

Chapter Four

Diasporans' Identity Crises

(I) Introduction

The issue of identity is perennially contested for people like Salim and Indar. As descendants of Indian diasporans, Salim and Indar are predetermined to be dislocated from their ancestral homeland, born in a place which they do not belong to, and brought up within the colonial regimes of power. As I discussed in the previous chapter, they are neither greatly nostalgic for their “original” homeland nor eager to be assimilated to “primitive” Africa. Instead, they fantasize about belonging to the British Empire. Continuing the discussion of their investment in the idea of “Englishness,” this chapter deals with how they adopt Eurocentric frames of reference to construct their identities, particularly in the case of Salim. He has identified himself with an “ideal” image, a male and white bourgeois on his own, and taken it for granted. However, the image should not be understood as the ultimate essence which transcends historical and cultural boundaries but rather as the historically contingent field of contestation within discursive and material practices. Thus, with the advent of independence movements in formerly colonized Africa, Salim suffers the fundamental contradiction in his identity. How he comes to terms with the major problematic of his being in postcolonial Africa will be dealt with in this chapter. The analysis of this issue will be discussed in detail particularly from three respective perspectives, race, gender and class, since the formation of Salim’s identity are intersected between these three.

(II) Identity Crisis—Salim’s and Indar’s Fundamental Problems

Salim's and Indar's will to restore power is progressively discovered in the previous chapter. Indeed, Salim himself confesses that he is different from his family members who just do what they have to do and who, when in difficulties, "had the consolations of religion" (*BR* 16), centered on the idea about the vanity of all human endeavour" (*BR* 16). Unlike his family members, he admits that he is a materialist and believes that his sense of pessimism and insecurity "was the price for my [Salim's] more materialist attitude, my seeking to occupy the middle ground, between absorption in life and soaring above the cares of the earth" (*BR* 16). Salim, on the one hand, is eager to make a success on his own terms. On the other hand, he is afraid that his involvement with the outside world makes him others' prey. Salim attributes the dilemma he is faced with to his materialism and his lack of religious belief. However, I assert that it is more than just the foregoing two which Salim sees as primordial factors that result in his feelings of anxiety and insecurity and that drive him to assume the new solidarity as a way to cope with the upheavals in Africa. What worries and torments him most is the major problematic of his being¹: Who and what am I in post-colonial Africa? His tenuous sense of himself is the fundamental problem that keeps haunting and overwhelming him to a great extent. But Salim is unwilling to admit his identity crisis, making great efforts to convince himself of the illusory image of the superior, solid, patriarchal, and integrated self, which is the unsaid part of the text and will be put into question in this chapter.

It is worth observing why *BR* depicts Salim's dilemma specifically at this

¹ I owe this idea to Cudjoe's *V. S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading*, which clearly points out, "the major source of tension in Naipaul's work arose initially from the conflict between his Hindu sensibilities and the Christian tradition to which he and his people were subjected" (12). Naipaul's work serves as the major site for the elaboration of his major problematic: the identity crisis. Inspired by Cudjoe's insight into Naipaul's oeuvre, I perceive that the major theme of *BR* is how Indian diasporans, Salim and Indar, endeavor to work out their problems of identity and to discover their purposes in life in newly decolonized Africa they cannot call home and attempt to explore the issue of identity in depth in this chapter.

particular movement of the withdrawal of the Empire and the rise of African nationalism. In other words, why Salim does not begin to be aware of his identity crisis until decolonization and African independence is the issue I am dealing with. Kobena Mercer offers a satisfactory answer to this question: “[. . .] identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, *when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty*” (43; emphasis added). Obviously, the “something” Mercer talks about can be referred to as Salim’s and Indar’s prosperous life during the colonial period. With his abundant possessions, Indar is able to differentiate himself from others, adopting this particular subject-position as a rich man. As Kareisha comments on Indar,

You know Indar. You know that when he was young the most important thing to him was that his family was rich. You remember the house they lived in. When you live in a house like that, I suppose you think ten or twelve or twenty times a day that you are very rich or that you are richer than nearly everybody else. And you remember how he used to get on. [. . .]. You would say that he felt that *money had made him holy*. (BR 242; emphasis added)

Indar gains a sense of identity by recognizing that he is a wealthy man. It is his fortune that constitutes who he is. Thus, the loss of his compound and fortune also indicates the loss of the sense of himself. The double loss tortures Indar tremendously. He feels very depressed and unhappy and becomes angry with Africans, saying,

The thought of losing that house built by my grandfather, the thought of the risks he and my father had taken to build up a business from nothing, the bravery, the sleepless nights—*it was all very painful*. In another country such effort and such talent would have made us *millionaires*,

aristocrats or at any rate secure for some generations. There it was all going up in smoke. (*BR* 142; emphasis added)

It seems that what pains Indar most is his loss of fortune; however, the concomitant loss of his identity as a millionaire or aristocrat should be the fundamental problem he most cares about.

Mercer's "something" can also be regarded as the order produced and maintained during the colonial period but collapsing after the withdrawal of the Empire. On the surface, the order is quickly associated with the public security and order. When bloody rebellions take place in Africa and the British seems unable to put them down, Salim begins to worry "that the political system we had known was coming to an end, and that what was going to replace it wasn't going to be pleasant" (*BR* 16). What he is concerned about does happen after the takeover of territories by Africans. Salim compares the colonial Africa with the independent Africa and misses the former one a lot. He is nostalgic for "the miraculous peace of the colonial time, when men could, if they wished, pay little attention to tribal boundaries" (*BR* 34) but sighs, "At independence, tribal boundaries had become important again, and travel was not as it had been" (*BR* 34). Besides, Salim is reminiscent of the colonial time when order is maintained under the rule of colonizers: "In the old days his [Father Huisman's] death would have caused anger, and people would have wanted to go out to look for his killers. But now we who remained—outsiders, but neither settlers nor visitors, just people with nowhere better to go—put our heads down and got on with our business" (*BR* 85). Salim also complains that public hygiene becomes a problem after independence: "In the colonial days public vehicles had by law to be disinfected once a year by the health department. [. . .]; and now taxis and trucks weren't disinfected just once a year; they were disinfected whenever they were caught" (*BR* 87). Living

under the control of new regime, Salim, as an outsider, feels unprotected and threatened.

However, the “political system” or order, Salim is nostalgic for, not only guarantees him a secure and stable life but also gives him subject positions which constitute his identities in the process of his taking up the positions and identifying with them. Thus, being deprived of the “order” that Salim has taken for granted during the colonial time, he suffers a great deal not only from the loss of his secure and stable life but from the loss of his sense of coherent and unified self as well. He makes a comparison between his life in the east coast and that in the interior, saying,

It was the opposite of the life of our family and community on the coast. That life was *full of rules*. [. . .]; *it was a pre-packed kind of life*. Here I had stripped myself of all the rules. During the rebellion—such a long time ago—I had also discovered that I had stripped myself of *the support the rules gave*. *To think of it like that was to feel myself floating and lost*.
(BR 191; emphasis added)

Salim points out why rules do matter. The rules provide Salim with support and some kind of certainty. Without it, Salim feels that “[l]ife in our town was *arbitrary enough*” (BR 190; emphasis added), worrying that “[w]e none of us [foreigners] had certainties of any kind” and that “[w]ithout always knowing what we were doing, we were constantly adjusting to the arbitrariness by which we were surrounded” (BR 190). Even before Salim is born, the rules have already existed and prevailed in East Africa during the colonial period and it is the rules that construct the life Salim is destined to lead and that constitute the subject position that Salim assumes. In other words, he is predetermined to lead such “a pre-packed kind of life” beneath which lie plenty of rules (BR 191). How and why such “a pre-packed kind of life” full of rules can make

Salim feel safe and certain of the present situation will be discussed in the following passages.

Rules during the colonial period Salim feels himself greatly dependent on are the bases for his understanding of the world and of his relations with others. Lumps of rules can be seen as particular classificatory systems during the colonial period, which produce categories by means of differentiation. It is through those categories that social control is exercised and social relations are organized and divided. Kathryn Woodward gives an example of how individuals who transgress rules are relegated to the outsider so as to maintain the social order. She says, “[T]he criminal is an outsider whose transgression excludes him or her from mainstream society, producing an identity which, because it is associated with lawlessness, is linked with danger and set apart and marginalized” (*BR* 33). She adds, “The identity of the ‘outsider’ is produced in relation to the ‘insider’” (*BR* 33). Salim is the one who is positioned within these different and relational categorizations operated in classificatory systems. Once rules are overturned, the social order and Salim’s “inherent” relations with others will undergo drastic changes, which explains why Salim feels that his life is fluid and uncertain while living in the interior. He thinks that “stable relationships were not possible here” (*BR* 210) and that “[w]e [foreigners] no longer felt accountable to anyone or anything” (*BR* 191). The “stable relationships” that Salim talks about can be seen as his differential relations with others, which constitute his identities. For instance, he is assigned and recruited to different categories or groups according to race, gender and class within the classificatory systems. If the classificatory systems collapse, his relations with others will be rearranged, which leads to the loss of his earlier adopted identities.

The instability of the classificatory system as a result of the political shift from

Europeans to Africans prompts Indar to be conscious of his in-betweenness and aware that his in-betweenness makes him vulnerable and miserable. Long before the collapse of the British Empire, Indar, to a certain extent, has, consciously or unconsciously, identified himself with Britons and Indians partly because he is one of the colonials and partly because he is of Indian ancestry. Not until his interactions with both Britons and Indians he has long identified himself with does he realize that he does not belong to them but is excluded by them. Indar's failure to apply for jobs in England and in the Indian embassy implies that he is treated as an "other" by those he has identifies himself with. In addition to the way Indar is marked as an "other" in terms of his race, what makes the issue of Indar's exclusion from the "center" and his "original" homeland complex is Indar's "psychological mechanisms," (Fanon 97), that is, his sense of inferiority complex and his guilty of his divided loyalties respectively aroused in face of Britons and Indians, both of which are concomitants of his failure to be accepted by them. Indar's inferiority complex results from his personal experience of being colonized, and his guilty of his divided loyalties, from his desire to become part of the "center," which are respectively dealt with in the previous chapter. Tortured by his own sentiments, Indar is aware that his identification with either Britons or Indians can never be complete but always is in a state of being fractured. In spite of his admiration for England and his Indian ancestry, he has lost the British Empire and India he has imagined and identified with in the mists of lost time. Caught in the in-betweenness and living on the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, Indar suffers his identity crisis particularly at the movement of the withdrawal of the Empire and the rise of African nationalism.

To Salim and Indar, the phenomenon of decolonization involves an extraordinary transformation, which results in the disruption of the old structures of the imperial

order and gives rise to the assertion of new and reclaimed national and ethnic identities. The identities Salim and Indar have invested in during the colonial period are contested during the period of decolonization. Their identity crises point out the instability of categorizations and identities they are assigned to and identify with. In other words, those categorizations and identities are not naturally fixed but the very products of history. The movements of decolonization in Africa challenge some of the existing fixed identities of race, gender and class, which should be considered contingent, emerging at the particular historical movement of colonization. As Stuart Hall asserts, “[C]ultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all” (“Cultural Identity” 395). Hall emphasizes, “Cultural identities,” instead, “come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 394). Identities do not transcend time, place and culture but are constructed within a particular historical context and subjected to transformation. Thus, “[i]dentity then is never a static location, [but] it contains traces of its past and what it is to become” (Rutherford 24). Identity is “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 394). However, both Indar and Salim have taken their earlier adopted identities for granted, by which they gain a sense of coherent and unified selves. They are unwilling to admit and accept that their identities are not fixed and essentialized but always produced and changed in different historical and cultural contexts.

The appeal of essentialism to Salim and Indar is unquestionable because it offers

a secure sense of selves, which, however, does not suggest that the concept of essentialism is unproblematic. Essentialism refers to reducing complex social relations to absolute and fixed divisions, such as the polarities of white/black, men/women, and masters/slaves, where the first one is dominant and the latter, subordinate. It is within such oversimplified classificatory systems that Salim's and Indar's identities are formed. For example, Salim's superior relations with Africans and Africa, with Yvette, a Belgian lady, and with Metty, his slave, constitute his identities, from which they gain a sense of selfhood. But to construct one's identities within the oppositional structures implies a limit on the possibilities of the social mobility and change and hides the power structures that preserve the hierarchical relations of difference. The exclusion of those who are categorized as Africans, women, and slaves is attributed to their innate flaws, such as Africans' primitivism, women's inferiority, and slaves' servitude, which result in their failure to measure up to the pre-given norm, that is, a white male bourgeoisie. It is partly because both Salim and Indar have identified themselves with this norm and partly because they believe in the fixed and innate attributes of others that they take their superiority in relation to those marginalized groups for granted, which often obscures the mechanism of unequal power relations and historical forces.

The notion of difference is "integral to an understanding of the cultural construction of identities" (Woodward 35). The simplistic notion of identity mentioned above "reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes '*difference*'" (Hall, "Chapter Four," 258). Hall in his "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" points out,

[The second sense of difference] challenge[s] the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show[s] how meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other,

additional or supplementary meanings [. . .]. Without relations of difference, no representation could occur. But what is then constituted within representation is always open to being deferred, staggered, serialized. (“Cultural Identity” 397)

Hall emphasizes that only by the marking of difference can one’s identities be constructed. In other words, one’s identities are created in one’s relations to others. But it is noted that the “difference” Hall mentions about does not simply refer to the eternally fixed divisions between selves and others according to their respective innate attributes. Instead, Hall buttresses the notion of “positioning” instead of “essence”: “Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position [. . .]” (“Cultural Identity” 395). Identities are constituted in the networks of unequal power relations and kept floating and changing in the continuous process of one’s relations to others within the discourses of culture and history.

The second notion of “difference” pointed out by Hall explains the instability of Salim’s and Indar’s identities. Since the formation of their identities is not from within themselves but dependent on their relations with others, the selves are never unified but split. It is in relation to such people as Ferdinand, Yvette and Ali that Salim struggles to define himself. With the advent of the transformation of political order, Salim experiences the loss of his unitary self and endeavors to restore the hierarchical divisions of people according to race, gender, and class during the colonial period, by which his identities are constructed. I will discuss the tension between Salim’s longing for and belief in his essential identities and the historical processes which undermine such identities, and explore how he fights for the maintenance of his earlier adopted identities by means of his respective involvement with three people in the following passages.

(A) Salim's Relation to Africans

Ferdinand is the son of Zabeth, an African trader from a village along the river. Zabeth sends Ferdinand to the lycee to receive education and asks Salim to keep an eye on him. Salim believes that the reason why Zabeth chooses him to be a guardian of his son is that "I was a foreigner, and English-speaking as well, someone from whom Ferdinand could learn manners and the ways of the outside world" (*BR* 36). But Salim does not "imagine him [Ferdinand] having the respect for my shop that his mother had" (*BR* 36) since "[n]o one could think of it [Salim's shop] as a modern place" (*BR* 36). Salim considers his shop "a shambles" (*BR* 39) and describes those things he sells such as bolts of cloth, big enamel, basins, and so on, as "junk" (*BR* 40). The words suggest the dichotomy between modernity and underdevelopment Salim has born in mind. In his opinion, he should have been what Zabeth expects him to be a civilized man so as to guard Ferdinand but fails to do so because he feels that the shabby shop he owns prompts Ferdinand to think that he is not qualified to be his guide at all. As a result, Salim feels in pain: "It would be hard for him [Ferdinand] to see any great difference between my life and the life he knew. This added to my nighttime glooms. I wondered about the nature of my aspirations, the very supports of my existence; [. . .]" (*BR* 42). To differentiate Ferdinand from him according to the bipolar division between modernity and underdevelopment is very important to Salim because he can thus gain the assurance of himself. Incapable of "asserting this difference" and "exhibiting *my true self*" (*BR* 42; emphasis added), Salim "fell into the stupidity of exhibiting my [Salim's] things" (*BR* 42). He shows Ferdinand his binoculars, cameras, and particularly magazines. Salim finds,

[W]hile I read, that the particular science or field I was reading about was

the thing to which I should have given my days and nights, adding knowledge to knowledge, making discoveries, making something of myself, using all my faculties. It was a good feeling; from my point of view, it was as good as the life of knowledge itself. (*BR* 43)

From the things Salim exhibits, it is easy to perceive that Salim wants to define himself as part of “the white people” from the West when faced with Africans. Salim shows those things off to Ferdinand as if those things were invented by his ancestors. Salim’s efforts to prove to Ferdinand that he is comparable to the civilized white people from the West reveal that it is not his innate attributes but those things outside him with symbolic marking that constitute his identities. Books, magazines, and cameras here function as important signifiers, symbolically marked as European culture. With these possessions, Salim differentiates himself from Ferdinand and the rest of the Africans and associates himself with Europeans, asserting his superiority over blacks.

In spite of his attempt to claim the hierarchal division between him and Ferdinand, Ferdinand finally responds one day, “You don’t have to show me anything, Salim” (*BR* 43). Upon hearing his reply, Salim feels “rebuked by what he had said about not showing him things” (*BR* 43). He thinks that his method backfires, imagining,

I had shown Ferdinand my things as though I had been letting him into the deeper secrets of my existence, the true nature of my life below the insipidity of my days and nights. In fact, I—and all the others like me in our town, Asian, Belgian, Greek—were as far away from “they” [the scientists from the West] as he [Ferdinand] was. (*BR* 45)

Salim, though eager to be part of the European culture, does know that he can never

be viewed as those scientists who invent binoculars and cameras but rather resembles blacks. He feels that Ferdinand sees through him and knows that in spite of Salim's emphasis on his interest in European knowledge and on his possessions of European technology, he is nothing but an immigrant who was rid off his superiority he had enjoyed during the colonial period. What is worse, Salim, used to gain the upper hand in his relation to Africans, becomes the object represented by Ferdinand who acts as a subject. Salim finds out that Ferdinand in school boasts that he "was interested in the education and welfare of young Africans" (BR 54). As a result, many African students go to Salim's shop, asking him for money with lousy excuses. Salim is "amazed by the stupidity [on the part of Africans], then irritated, then unsettled" (BR 55). The reason for his being "unsettled" is that "[i]t was as if none of them cared about my reactions, as if somewhere out there in the town I had been given a special 'character,' and *what I thought of myself was of no importance*" (BR 55; emphasis added). Salim continues, "And I felt now that out of his lies and exaggerations, and the character he had given me, a web was being spun around me. I had become prey" (BR 55). The relationship between the subject and the object is never fixed but keeps changing within different historical and cultural contexts. Salim used to take up the racial identity he was positioned by the imperial discourse during the colonial period.² Committed to this subject position, Salim firmly believes that he is "essentially" dominant in relation to Africans. However, as a consequence of decolonization and independence in Africa, Salim not only suffers his inability to represent himself but also becomes subjected to Ferdinand's representation of him. The blurred division of

² Under the rule of the British Empire, those who settle in East Africa but are not of Britain are inscribed within the racial and gendered relations of "the colonial sandwich", with Europeans at the top, Asians in the middle, and Africans at the bottom" (Brah 1). Brah explains further, "To be the middle layer in the colonial sandwich meant that a substantial number of Asian households led a lifestyle that was comparatively more affluent than that of the overwhelming majority of Africans, and substantially less affluent than that of the Europeans" (31).

people into hierarchical groupings in terms of race worries Salim greatly.

His contradictory attitudes towards Africans are revealed by his attitude towards Ferdinand. Representing the new African man, Ferdinand has “his own importance, his own glamour” (*BR* 103), which Salim is jealousy of. However, at the same time, Salim feels, “It was absurd to be jealous of Ferdinand, who still after all went home to the bush” (*BR* 103). Though having never been to the bush, Salim gains the rough picture of it from the villagers who come to the town:

They looked exhausted and ragged [. . .], and wandering back to the food stalls: little oily heaps of fried flying ants [. . .]; hairy orange-coloured caterpillars with protuberant eyes wriggling in enamel basins; fat white grubs [. . .]. These were all forest foods [. . .]. (*BR* 66)

Salim indicates that even if Ferdinand develops a sense of self-importance and assumes the identity as a new African, he, after all, still belongs to the bush which is permanently invested with the qualities of the uncivilized. Thus, it is Salim’s pre-existing belief in Africa’s backwardness in essence that causes him to think that it is absurd to be jealousy of such a man as Ferdinand originally coming from the bush.

What Salim is really jealousy of Ferdinand is less the possibility that Ferdinand is going to race ahead of him in knowledge than Ferdinand’s optimistic attitude towards the place: “We lived on the same patch of earth; we looked at the same views. Yet to him the world was new and getting newer. For me that same world was drab, without possibilities” (*BR* 103). The bush is and will always be the bush; no matter how it is modernized, it eventually will return to its primitive condition. For example, in Salim’s opinion, the life in the bush is so backward that the attempt made by the previous owner of Salim’s flat, a Belgian lady, to “introduce a touch of Europe and home and art, another kind of life, to this land of rain and heat and big-leaved trees”

“was not of much value” (*BR* 42). The modern paintings leaning against the walls in her flat give her a sense of pride during the colonial period but become junk when the independence crisis comes because “the land of rain and heat and big-leaved trees” (*BR* 42) will sooner or later overrun the flat and make the paintings worthless against such an uncivilized setting.

The physical condition of Africa and “uncivilized” Africans keep Salim feeling frustrated. “The broken-down town” which is described by Salim as follows: “[T]he square with the bedraggled trees, the market stalls, the wandering villagers, the unpaved roads dusty in the sun or running red in the rain” (*BR* 184). Living in such circumstances, Salim feels “neutered” (*BR* 184). He intends to seek to prosper in the interior of Africa. However, instead of gaining what he wants, he feels “oppressed by the country, the forest and the waters and the remote peoples” (*BR* 125), suffering the gradual loss of power he enjoyed during the colonial period. He attributes his failure to fulfill his desire for power to the lifeless and uncivilized town, which used to be a European town, at the bend in the river and feels being castrated by the disappointing surroundings. Salim’s feeling of being castrated indicates the loss of his masculine self. Unable to achieve success in the public sphere of social life, Salim feels anxious because the recognition of the male as “real men” is based on the understanding of their accomplishments in the public sphere.

(B) Salim’s Relation to Women

To make up for the loss of his male identity and to release his feelings of impotence, frustration, and insecurity caused by his loss, Salim becomes involved with women. It is in his relation to them that Salim struggles to define himself and to restore his manhood. It is worth noting that the women Salim has sex with are not a

monolithic or homogeneous entity but are underpinned by class and racial differences and divisions. With their differential access to power, wealth, and privilege, women are hierarchically ranked in relation to one another. How the heterogeneous category of women has a great influence on Salim's claim for his manliness by his involvement respectively with the women such as African prostitutes and Yvette, a Belgian white, will be discussed in the following passages.

Salim goes to the bars of the town, having sex with African prostitutes. It seems that the sexual satisfactions Salim gains from having sex with African prostitutes can compensate for the loss of his masculinity. However, Salim's "[f]amiliarity of this kind with so many women had bred something like contempt for what they offered; and at the same time, *like many men who use brothels alone, I had grown to think of myself as feeble, critically disadvantaged*" (BR 174; emphasis added). Salim holds in contempt the sexual service African prostitutes offer because he is aware that they cannot really fulfill his desire but, on the contrary, degrade his dignity as a man and label him merely as a patron of brothels. His feelings of being feeble and disadvantaged are mainly brought about by his awareness that he is able to vent his fretfulness and anxiety on African prostitutes but can never restore his masculinity by having sexual intercourse with African prostitutes. His involvement with prostitutes can never be a way out but always keeps reminding him of his inability to engage in the public sphere, which pains him greatly.

It is not until Indar takes Salim to a party held in Raymond's house that Salim suddenly feels that his loss is fully compensated by "love" (BR 127), which he cannot obtain from bought women. At the party, Salim sees men and women dancing purely for pleasure, which he has never experienced before in brothels. He recalls,

All my adult life I had looked for release in the bars of the town. I knew

only women who had to be paid for. The other side of *the life of passion, of embraces freely given and received*, I knew nothing of, and had begun to consider alien, something not for me. And so *my satisfactions had only been brothel satisfactions, which hadn't been satisfactions at all*. I felt they had taken me further and further away from the true life of the senses and I feared they had made me incapable of that life. (BR 126-7; emphasis added)

Salim admits that the satisfactions he obtains from having sex with African prostitutes cannot really be considered the “real” satisfactions at all because he desires other kind of sexual relationships with women. Seeing women dancing with men, Salim describes, “such a sweetness was released in me that I felt I had recovered a part of myself I had lost” (BR 127); listening to the voice of the singer, Joan Baez, he believes, “[I] felt the deepest part of myself awakening, the part that knew loss, homesickness, grief, and longed for love” (BR 127). Having suffering “loss, homesickness, grief” after the withdrawal of the colonizers in Africa, Salim finds out that it is through mutual love that he is able to gain consolation, protection, and support, which he cannot obtain from his involvement with prostitutes. Salim thinks that in that room “we all lived beautifully and bravely with injustice and imminent death and consoled our selves with love. Even before the songs ended I felt I had found the kind of life I wanted; I never wanted to be ordinary again” (BR 129). Salim’s statements indicate that in this room he has rid himself of his past self as a brothel man and becomes a new man inspired by love.

Yvette, Raymond’s wife, is a white woman from Belgian, with whom Salim wants to develop the mutual love. However, I argue that Salim’s love for Yvette does not merely derive from his romantic and sexual feeling towards her but from his

desire for the loss of power, of his manhood, and of his superiority. The love Salim pursues is involved with the politics of gender and race and based on the mechanism of power relations working beneath specific situations constitute Salim's sexual and racial identities. It is from this perspective that I attempt to analyze Salim's complex relation with Yvette and vice versa.

Upon seeing Yvette at the party, Salim is immediately fascinated with her and later has an affair with her. In his erotic relationship with Yvette, he experiences satisfaction he has never known in his past physical experiences with prostitutes. His description of his sexual intercourse with Yvette discloses why he experiences such a great joy from it:

The wish that came to me—consuming the anxiety about letting myself down—was the wish to win the possessor of that body, the body which, because I wished to win its possessor, I saw as perfect, and wanted continuously, during the act itself, to see, holding myself in ways that enabled me to do so, avoiding crushing the body with my own, avoiding that obliteration of sight and touch. All my energy and mind were devoted to that new end of winning the person. All my satisfactions lay in that direction; and the sexual act became for me an extraordinary novelty, a new kind of fulfillment, continuously new. (*BR* 175)

From Salim's words, it is noted that what Salim gains from having sex with Yvette is not only the sexual satisfaction but, most important of all, the sense of his fulfillment of winning Yvette as well. The reason why Salim is devoted to conquering Yvette is that he considers Yvette perfect and worthy of winning. Significantly, what makes her perfect in Salim's eyes is less her physical perfection than her racial privileges.

Unwilling to recognize the impossibility of escaping his inferior race and eager to be

an equal of the white, Salim deludes himself into being affiliated to the white by such means as reading science magazines and showing off his possessions of cameras and binoculars. By doing so, he gains access to European culture and civilization.

Similarly, his sexual intercourse with Yvette is viewed as a way in which Salim finds himself equal, or even superior, to the white. With his affair with Yvette, Salim not only wins her but also vanquishes her husband, Raymond. Thus, to achieve his end, he becomes more and more aggressive in the process of his sexual intercourse with Yvette: “But as a means of winning, rather than the [allegedly] triumph, [which he gets from prostitutes], the present act required constant alertness [. . .]. It became a brute physical act, an act almost of labour; and as it developed it became full of deliberate brutality” (*BR* 175-6). The reason why Salim dates Yvette is not only that he loves her but also that he wants the racial privileges the white have enjoyed as well.

As the love affair progresses, Salim gradually discovers new dimensions of himself: “But I was altogether surprised by *my new self*, which was as far from the brothel man I had taken myself to be, with all his impulses to feebleness, as this act was from the brothel act of surrender, which was all I had so far known” (*BR* 176; emphasis added). From his comparison between his sexual relationship with African prostitutes and with the white woman, Yvette, I find it significant that Salim’s racial identity is cut across by gender affiliations. Having sex with Africans cannot satisfy him because they are racially inferior to him. They even cause Salim’s feeling of feebleness because they are bought women. As a great brothel man, he “doubted, after my brothel life, whether I could be a man in that way with any other woman. She [Yvette] gave me the idea of *my manliness* I had grown to need. Wasn’t my attachment to her an attachment to that idea?” (*BR* 202; emphasis added). The answer

to Salim's questions is positive. In contrast to those African prostitutes, Salim can not only gain his racial privileges but also his manhood in his erotic relationship with Yvette. His gradual development of the qualities of self can further be shown in the following passages: "And there was a further surprise. No fatigue, no drowsiness overcame me at the end. On the contrary. In that room with the window panes painted white, a white that now glowed with late afternoon light, in that heated room [. . .], I was full of energy. [. . .]. I felt refreshed, revitalized; my skin felt new [. . .]" (*BR* 176). His careful notice of the color of window panes is likely to suggest his desire to delude himself into being a white man. Feeling "blessed and remade" (*BR* 177), he rids himself of the past self with feebleness and of a sense of racial inferiority and becomes a privileged white man.

Salim, however, cannot solve his problem by his affair with Yvette once and for all but temporarily. The reason is that his new self is not a fixed and substantive essence, which, after he obtains it, will secure his sense of himself for good. Instead, his new self is constituted in his newly established relation with Yvette and is subject to constant fragmentation since the relationship between Salim and Yvette is tenuous and unstable. In other words, Salim's identity neither already exists nor transcends historical and cultural contexts; it, instead, is constructed by its inevitable dependence on Yvette within the conflicted and contested field. But Salim refuses to recognize that his masculinity is actually dependent on women such as African prostitutes and Yvette rather than autonomous. His refusal to admit that there is no such a pre-given masculine ideal he can discover and obtain but a constituted one with its dependency on women is illustrated in his remark on Mahesh's relationship with Shoba. Salim comments on Mahesh's relationship with Shoba:

But I thought of him as a man who had been stunted by his relationship

with Shoba [. . .]. He dressed for her, preserved his looks for her. I used to think that when Mahesh considered himself physically *he didn't compare himself with other men, or judge himself according to some masculine ideal*, but saw only the body that pleased Shoba. He saw himself as his woman saw him; and that was why, [. . .], I thought that his devotion to Shoba had made him *half a man, and ignoble*. (BR 196-7; emphasis added)

In Salim's opinion, the constitution of one's manhood should not be dependent on his relation with women but relies on his relation to other men or on "some masculine ideal" (BR 197). He believes in the clear division of men and women respectively categorized to the public and private spheres. Men can only gain his complete manhood by his success in the public sphere; the manhood he gets by means of his involvement with women in the private sphere cannot be counted as "real" manhood and makes him "ignoble" (BR 197). Salim is "locked into a male-centered mind-frame" (Marrouchi 196) when it comes to the constitution of one's manhood, in the process of which, women are presupposed as a necessary and natural foundation for one's manliness but are treated as an irrelevant and inferior category.

In spite of his harsh remark on Mahesh, Salim finds it surprising that his relation to Yvette resembles Mahesh's to Shoba. He confesses,

I never thought that it would take me in that way, that all my idea of my own worth would be bound up with the way a woman responded to me. But that was how it was. All my self-esteem came from being Yvette's lover, from serving her and pleasing her in the physical way I did. (BR 197)

Unwilling to admit that his masculine self cannot be obtained without women, he

concludes, "That was my pride. It was also my shame, to have reduced my manhood just to that" (*BR* 197). In addition to his refusal to admit that the constitution of his manhood is dependent on his sexual relation to Yvette as a woman, it should be noted that Salim's new self is also constructed in his racial relation to Yvette as a white. In short, Salim has been searching for the idealized self which he has identified with and taken it for granted since the colonial period: a white, bourgeois man on his own. However, in the process of his quest for the idealized self, Salim gradually finds out that his racial and sexual identities are not fixed but constructed in his relation to others, which makes him uncertain of who he really is. He is reluctant to admit that he is not absolutely superior and domineering but dependent on the white woman.

It is his inevitable need for and complete dependence on this relation to obtain his new self that leads to Salim's ambivalent and contradictory attitudes toward what he has obtained from Yvette. His dependency on Yvette torments him because his new self is always in a state of being threatened in such an unstable relation between him and Yvette. To keep his relation to Yvette stable and maintain his new self, Salim must gain Yvette's recognition. In other words, Yvette has to assume the role which can help Salim obtain his new self. It is through repetitive practices of the identity Yvette takes up that Salim is capable of maintaining his new self. But Salim is uncertain whether Yvette always repeats the same practices which consolidate Salim's newly established relation to Yvette. He is so afraid that he will lose his new self that he becomes terribly suspicious of Yvette's attitude towards him. Any incoherent performance on Yvette which exceeds the injunction or the demand to be Salim's "faithful" lover will threaten his new self. After their sexual intercourse, Yvette says to Salim, "This hasn't happened to me for years" (*BR* 176). Salim thinks, "That statement, if it was true, would have been a sufficient reward [. . .]. She was the

experienced one, I was the beginner” (*BR* 176). While obtaining the sense of fulfillment by satisfying Yvette’s need, Salim at the same time doubts whether Yvette’s words are true or not. Just before Yvette leaves his bedroom, “she stopped and kissed me briefly on the front of my trousers” (*BR* 176). Salim thinks, “That gesture, of kissing my trousers, which elsewhere I would have dismissed as a brothel courtesy, the gesture of an overtipped whore, *now moved me to sadness and doubt*. Was it mean? Was it true?” (*BR* 176-7; emphasis added). Still immersing himself in his satisfaction, Salim feels uneasy faced with Yvette’s gesture, which is easily associated with a brothel courtesy by such a brothel man as Salim. He poses the question and reveals his wilderness of her behavior; however, he perfectly understands what it means but is unwilling to admit it, which explains why it moves Salim to both “sadness and doubt” (*BR* 177). Salim’s observation that Yvette acts as if she were a bought woman indicates that Salim, above all, is nothing but an afflicted man, who needs prostitutes to compensate him for what he has lost. After having come a long way in transforming himself to such a new self, he suddenly feels that his efforts to win Yvette are in vain and his new self is destroyed. His intention to be recognized by Yvette and even to become an equal to the white is not repaid; what is worse, he feels that as a matter of fact, he is racially and sexually looked down upon by Yvette, who treats him as nothing but a brothel black.

His intermittent suspicion ends up in his attack on Yvette. One night, Yvette slips away from dinner to come to meet Salim, and Salim is thus moved to tears. Not until Yvette says to him, “I thought you might have been in your old haunts” (*BR* 218) does Salim turn angry suddenly because “I had heard from whores who thought they should pretend to be jealous in order to please. It blasted the movement” (*BR* 218-9). Salim responds, “Do you think I’m Raymond?” (*BR* 219) and then starts to hit and

kick her violently. After being mistreated by Salim, she lies on bed, asking Salim to have sex with her. Salim “held her legs apart [. . .] and then I spat on her between the legs until I had no more spit” (*BR* 220) and then hits her again. Obviously, Salim beats Yvette partly because her flippant words lead him to think that he is still treated as his previous self by her, the self who has to pay for pleasure and cannot be counted as a man.

However, Salim’s violent attitude towards Yvette grows out of something more complex than the foregoing reasons: Yvette serves as his other self, reminding him of his failure to make himself the idealized image. When Yvette was a student, Raymond, a historian of great eminence and the Big Man’s advisor, was invited to lecture at the university where Yvette studied. Overwhelmed by his attentions, she married Raymond and went to Africa with him, expecting a brand-new, better and exciting life waiting for her in the third world. However, unexpectedly, Yvette found out that Raymond gradually fell out of the Big Man’s favor and became very anxious, saying “My life is still fluid. I must do something. I just can’t stay here” (*BR* 189). Aware of Yvette’s dilemma, Salim comments on Yvette, “To Yvette, inexperienced, from Europe, and with her own ambitions, she must have glittered. She would have been misled by her ambitions, much as I had been by her setting, in which I had seen such glamour” (*BR* 182). Yvette’s illusion about Raymond is comparable to Salim’s illusion about Yvette. Salim’s amorous affair with her is partly based on Raymond’s position in Africa, “the Big Man’s white man” (*BR* 125). Introduced to the life in the new Domain and to Raymond and Yvette by Indar, Salim understands,

[I]t showed me how far away I, and people like me, were from the seat of power. Considering myself from that distance, I saw how small and vulnerable we were; and it didn’t seem quite real that, dressed as I was, I

should be strolling across the Domain after dinner to meet people in direct touch with the great [. . .]: I felt myself above it all, considering it from this new angle of the powerful. (*BR* 125)

Salim believes that by knowing both of them, he is one step closer to the center of power and thus is able to restore the loss of his idealized self. However, to his disappointment, he finds out that Raymond starts to lose his glamour because the Big Man, according to Yvette, “decided that he didn’t need him, that in the new direction he was taking the white man was an embarrassment to him in the capital” (*BR* 187). To implement the political policy of nationalism and nativism, the Big Man needs to rid himself of the white. Yvette continues, “The place is a one-man show, as you know” (*BR* 188). After realizing Raymond’s and Yvette’s circumstances, Salim says, “And failure like that wasn’t what I would have chosen to be entangled with. My wish for an adventure with Yvette was a wish to be taken up to the skies, to be removed from the life I had—the dullness, the pointless tension, ‘the situation of the country.’ *It wasn’t a wish to be involved with people as trapped as myself*” (*BR* 183; emphasis added). Salim’s regret for his decision suggests not only that he loves her in order to gain power and that he sees his unbearable self in Yvette. Yvette’s failure to obtain what she wants in Africa is so similar to Salim’s that she serves as a reminder of his vulnerable position in the world and that he sees her as his despicable self. Thus, he beats her as if he beat his unbearable self off.

It seems that as King asserts, “one of the major themes of his [Naipaul’s] novels is the way male impotence and insecurity turn into sadistic rage against women” (124). Apparently, Salim’s relation to women, either women in brothels or Yvette, reveals his male impotence. But I argue that Salim’s impotence and insecurity have to do with his own identity crisis. From my argument above, it is noted that Salim’s involvement

with Yvette and his violent attitude towards her are entangled with the complicated issues of race, gender, and power. From his affair with Yvette, he tries to gain political power, racial and sexual privileges so as to make himself an idealized self but fails. He believes that there is the substantive and privileged “I,” transcending historical processes. But as a matter of fact, there is no self that is prior to its involvement in and its relations to others.

(C) Salim’s Relation to Slaves

Salim’s identities should not be understood to have any stable existence, free from the discursive formation, but be conceived as tenuous construction dependent on the illimitable process of his relation to others. Since his identities are culturally constructed in his contingent relations to others, the identities Salim has regarded as the original, the authentic and the substantive are subject to destabilization for the sake of the instability of his established relations to others, which causes the identity crisis on Salim. His relation to his slave, Metty, serves as one of the best examples.

Metty, a slave of Salim’s family, goes to join Salim in the interior of Africa when his family is scattering due to an uprising on the coast. After his arrival in the interior, Metty is admired by African girls because he has the mixed-race heritage of Asia and Africa. Unlike Ferdinand, whose mixed parentage of different tribes incurs other Africans’ hostile attitude towards him and leads him to become an outcast who does not belong to any tribes, Metty does not arouse Africans’ hostility to him because he is not quite an African, and as a half-African boy, he becomes what the local girls want to pursue. Metty is not his real name. He is originally called Ali and renamed as Metty by the local people, which comes from “the French word *metis*, someone of mixed race” (*BR* 33). The heritage of Metty’s mixed race makes him popular among

the local women. As a consequence, Metty gradually sheds “the manners of the servant house” (*BR* 33), “[ceases] to be one of the boys from the servant houses” (*BR* 33), and “[learns] to assert himself” (*BR* 33). Metty’s development of the idea of his own worth after his arrival in the interior destabilizes the clear-cut division between master and slave. Salim has been indoctrinated with during the colonial period. Salim begins to be aware of Metty’s personal transformation and gradually finds out that his subject-position as Metty’s master is terribly threatened particularly after he learns a secret about Metty from an African girl. It is not until Salim discovers that Metty has secretly settled down and had his own family in Africa that Salim seriously suffers the loss of his identity as Metty’s master in the face of his unstable relation to Metty and feels himself floating and lost in this world where nothing feels settled. Salim learns that Metty has a baby from an African girl, who obviously is the baby’s mother, realizing, “Metty had a whole life out there, separate from his life with me [Salim] in the flat, separate from his bringing me coffee in the mornings, separate from the shop” (*BR* 105). The separation of Metty’s life from Salim’s implies that their master-slave relationship is not as solid as it was during the colonial period.

Unwilling to be confronted with the threat to his subject-position brought by Metty’s unusual action, which is not regarded as any of the regulating practices imposed on such identity category as a slave, Salim immerses himself in the past when they still lived on the coast. Nostalgic for their previously established relationship, Salim imagines, “If we had been living in our compound on the coast, he would have lived his own life, but there would have been no secret. I would have known who his woman was; I would have known when his baby was born” (*BR* 105). On the surface, Salim seems to be a benevolent master, who does not oppose Metty’s right to have a family life of his own. However, Metty, as a matter of fact, can only be

endowed with freedom on condition that he must keep Salim informed of everything he has done. As a slave, Metty is rid of his own privacy by Salim, who can thus gain the total control over Metty. From this perspective, Metty, though permitted to lead his own life, cannot be counted as a free individual with agency and that Salim is the one who has the absolute claim to the ownership of Metty, who is seen as his property. It is through his hierarchical relation to Metty that Salim assumes the subject-position as a master, which constitutes Salim's identity.

However, the seemingly stable, privileged and naturalized self as Metty's master is disrupted by Metty's decision not to disclose the secret to Salim. The reason is that by doing so, Metty shows that he is able to act on his own as if he were the master of his own instead of Salim. As Salim observes, "I've been noticing you since you've been here. You've been very much getting on *as though you're your own man*" (*BR* 107; emphasis added). Metty's behavior in the interior violates his usual repetitive practices on the coast, which, Salim believes, makes one a "proper" slave. Salim is aware that Metty begins to develop his own individuality, that he can not have full control of Metty, and that his earlier adopted subject-position as an absolute master of his slave is threatened.

To resolve his identity crisis, Salim must restore his earlier established relation to Metty. He attempts to persuade Metty to make an investment again in his subject-position as a slave. Salim's strong intention to maintain the master-slave power relationship can be illustrated with his reaction to Metty's concealment. After learning Metty's secret, Salim keeps reminding Metty that he treated him very well and took great care of him in the past when they were still on the coast: "You know, Metty, the first day you went to school, I went with you. You cried all the time. [. . .]. I just heard you bawling. I couldn't stand it. I thought they were doing terrible things to

you, and I begged for you not to go to school” (*BR* 106-7). Salim’s words reveal more than that he is a good master. Salim’s emphasis on how Metty was treated with great kindness in his early childhood is to induce Metty to make an investment again in this particular subject-position as a slave. In other words, Salim’s portrayal of himself as a good master, on the surface, seems to reinforce his feeling of being “shocked” and “betrayed” (*BR* 105) by Metty’s intentional concealment and to emphasize that he is disadvantaged and wronged by Metty. However, as a matter of fact, the purpose of his recall of his kind treatment to Metty is to persuade Metty to recognize and take up his identity position again as Salim’s slave.

The way Salim tries to maintain his identity and to keep his privileged subject-position is greatly influenced by Europeans’ attitude towards slaves. Salim describes,

The Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else; but at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being an intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their powers, they could express both sides of civilization; and they got both the slaves and the statues. (*BR* 17)

Europeans, according to Salim, though exploiting Africa and enslaving Africans, are still capable of earning themselves respect and admiration from those exploited.

Salim’s thought not only reveals his favor of Europeans’ wise attitude towards their slaves but also implies the importance of the role slaves play in such a hierarchical master-slave power relations. The reason why Europeans want statues put up to themselves by slaves is to assure themselves that their African slaves are willing to take up their subject-positions as slaves. Only by doing so, can their privileged relations to African slaves maintain stable and can they make sure that their adopted

identities as their masters will always remain intact as well. Their dependency on slaves to consolidate their identities discloses that the so-called naturalizing narratives of the master-slave relation are actually founded on a refusal of their need for the slaves' recognition. Europeans cannot assert their privileged subject-positions as masters without the recognition of African slaves. In other words, to make their relation to African slaves stable and fixed, Europeans must make sure that Africans fully identify with and take up this particular subject-positions as slaves.

Indoctrinated with Europeans' attitude towards slaves, Salim recalls the long history of slavery within Africa with the consistent and one-sided interpretation. I will quote three respective passages about Salim's consistent opinions about slavery from *BR* to disclose that the substantive "master" only appears as such through slaves' recognition, the workings of which are often concealed and naturalized. On his way to the interior, Salim cannot help thinking,

[T]hat was how it was in the old days with the slaves. They had made the same journey, but of course on foot and in the opposite direction, from the centre of the continent to the east coast. The further away they got from the centre and their tribal area, the less likely they were to cut loose from the caravans and run back home, the more nervous they became of the strange Africans they saw about them, until at the end, on the coast, they were no trouble at all, and were positively anxious to step into the boats and be taken to safe homes across the sea. (*BR* 4)

Instead of commenting on European injustice to Africans, Salim stresses that those masters do those Africans a great favor for accommodating them and keeping them from being hurt or slain by the Africans from other tribes. He makes a similar remark on his grandfather's shipping of a boatful of slaves as a cargo of rubber. Salim

describes,

To an African, a child of the forest, who had marched down hundreds of miles from the interior and was far from his village and tribe, the protection of a foreign family was preferable to being alone among strange and unfriendly Africans. This was one reason why the trade went on long after it had been outlawed by the European powers; and why, at the time when the Europeans were dealing in one kind of rubber, my grandfather could still occasionally deal in another. This was also the reason why a secret slavery continued on the coast until the other day. The slaves, or the people who might be considered slaves, wanted to remain as they were. (*BR* 12-3)

Salim justifies the slave trade his grandfather engaged in, attributing the continuous slave trade after it was forbidden to Africans themselves and firmly believing that people such as his grandfather are saviors of African slaves. With his consistent attitude towards slavery, Salim disagrees with Raymond's report on the European priests' plan for emancipating slaves by means of "buying slaves cheap from the caravans before they got to the depots on the coast" (*BR* 181). Salim considers Raymond's report too naïve, asserting that "the whole pious scheme was cruel and very ignorant, that to set a few unprotected people down in strange territory was to expose them to attack and kidnap and worse. But Raymond didn't seem to know" (*BR* 182). In short, Salim argues that when it comes to slavery, people such as the Arabians and his grandfather are protectors of Africans; without them, Africans could not survive in such hostile surroundings. Salim's belief in the portrayal of masters as saviors is parallel to that of Europeans who can thus win both slaves and statues. His consistent and one-sided interpretation of slavery within Africa discloses that the

seemingly seamless master-slave relationship is constituted and maintained only through slaves' recognition and through their social practices which regulate them as slaves.

With his consistent attitude towards slavery, Salim makes a similar remark on Metty's betrayal: "He[Metty] lost the brightness and gaiety of the servant who knows that he will be looked after, that others will decide for him; and he lost what went with that brightness [. . .]. Responsibility was new to him; [. . .]" (*BR* 108). On the one hand, Salim buttresses Metty's inevitable dependency on him. It is better for Metty to lead his life in the previously established master-slave relationship. On the other hand, Salim exposes his need for Metty's recognition of his subject-position as his master and for the personal investment Metty makes in his identity as Salim's slave. In other words, without slaves' continuous practices and their investment in the master-slave relationship, people such as Metty are unable to take up their subject-positions as slaves, which explains why Europeans' wants statues put up to them by slaves and why Salim keeps stressing how slaves can benefit from their masters. It is because the constitution of Salim's identity as a master requires Metty's recognition that Salim's identity can never be a fixed essence transcending history and culture but both Salim and Metty are repositioned in the master-slave power relation in relation to different points of reference.

In spite of his efforts to restore his earlier adopted identity constituted in relation to Metty, Salim thinks that Metty gradually abandons his previous subject-position as a slave and assumed other identities such as a father, a husband and an African. Salim believes that "he [Metty] had returned home; he had found his new life [. . .]. He had shed the past" (*BR* 107). Making "in reverse the journey which some of his ancestors had made a century or more before" (*BR* 31), Metty finally

returns to his “original” homeland and starts a new life of his own. In contrast, Salim feels in pain, thinking, “Nothing stands still. Everything changes [. . .]” (*BR* 107). The boundaries of master-slave power relationship between Salim and Metty is not always fixed but destabilized and kept re-sited within different contexts. Salim’s inability to keep the relation stable puts his earlier assumed identity as a master of Metty in jeopardy. The identity crisis he encounters in such circumstances leads to his homesickness: “I was homesick, had been homesick for months. But home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost” (*BR* 107). The home Salim misses greatly is associated less with his home in East Africa than with his imaginary and idealized homeland where the imperial order consolidates his superior relations to others, from which his identities are constructed. He reminisces of the good old days but “[t]hat way of life has gone” (*BR* 107). The identities he has adopted and taken for granted since the colonial period are no longer available to him, which makes him feel threatened and insecure.

(III) Conclusion

Salim’s quest for his “hidden” self reveals how discourses establish “I” and “Other.” Specific patterns of social relations during a specific period of (post-)colonial history construct Salim’s identities. With the advent of independence movements in Africa, which involve an extraordinary transformation, such social relations during the colonial period are subject to change, which also implies that his earlier established identities are threatened. To restore what he regards as “substantive” identities, he is involved with others, hoping that they will recognize and take up certain rule-regulated identities by means of continuous practices. Ferdinand, Yvette, and Metty have to repeat certain signifying acts so as to keep their hierarchical

relations to Salim. However, his dependency on others cannot guarantee repossession of his “lost” self since [t]he process of *repetition*” creates new possibilities which “contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms” (Butler 145). Hence, identity is neither singular nor fixed but is constantly changing. It is rather produced within the interrelationships between various forms of social differentiation in terms of race, gender, class and some other markers, embedded in unequal power relations. Salim’s efforts to maintain his “original” self are in vain.