place like it. Every other kind of life was make-believe. Home—what for? to hide? To bow to our great men? [. . .]” (*BR* 152). Indar has made his mind, saying “now I want to win and win and win” (*BR* 155). He is offered a job by an American, working as an international advisor on third world problems, a self-made intellectual, independent of others.

To curb his “*homing* desire” with the idea of trampling on the past is extremely painful. When Indar meets Salim in central Africa, he not only advises Salim to trample on the past but also discloses his struggle with his own belief:

It isn't easy to turn your back on the past. It isn't something you can decide to do just like that. It is something you have to arm yourself for, or grief will ambush and destroy you. That is why I hold on to the image of the garden trampled until it becomes ground—it is a small thing, but it helps. (*BR*

141)

On the one hand, caught between his attachment to his ancestral homeland to which he does not belong and his yearning for his adopted home from which he remains marginalized, Indar becomes an alienated outsider, overpowered by his feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and vulnerability. To make his emotions easier to bear, Indar hides himself from reality and lives in a fantasy homeland of warmth and safety, to which he has a sense of belonging. On the other hand, Indar does not allow himself to become a failure, completely overwhelmed by his sentiments. He makes efforts to repress his “*homing* desire” and masks his feelings by his claim that he is now emotionally detached from “home” and that he belongs to himself alone. To defend himself against his feelings of alienation, frustration, and homelessness, Indar must be

strong enough. However, the following example reveals that it is never easy for Indar to be strong and that he must struggle to keep his belief in self-reliance. While he works as an actor in a theatrical group in London, he finds it depressing that his will to better himself is limited by the environment and his past: “People dropped out and took jobs and you understood that they had had pretty solid connections all along. That was always a letdown, and *there were times during those two years when I felt lost and had to fight hard to hold on to that mood that had come to me beside the river*” (BR 153; emphasis added). After being aware that he, unlike his English colleagues, lacks “solid connections” (BR 153), Indar feels that he is “the only dropout” (BR 153) and is unwilling to “be a dropout at all” (BR 153). Indar notes that his efforts to trample on the past so as to become a fully self-made man are impossible. As Gorra argues, “[n]one of us belong to ourselves alone, [. . .], the self he has made depends on his membership in a group that others, that British imperialism, have defined as marginal and powerless” (95). Indar’s self is partially predicated on the (post-)colonial spaces of racial difference, of movement across shifting cultural and religious boundaries, and of journeys across geographical borders. He cannot be free of the discursive formation of his identity and home simply by means of renouncing his past. His discovery that he, unlike the Britons, does not have “solid connections” pains him because he realizes that he cannot be part of England but extraneous to it no matter how hard he tries to rid himself of the past. Even if he perceives that he has been deluding himself with the false hope, Indar still makes strenuous efforts to hold on to his belief. The reason is that if he did not do so, he would be defeated by his own sentiments. He rather deludes himself with a false belief so as to brave the harsh world than becomes overwhelmed by his sentimentality about home.

The diasporic experience of in-betweenness, hybridity, and diversity, in critics’

opinions, offers new possibilities for understanding the concept of home but, in Naipaul's *BR*, fills diasporans with great despair. Many critics contend that the strong association of the concept of diaspora with dislocation and displacement challenges the received notions of homeland and returning home, disrupts the geographical and political spaces of the home-nation as an authentic space of belonging and civic participation, problematizes the conceptual limits imposed by national and ethnic/racial boundaries and offers new frames of analyses of the uncritical and unreflexive notions mentioned above. However, multiple belongings and dual loyalties are sheer torture for Indar. As Indar takes the difficult decision to trample on the past and to make himself part of England, he somehow feels guilty. He tells Salim, "You may say—and I know, Salim, that you have thought it—that I have turned my back on my community and sold out" (*BR* 152). Without waiting for a response from Salim, Indar immediately defends himself against the predictable charge, saying, "Sold out to what and from what? What do you have to offer me? What is your own contribution? And can you give me back my manhood?" (*BR* 152). Living on the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, Indar desires for a solidarity; "borders, like diasporas, *are not just places of imaginative interminglings and happy hybridities for us to celebrate*. [. . .]. Borders are zones of loss, alienation, pain, death" (Lavie and Swedenburg 15; emphasis added). While theorists emphasize that the concept of diaspora undermines and challenges the normative notions of home and identity, diasporans in *BR* instead endeavor to get rid of their hybrid selves.

It is not until his trip to America that he becomes disillusioned with his belief. Indar's life in New York is narrated by Kareisha. She tells Salim that after the outfit folds, Indar goes to America and has a very bad experience there. On his arrival in New York, he expects that those Americans will treat him just like the way when they

were in Africa, they looked upon him not as a refugee from the East Coast but as one of themselves. Kareisha emphasizes that to be seen as their equal is taken very seriously by Indar because it is the idea Indar has grown up with and will never lose. Kareisha reminds Salim that Indar, “who used to lead a luxurious life, had believed that “money had made him holy” (*BR* 242). However, his property and holiness are deprived as a consequence of the rebellions taking place in East Africa. Working for the outfit makes Indar holy again not by giving him back his money but by endowing him with power. As Kareisha says, “[h]is outfit didn’t give him back his money, but it made him holy again. It raised him again above everybody else and made him equal with the big boys of Africa, being a guest of the government in this place and that place, meeting foreign ministers and presidents” (*BR* 242). According to Kareisha, Indar enjoys being a man with power. His determination to trample on the past evidences his will to get access to power. Thus, when the outfit folds, he goes to America to meet his colleagues, hoping “to be made one of them, to keep on at the old level” (*BR* 242). However, he finds that “they were pushing him towards smaller things and he pretended not to notice” (*BR* 242). Not until Indar visits an American’s apartment does he finally become “shattered” (*BR* 243). Indar has no idea that the American, who he considers as his equal and friend, is such a rich man and becomes overwhelmed. Kareisha describes,

It was only there, in the rich apartment with the costly objects and pictures, that Indar understood that while he had opened himself to the man, and talked of all the little things that made him anxious, he had received very little of that in return. This man was much, much holier. It was more than Indar could bear. He felt he had been cheated and fooled. [. . .]. He thought of this man as someone like himself. He felt he had been

led on all these years, and exploited in the worst way. (*BR* 243; emphasis added)

Indar used to believe that the man is equal to him. But after his visit to the man's splendid apartment, Indar is totally shocked and upset. He suddenly realizes that he has been blind to the fact that he is inferior to the man and excluded by the people in metropolises. After this terrible experience, "[a]ll that optimism dragged out of him" (*BR* 243) and "[h]e doesn't want to risk anything again" (*BR* 244). To him, "[t]he idea of sacrifice is safer" (*BR* 244). Ever since, Indar has given himself up and became passive. He traps himself in "some dream village in his head" (*BR* 244), believing that "it was time for him to go home, to get away" (*BR* 244). Indar recognizes that no matter how hard he tries, he can never make himself an equal to those privileged ones with great power in the metropolises, such as London and New York. Defeated and crushed, he is unwilling to deny his notion of self-importance. To protect himself from being frustrated again by the cruel world and to prevent his notion from being challenged, he becomes a secluded man, living in his own world.

After learning about Indar's life in America from Kereisha, Salim shows an ambivalent attitude towards Indar. On the one hand, he pities Indar because he, like Indar, is sentimental about home: "That idea of going home, of leaving, the idea of the other place—I had lived with it in various forms for many years. In Africa it had always been with me. In London, in my hotel room, I had allowed it on some nights to take me over" (*BR* 244). To the homeless such as Indar and Salim, home is what they first resort to when they are excluded by others. On the other hand, Salim comments, "[the] younger Indar was wiser. Use the airplane; trample on the past, as Indar had said he had trampled on the past. Get rid of that idea of the past; make the dream-like scenes of loss ordinary" (*BR* 244). Salim continues, "That was the mood in which I

left London and Kareisha, to go back to Africa, to wind up there realise as much as I could of what I had. And make a fresh start somewhere else” (*BR* 245). From Salim’s ambivalent attitude towards Indar, it is evident that Salim is now struggling with what Indar grappled with in England. Though he takes up Indar’s belief of trampling on the past, he at the same time reveals his emotional attachment to home. The novel ends with Indar’s departure from Africa by boat. However, Salim’s plan to embark on a new life might be in vain, which is somehow foreshadowed in Indar’s failure to become a self-independent man.

(VI) Conclusion

The opening sentence of *BR* conveys two protagonists’ continual struggle to survive, to adapt themselves to the political, historical, social and cultural forces that provide them with no stability and few choices, and to fight to become part of the “center.” However, it is difficult for both of them to keep their faith in the belief; their sentiments attending their failure to achieve the end overwhelm them and discourage them from overcoming their eventual existentialist crisis of their rootlessness. While they enjoy immersing themselves in their imaginary home, they at the same time are aware of the accompanying dangers of that desire and endeavor to depress that desire. Throughout *BR*, Salim and Indar are described as those who are painfully subjected to the repetitive process of their attempt to become part of their adopted countries and their withdrawal from it.