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**Writing the Failure of Nation-state Building after
Decolonization: Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*
and V.S.Naipaul's *The Mimic Men***

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Dedications

.I dedicate this work to my parents Ameziane Meziane and Mouloudg Ouardia, who assisted me all along my studies.

To my Sisters Racha and Kenza, and my brother Nabil.

To my boyfriend Aghiles and his family.

To all my aunts and uncles and their children.

To my friends , Ouiza, Samira, Houria, Nadia, Sabrina, and Drifa

To Kamal with whom I shared this work.

To my supervisor Mr Mohammed Haddaddou and his family.

Hakima.

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Abstract

This study has presented nation-state building and national identity in two novels of post colonial societies: *A Man of The People* (1966) by Chinua Achebe and *The Mimic Men* (1967) by V S Naipaul. Our major interest has been to show the struggle of peoples of the Third World and the difficulties that faced them in their project of building their nation-state. To achieve our purpose, we have relied on three theorists: Benedict Anderson's notion of nationalism as explained in his book *Imagined Communities* (1983), Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry explained in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). We have attempted to show how the two works share the same attitudes toward nation-state building, and its disillusionment caused by political corruption, politician's incompetence and the people's loss of identity and their mimicry of their former colonizer.

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Introduction

This research paper is a comparative study of two postcolonial novels, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967), in terms of national identity and nation state building.

Beginning from the Age of Discoveries, the European powers like England, France, and Spain divided the world into different empires where they settled their trading posts. The aim of this trading settlement was to explore the natural and human sources of the third world countries. This settlement in such powerless nations has taken a very long time. As a result, the colonized nations could not find a correct way to rule themselves after their independence. The reconstruction of these colonized was a difficult task for them since they have been ruled by foreigners for many centuries. The effect of colonization lasted even after the independence because the objective of the colonizer was to suppress the identity and the social values of the colonizer.

After the independence, the colonized nations hoped to find a way to build nation states and revive their national identity to avoid the disorder which resulted from years of colonization. This issue is still a serious problem because the effects of colonialism create an impression which is based on the inferiority of the colonized and the superiority of the colonizer. The disorder that takes place in the newly independent states resulted from those who revere their former master. Because the feeling of inferiority was rooted in his mind, the colonizer fell most of the time in the trap of mimicry .

The disorder of the postcolonial societies pushed writers to write such themes in postcolonial literature. Several writers and intellectuals from different parts of the world wrote about the effects of colonialism on the colonized countries.

Chinua Achebe and Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul are just two among many others who have used their writings to share with the whole world the pains that the newly independent states faced to reconstruct themselves. The two authors tried to give vivid images of the post colonial societies to which they belong. The delicate situation of their countries pushed them to write such novels. The two chosen novels deal exactly with the disillusionment that followed the independence in the third world countries.

The two novels discuss the same theme which is the failure of the nation state building in the post independent states. The two authors dealt with this theme in spite of their different geographical areas and different cultures. In addition, their relations to their countries are not the same. Achebe's ancestors are Nigerian and he was born there, so he wrote about his country of origins, whereas Naipaul's ancestors were Indian immigrant to Trinidad. So, Naipaul wrote of his country of adoption. Both authors found themselves lost in societies where there were neither national values nor cultural customs that define their identity.

Review of Literature

Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, have received a large amount of criticism from different scholars. Concerning *A Man of the People*, Wole Ogundele has dealt with *A Man of the People* through a political perspective in his book *Reading Achebe's Politics in A Man of the People*. He said

Achebe himself has constantly reminded readers to see his work against the background of the African history.¹

In this book Ogundele told that Achebe has written his book for political reasons in order to denounce the corrupt governments that have ruled African countries after decolonization. As a writer, Achebe has expressed his opposition against the politics of Africa.

Another work that has discussed the novel is Emenyonu *Emerging Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*. In this book, Ernest Emenyonu has dealt with the novel from the political point as the first critic. He asserted,

Achebe in *A Man of the People* presents a pessimistic picture of the unenviable predicament of the Nigerian politicians of the first republic who fell from power to imprisonment and even death.²

Emenyonu has stated that the objective of Achebe in writing the novel is to express his disappointment about the postcolonial politicians who rule Nigeria. He has also described the delicate situation that Nigeria has suffered from for many years, because of disorder and corruption.

One more research about the novel in this review is M. Keith Booker's *The Chinua Achebe Encyclopedia*, in which the critic dealt with the political and literary aspects of the novel. He has related the novel with the political circumstance of Nigeria. He stated:

A Man of the People is a political satire that obviously comments on the postcolonial political situation in Nigeria.³

Booker has worked on the book and linked it to Nigeria during the writing of the novel, *A Man of the People*, and even the civil war that followed two years later on. As

On the other hand, different studies have been made on V.S Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*. Among them, Champa Rao Mohan's *Postcolonial Situation in the Novels of V.S. Naipaul* (2004). In this book, the author has made a relation between the real life of Naipaul and the life of the main character in the novel. Mohan wrote:

Singh's conclusions about Isabella are strikingly similar to those arrived at by Naipaul in *Passage*.⁴

He has compared what Singh experiences in the novel with what Naipaul undergoes in his personal life. At the end he has come to conclude that the novel represents Naipaul's

autobiography. Another work that has been made concerning the novel is *Nationalism and Identity* (1996) by Stefano Harney. He asserted:

The work of V.S. Naipaul stands both at the centre and the periphery of this book, as Naipaul himself is always at the centre and the edge of West Indian literature and national consciousness.⁵

Harney has considered Naipaul and his work, *The Mimic Men*, as a representation the west Indian national identity. According to him, Naipaul has profoundly touched the topic of identity in his novel. One more study about *The Mimic Men* is Gillian Dooley's *V.S. Naipaul, Man and Writing* (2006). Dooley has dealt with the book from the literary, cultural and historical perspectives. He said:

The narrator in *The Mimic Men* is unlike many narrators in modern fiction. Many first person narrators are obviously unreliable...⁶

This study has analysed different aspects including the narration of the novel, the colonization of the India and the marriage of Ralph Singh with Sandra and many other things.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

The above review of literature shows that the two novels have received a large amount of criticism. Both authors wrote their works about the lack of national unity and identity in newly independent states. They showed their ideas throughout the main characters. However, in spite of the similarity in the theme dealt with in the two novels, the two works have never been brought together as far as we know. The question we want to answer through this dissertation is why do two authors, originating from different geographical backgrounds, write about the same theme?

Our contention is that most third world postcolonial countries, be they African or West Indian, faced the same disillusionment caused by the failure of the political regimes

established after independence. And both authors belong to postcolonial societies that were colonized by the English.

To show this, we will rely on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and Frantz Fanon's essay, "The Pitfall of the National Consciousness", in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*. We will also appeal to Bhabha's concept of 'Mimicry' as developed in his book *The Location of culture*.

Following the IMRAD structure we have divided our dissertation into five sections. The Introduction introduces the topic, reviews the literature and states the issue and the working hypothesis. The Method and Materials section presents briefly the theories used in our argument then provides the biographies of the two authors and the summaries of the two novels. The results section enumerates the findings after the analysis of the two works. The discussion section is divided into two chapters. The first deals with the failure of the nation-state building and the nationalist dream in the two literary works *A Man of the People* and *The Mimic Men*. The second discusses the way the two writers dealt with the theme of mimicry in relation to the main characters of the novels. Finally the conclusion restates our main findings and suggests further research.

Method and Materials:

a)-Method:

Benedict Anderson is a political scientist and historian who one of the most important figures that worked about the idea of nationalism in third world nations. In his book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983),⁷ Anderson considers the national community as imagined because its citizens cannot identify each other. However, they built relationships between them through the desire to have a link with others. They just imagine themselves to be in the same community with other people who can speak the same language, follow the same ideology.⁸ Anderson relates the term 'nation' to many elements such as: religion, language and traditions. These three elements together create what Anderson calls an imagined nation. This imagined nation is a body of people that share similar values and history. It is according to the values that Anderson states in his book that people bear in mind their belong to the same community or they share the same national identity.⁹

The second theory is Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* in which he goes very far with the analysis of the national identity and the term of mimicry. Homi K. Bhabha is a professor of English who gave very important ideas to the contemporary postcolonial studies.¹⁰ In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man", Bhabha deals with the concept of mimicry. At first, he considers mimicry as a result of colonialism. It results from the desire of the colonizer to make the colonized like him. This means that mimicry does not produce a real Englishman, but it creates only a mimic man who is anglicized.¹¹

Concerning the postcolonial era, the feeling of inferiority leads the colonized to imitate the attitudes and the behavior of the master. This imitation suppresses their original identity which unifies their nation. Mimicry leads the colored man to resemble the white man,

but he cannot be a white man. After falling in the state of disillusionment, the mimic man becomes lost between two worlds. On the one hand, he cannot be a white man, on the other, he finds himself excluded from his own society. In general, mimicry is used by the colonized to prove that they can be civilized and organized like the colonizer.¹²

The third theory is Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in the third chapter "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness". In this chapter, Fanon discusses the different social classes that form a nation after the decolonization of the country. The problem in such societies is that the nation does not find the harmony that it needs after the independence. The powerful classes seek for more power in order to oppress the weaker ones. These classes are just representing another form of colonialism after the expelling of the real colonizer.¹³

In this chapter, Fanon states that the national bourgeoisie that took the power after the independence works for its own interests. It makes some national systems that can serve its wealth. Their lack of economic power leads them to appeal to the former master and the foreign capitalists. The leader of the colonized nation promises people independence and political liberty, but after the independence he uncovers his real purpose. He shares the wealth of the nation with the national bourgeoisie.¹⁴

B)Materials:

The biographies of the authors

1) Biography of Chinua Achebe:

Achebe is a Nigerian writer born in 1930, the son of an instructor for the church. When he was young, Nigeria was a British colony this why he received an English education. His father named him Albert, but he prefers his Igbo name "Chinua" when he was in college. He did very well in his study as a result; he attended one of the best schools in the west

Africa. In 1958, he went to London where he published one of his most known novels *Things Fall Apart*. His works are known to deal with problems of society or in other words he writes for a purpose. He writes to denounce the issues of the African society and in particular Nigeria. He blames the leaders of his mother country for their lack of national consciousness and lack of a sense of leadership.¹⁵

Through his writings he deserves the name “the father of the African writing” because of his participated in the development of the African literature. He defended the African life and culture against the west and other writers who considers the African civilization as savage and primitive. His book *Things Fall Apart* is considered as a canon of the African literature. He earned several awarded degrees from different universities of the world. In 2007, he became the winner of the “Man Booker International Prize”.¹⁶

2) Biography of V.S. Naipaul:

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is Trinidadian writer born in Trinidad in 1932. His family was from India they served as indentured servants in Trinidad. His writing aspiration began when he was young because of the career of his father who is an-English language journalist. His goodness in his study led him to earn a Trinidad government scholarship, so he left the country to study in England. In London, he published his first novel, *The Mystic Masseur*, in 1957. He is a Nobel prize winner in Britain for his works which speak about the disappointment of the immigrants in foreign countries. His wife Hale whom he met in England, encouraged him in his writing after he was unsuccessful in his beginning. Both Naipaul and his wife graduated from the University of Oxford. He won the Man Booker International Prize in 1971 and the Nobel Prize of Literature in 2001.¹⁷

He wrote his novel *The Mimic Men*, in 1967 to complain about his alienation from the society where he found himself lost without any hope to find his belonging whether to England or to Trinidad.

The Summaries of the novels

1) The Summary of *A Man of the People*:

A Man of the People is a novel which is written by Chinua Achebe in 1966. The story happens in an unknown postcolonial African country. It is narrated by the main character named Odili. The country is ruled by corrupt politicians including the former teacher of Odili named Chief Nanga. One day, they meet each other and Chief Nanga invites Odili to spend some days in his house. And Odili accepts his invitation and goes to the house of the minister of culture. During his stay in the house of Chief Nanga, a personal problem sets off between Odili and Nanga. It is because of this problem that the main character involves in politics to take his revenge from his former teacher. He creates a new political party which seeks to replace the current government. Odili is opposed to Chief Nanga and wants to take his position. During the running of the campaign, Odili tries to demonstrate to people that the current politicians are just layers who think only about exploiting the wealth of the country. In doing his campaign, Odili is threatened and his village is punished because of the deeds of Odili. When Odili attends the event of Chief Nanga, He is beaten savagely until he is taken to hospital. Nanga's party wins the elections, but without any hope because the military removes the government from power by force.¹⁸

2) Summary of *The Mimic Men*:

The Mimic Men is a novel which is written by V.S. Naipaul in 1967. The story turns around Ralph Singh, a man who is born in Isabella which a part of the British Empire. This

story is based on Singh's memoir when he finds himself exiled to England. Singh begins by narrating his childhood in Isabella in which he speaks about his family and his years at school where he received a colonial education. He learns English the language of their colonizer this leads to many events that shows the influence of the education on Singh. When he becomes an adult he involves into politics to guarantee a better life for his Island. He travelled to England to ask for complete independence of the different institutions Of Isabella. He failed in his mission, and unfortunately he becomes removed from politics and exiled from Isabella as well. He fails in his political career and he loses his mother country. He finds himself exiled to London where he dreams of India the land of his ancestors.¹⁹ At the end of the novel, Singh discovers that he belongs to nowhere.

Results:

Our reading of Chinua Achebe's *A Man of The People*, and V S Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* has shown that the two novels share several affinities despite the fact that the two authors are from two different continents, and faced the same disillusionment with the task of nation-state building. In fact, both novels deal with people's struggles and difficulties facing them in their task of nation-state building.

In fact, each of the main characters of the two novels suffer from the postcolonial political crisis. Both of them try to do anything to avoid this problem. They experience the hypocrisy of the societies where they live. In addition, they work to try to reconstruct their countries values and identities.

We deduce that the two novels discuss the failure of the nationalist dream caused by political corruption in the newly independent states whether African or west Indian countries, and colonial presence in every aspect of people's life manifested in the concept of mimicry where people of such societies become mimic Men and unable to set themselves with their original identity.

Moreover, we come to find that the aim of the two stories resembles to each other since they deal with the same themes.

IV- Discussion

Chapter One: the Failure of Nation State building and the Nationalist Dream.

After having achieved political independence, the nationalist movements in the formerly colonized societies have faced another challenge which is nation state building. Thus this chapter of our dissertation tackles the theme of nationalist dream and the struggle for nation building. We will discuss the socio political climate of the Nigerian and Caribbean societies in order to show the failure of nation building in such societies, relying on Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined Communities.

The Nationalist Dream in: Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966).

Before the British colonialism, we cannot speak of Nigeria as a nation, but rather about a group of tribes in West Africa that were in conflict with each other²⁰. After independence Nigerian people has looked for ways to unify themselves under one national state that is Nigeria, and engaged in the task of nation state building. Anderson believes that the shared beliefs between the members of a nation such as traditions, language and values enable people to belong to a specific group. It is these beliefs that made the dream of nation state building possible.²¹ he says "*nationality, or as one might prefer to put it in view of that world's multiple signification, nation-ness, as well as nationalism are cultural artifacts of a particular kind*"²². So, what makes the task of building a nation possible mostly is the shared cultural elements; it means that the first step is establishing the cultural identity then moving to political identity.

Chinua Achebe in *A Man of the People* has shown how his people failed in creating a national state and in unifying the different ethnic groups of their country because of political corruption and different ambitions of Nigerian people. He has portrayed the political conflict

between old politicians and the new generation of intellectuals and detailed the struggle of the Nigerian society against the state of confusion and disorder that followed independence, and finally has shown how violence and corruption has led to the collapse of the Nationalist dream with the military coup of 1966.²³

After reaching their independence, Nigerian people have expected from their political elite to build a nation-state and identify themselves with one national identity. To reach their aim, they have began by establishing a government no matter who would assume this task; the matter is who could satisfy their needs. Anderson believes that the nation precedes the state; it exists first as narrative²⁴. However in the case of Nigeria, as many post colonial countries the state is formed first by British colonialism that has not taken into consideration the matter of cultural or ethnical differences, but has looked only for economic interests. Therefore after independence, people have carried this philosophy, and accepted their state as it is formed by their colonizer and set themselves to the task of building a nation and reinforcing national identity.²⁵

Anderson believes that:

The arrival of nationalism in a distinctively modern sense was tied to the political baptism of the lower classes, although sometimes hostile to democracy, nationalist movements have been invariably populist in outlook a sought to induct lower classes into political life. In its most typical version, this assumed the shape of a rustler middle class and intellectual leadership, trying to sit up and channel popular class energies into support for the new states.²⁶

Here, Anderson believes that in modern time nationalism is identified with lower classes, who participate in political life of their countries through the support of nationalist movements. These nationalist movements are led by intellectuals who have succeed to gain their force from the mass of the people and believed that the advance of their new state cannot be run only by political elite but also with the support of the mass. In the case of Nigeria old

nationalist movements or the political elite who took the responsibility of ruling their country have not considered the mass as the source of power but as their subjects who are remembered only in election period. This is precisely the main criticism contrasted to them by the new generation of intellectuals for whom, at least outwardly, the masses should be the source of government.

The protagonist of the novel, Odili, the young teacher, represents the young generation and the hope of their expectations. He is surprised when he discovers the reality of his country's government and that of the greedy politicians who were interested only in their personal gains instead of helping their people. As a result he decided to enter the political ground to improve his people's lives and established the Common People's Convention. Odili says:

Max and some of his friends having watched with deepening disillusion the case to which our hard won freedom was being put by corrupt, mediocre politicians and decided to come together and launch the c Common People's Convention.²⁷

Odili enters politics as a way to show his political consciousness and his disagreement with the acts of the ruling party. He believes that he and his followers will offer the real sense of political leadership that imposes morality and fights the corrupt practices of Nanga's party. He says *"I would have thought it was better to start our new party clean, with a different kind of philosophy"*²⁸. For this reason problems and competition started with his former teacher Chief Nanga who used his popularity as a politician and the blind support of his people for him to make people against Odili and his party, and shift the conflict from a personal conflict and make it a national matter where the political elite impose their dominance and causes people to fear about their country's future if another force dominate politics and takes power. After a long time Odili and chief Nanga met again, but this time, Odili could not see that handsome good and respectful teacher, instead he saw the greedy chief Nanga who takes

profit from everything and looks only to increase his wealth and power; so Odili wants his people to see the truth of their minister. He says:

I wished for a miracle, for a voice of thunder, to hush this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths. But of course it would be quite useless. They were not only ignorant but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you... as my father did if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth.²⁹

It was this evil side of chief Nanga that pushes Odili to run against his government, and tries to convince the mass of people that when unworthy people take politics, national state disappears.³⁰ The old nationalist leaders failed in the task of nation state building and nationalist dream because national identity is just a tool to reach their aim that is wealth and women. When Odili told the story of Elsei and Nanga, Max says: *“That’s all they care for’ he said with a solemn face. Women, cars, landed property, but what else can you expect when intelligent people leave politics to illiterates like chief Nanga?”*³¹. So Odili and his friends try to convince the mass with the idea that the failure of national dream that is caused by corruption is the result of leaving politics to incompetent politicians. Accordingly, he assumed a new responsibility in order to help his community and fights illegal practices of the political elite.

Unlike Odili; Chief Nanga the minister of culture is portrayed as being greedier and selfish. He is the representative of the older generation of politicians which replaced the colonizer in the sense that his politics is a copy of that of English administrator. At the surface he is working not only for his people, but also fighting the European style of living supposedly adopted by the new generation of intellectuals. He says:

From today we must watch and guard our hard won freedom jealously. Never again must we entrust our destiny and the destiny of Africa to the hybrid class of

western educated and snobbish intellectuals who will not hesitate to sell their mothers for a mess of pottage...³²

Chief Nanga knows very well that all what is European or has a relation with the colonizer is not welcomed in his country, for this reason he associates the young generation of intellectuals with western education and culture. In addition he tries to extend his political conflict with the new generation, and make of it a national issue. He portrays those who are against him as being not only his enemies but the enemies of their nation. The ruling party he represents does not accept the opposition expressed by the young intellectuals, so they plot against them and consider their opposition as a betrayal of the task of nation state building. In order to suppress this opposition, Chief Nanga uses every possible means: he arrests Odili's father, bribes Max and kills him later on, and finally tries to bribe Odili in front of the mass of the people gathering to listen to his campaign speech. Addressing Odili, he says:

My private secretary has BA from oxford, he said he should have come with me on this tour but I had some office work for him to do. By the way, Odili, I think you are wasting your talent here. I want you to come to the capital and take up a strategic post in the civil service. We should not leave everything to the highland tribes. My secretary is from there; our people must press for their fair share of the national cake.³³

This passage shows that chief Nanga tries to corrupt Odili in the sense that they are both from the same tribe and why not working together to get their tribe's share of the national cake, this act is an effort by Nanga to get rid of the opposition and to continue his practices. He is the side that replaced colonial power and his acts and ambitions prove that his sayings are just slogans. On the one hand, he promises his people to fight corruption but he himself uses corruption to ensure winning elections every year. He is only interested in gaining more support, instead of using public money to build schools and hospitals; he builds four story buildings to increase his wealth. He lives in a luxury, Odili is surprised when he sees Nanga's home:

I was simply hypnotized by the luxury for the great suite assigned to me, when I lay down in the double bed that seemed to ride on a cushion of air, and switched on that reading lamp and saw all the beautiful furniture anew from the lying down position and looked beyond the door to the gleaming bathroom and the towels as large as a lappa.³⁴

Anderson believes that “*kingship organizes everything around a high centre. Its legitimacy derives from divinity, not from population, who, after all, are subjects not citizens*”.³⁵ In the case of a new independent state like Nigeria, rulers consider their nation as their own property. The population is considered not as citizens but as subjects that have not the right to participate in decision making.

When the government faced a financial crisis, Nanga and his officials refused the plan proposed by the minister of finance, even though he found a solution but the government at that time feared to lose elections; and tried to shut him in order not to spread his solution.

Although Dr Makinde read his speech, which was clearly prepared, the Hansard later carried a garbled version which made no sense at all. It said not a word about the plan to mint fifteen million pounds...which was perhaps to be expected but why put into Dr Makinde's mouth words that he could not have spoken?³⁶

This passage shows that all what interests chief Nanga is not his nation and the way to develop it but rather staying in power. He does everything to eliminate the initiatives that may prevent him from reaching his aim of staying in the government.

In addition his illegal practice, Chief Nang is portrayed in the novel as being an incompetent politician. He rose from the position of a teacher to that of a minister of culture. Odili says: “*Nanga must have gone into politics soon afterwards and then won a seat in parliament [it was easy in those days before we knew its cash price]*.”³⁷

Chief Nanga and many other politicians who assumed power did not get their positions thanks to competence to run their country; but out of political expediency after the independence. We

can say that they filled the gap that was left by the colonizer; therefore they carried out its acts. Chief Nanga as a minister of culture knows very little about his own culture; furthermore he is not interested in advancing his culture. This is shown when he says about his children *they would become English people. "Don't you see they hardly speak our language? Ask them something and they reply in English."*³⁸ Normally a minister of culture would teach his children their native language not the foreign one. Odili is surprised when the minister of culture did not know the writer's name. He says:

I had expected that in a country where writers were so few they would all be known personally to the minister of culture. But it was clear chief Nanga hadn't even heard the man's name before.³⁹

Odili's hope collapsed when confronted to the reality of Nigeria. he discovers that the problem within his nation does not reside only in the political elite but is also present among his community. Anderson argues that *"even in the case of colonized people, who have every reason to feel hatred for their imperialist rulers, it is astonishing how insignificant the element of hatred is in this expression of national feeling"*.⁴⁰ People knew that their politicians engage in all sort of illegal practices such as corruption, but they do nothing to stop them, instead they wish to get a share of the money gathered by those politicians, for this reason they do not show any opposition or reaction against these practices. The policeman says:

We know they are eating. He said; but we are eating too. They are bringing us water and they promise to bring us electricity. We did not have those things before that, that is why I say we are eating too.⁴¹

The above passage shows that by realizing some projects as bringing water and electricity, people are convinced that they are also eating. Their aim is taking profit without taking into consideration how these projects are realized. When the expert advises Chief Nanga to wait dry season in order to realize the road, Nanga reacts in a negative way and refuses. He says:

And who is the expert? One small boy from his town... whom we all helped to promote last year, now the boy advises him that my road should not be tarred before next dry season because he wants to carry out tests in the soil. He has become an earth worm.... Have you ever heard of such a thing? Is this the first road we are tarring in this country? .⁴²

In order to show to his people that he is doing many things to help them; Chief Nanga wants to realize the projects in a short time without taking into consideration the warnings of his experts, Even those people found in their officials their way to share the national cake. Odili says:

I could not say I blame my village people for recoiling from the role of sacrificial ram. Why should they lose their chance of getting good, clean water, their share of the national cake?⁴³

The mass of the people consider Nanga as being their man who may bring them their share of the national cake, and the one who defends and protects their traditions⁴⁴ ignoring that behind his promises chief Nanga aims to ensure his victory in the upcoming elections. Odili argues:

Chief Nanga was a born politician, he could get away with almost anything he said or did, and as long as men are swayed by their hearts and stomachs and not their heads the chief Nanga's of this world will continue to get away with anything. ⁴⁵

The above passage shows that people support their chief without using their heads to question his deeds or search to find where all public money is going. They are portrayed as being blind because they believe that a corrupt government would improve their nation and their lives. For Anderson, "*a nation is a socially constructed community imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group*"⁴⁶. However in the novel, people dream about building their nation, but this dream is far from being realized because their politicians do not work in this way but they want only to take profit from public money. But the matter is not only with political elite, also is spread within Nigerian community because at the surface they

want to be unified under one nation state and one national identity, but they prefer their personal interests rather than national ones.

One example of people's greed is Odili's father, he pushes him to insure getting a seat in government not for the sake of national interest, but get their share from the wealth, Odili says:

He would tell me that I already had more than enough education, that all the important people in the country today...ministers, businessmen, members of parliament, etc..., did not have half my education. He would tell me for the hundredth time to leave this foolish teaching, and look for a decent job in the government and buy myself a car.⁴⁷

It was until Odili's involvement in politics that his father could be satisfied; *"but he was clearly satisfied with what I had got out of it so far, especially the car which he was now using nearly as much as myself"*⁴⁸

Max is another figure with whom Odili was disappointed; he and other members of the CPC accepted bribes offered by chief Koko:

Chief Koko offered me one thousand pounds, he continued placidly. I consulted the other boys and we decided to accept it paid for that minibus....⁴⁹

While listening to his political speech, Odili is surprised when Max says that it is their turn to win election in order to improve life in their village; and Odili thought that it was needless to make such affirmation. People were satisfied by Max's words, their position about this is apparent when one villager put it clear by saying: *"that word entered my ear. The village of Anata has already eaten, now they must make way for us to reach the plate. No man in Unua will give his paper to a stranger when his own son needs it"*⁵⁰. This short passage shows that

people decided to vote for Odili's party not for the program they propose or for their political competence but for their personal advancement.

For Anderson "*the nation is imagined as a community thanks to the shared feeling of fraternity among members of a society who consider themselves as being attached and unified*"⁵¹ But in the novel, it is far from being the case. The mass of the people are separated from their officials, or better said it is not the shared feeling of fraternity that unified people and their political elite, but it is the fact of taking profit; so nation state building disappeared because it is an artificial goal for the mass and their political figures. It was until the end when the government was thrown by the military coup that people realized how terrible the former government was, despite their support for the same elected officials when they were in power.

As a conclusion, we can argue that the novel has clearly shown that nation building and the nationalist dream failed in Nigeria because of the gap existed between the mass of the people and their politicians. It is confronted with illegal practices such as corruption and bribery. Through our analysis we come to find that Nigeria as a newly independent state has fallen into another form of colonialism that comes out of the same nation and that the only way to overthrow this neocolonialism is by a military cup.

b- The Nationalist Dream in V S Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967).

The building of a nation is established through the existence of cultural icons such as language and traditions. These icons contribute to building up a nation, and its preservation manifests the issue of nationalism among the citizen of that nation"⁵². Anderson highlights the importance of culture to spread the feeling of nationalism in a particular nation, he says "*what I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which- as well as against- which it came into being*".⁵³ He believes that nationalism did not

emerge from the political discourse but from the specific shared cultural systems among people of a given nation.

V S Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* deals with construction of identity in post colonial period, and sheds light upon the difficulties facing Caribbean people in building up their nation- state such as the bad effects of colonialism on their political, social, and economic life, and the fact of being from different origins and ethnic groups on the island.

Ralph Singh sets himself to the task of re-establishing his national identity and reaching a state of order. Anderson believes that:

The nation is imagined as sovereign due to the emergence of wars that caused the collapse of the nation's hierarchical system, this collapse led to the emergence of the self governing state as the reinforcement of the feeling of nationalism among its people. In fact, the nationalist's major aim was to reestablish the order in their communities.⁵⁴

To reach his aim, Singh begins with identifying himself with one homeland, because home is associated with identity⁵⁵. So after feeling lost in his land Isabella, he understands that Isabella is not an appropriate place which can be his home, so he decided to move to London with the hope that it would be the right place where he may fulfill his ambitions. He says:

Coming to London, the great city, seeking order, seeking the flowering, the extension of myself that ought to have come in a city of such miraculous light, I had tried to hasten a process which had seemed elusive. I had tried to give myself a personality.⁵⁶

This quotation shows that Ralph Singh tries to connect himself with London, the city of order where he can establish a clear vision about himself and his own community and reaches Order. Unfortunately he could not do so; he comes to discover that even in London he cannot feel at ease because that great city despite all its developments cannot offer a notion of home that he is in search for. As it is very different from his land he as those who immigrated to it

could not be part of English society, they were lost in this foreign land and their feeling of disassociation grows more and more. He says:

In the great city, so three dimensional, so rooted in its soil, drawing color from such depths, only the city was real. Those of us who came to it lost some of our solidity; we were trapped into fixed, flat postures. And in this growing disassociation between ourselves and the city in which we walked scores of separate meetings, not linked even by ourselves, who became nothing more than perceives, everyone reduced reciprocally to a secession of such meeting, so that first experience and then the personality divided bewilderingly into compartments.⁵⁷

The failure of Singh's attempt in finding his real identity in London pushes him to go back to his Island Isabella, where he may get another chance to identify himself. He tries to reconsider his past and accepts it, for example he reads books on Asiatic and Persian Aryans, and dreams of horsemen who look for their leader.

China was the subject of Hok's secret reading. Mine was of Rajputs Aryans, stories of knight's horsemen and wanderers. I had even read Tod's difficult volumes. I had read of the homeland of the Asiatic and Persian Aryans, which some put as far away as the North Pole. And I would dream that all over the central Asian plains of horsemen looked for their leader.⁵⁸

This quotation shows that Singh is proud of his past, and this fact makes him aware about how terrible is his actual life on the island, it was his conscious of his reality that encouraged him to deal seriously with disorder and alienation either by being a politician or by writing his memoirs. He says "*once a man is stripped of his dignities he is required not to die or to run away, but to find his level*"⁵⁹

To reach his political identity and get away from his problems, Singh enters politics under his friend's Browne motivation and support.⁶⁰ therefore; at the beginning Singh's political carrier was very successful and got the support of all groups and classes on his Island. He says:

The truth of our movement lay in the Roman house. It also lay in our undeniable success. We attracted support from all races and all classes. We offered, as it soon appeared, more than release from bitterness we offered drama.⁶¹

In addition the population saw him as their chance to establish their national identity, and as an attractive public figure, and a famous personality who puts himself on the side of the poor: Singh says:

I had become a public figure and an attractive one. It was the personality Browne had seen, the rich man with a certain name who had put himself on the side of the poor, who appeared to have turned his back on the making of money and on his former associates...so in the unlikely circumstances the London dandy was resurrected...it was pleasant in those early days just to be this sell I had known nothing like it.⁶²

Before Singh's engagement in politics, high jobs especially in administration were occupied by English administrators, their wages were high. After the arrival of Ralph Singh to politics he succeeded to decrease the number of the posts occupied by white servants, what lead to the increase in the number of native servants, so both the land and its population benefited .⁶³

At the age of forty, when Singh failed to find an appropriate home, he attempts to write as a way to enlighten his past and prove his existence.

From the central fact of this setting, my presence in this city which I have known as student, politician and now as refugee immigrant, to impose order on my own history, to abolish that disturbance which is what a narrative in sequence might have led me to.⁶⁴

Singh acknowledges in his memoirs that his problems of dislocation is the result of colonial background that in most of the time erased the historical background of colonized people⁶⁵.

So he writes for the sake of constructing his real identity, he refers to his past through flashbacks, and he shows his satisfaction with his politics, he says:

It does not worry me now, as it worried me when I began this book, that at the age of forty I should find myself at the end of my active life. I do not now think this is even true. I no longer yearn of landscapes and no longer wish to know the god of the city. This does not strike me as loss. I feel instead I have lived through attachment and freed myself from one Cycle of events. It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have also fulfilled the four fold division of life I prescribed by own Aryan ancestors.⁶⁶

Singh's psychological problems are not the only reason that prevented him from reaching his dream of national identity. Indeed, still other factors that affected him such as colonial experience and the existence of many ethnical groups on the Island.

Although Isabella got its independence, it is still dependent on the English colonialism culturally, economically and politically, therefore the colonizer is present in every aspect of the Caribbean's life. Singh puts it clear when he says "*we were a colony, a benevolently administered dependency, so long as our dependence remained unquestioned, our politics were a joke*"⁶⁷. The process of colonization has not ended within independence because the population on the Island of Isabella still suffers from a linguistic imperialism. They are dominated by English culture that creates a kind of struggle in their mind. This means Caribbean people have adopted the foreign culture (English culture) this what led to the existence of more than one culture on the Island, the native culture and that left by the colonizer, but while adopting English culture, people place themselves on its margin; Anderson argues that "*communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/ geniuses, but by the style in which they are imagined*".⁶⁸ it is this struggle between the native culture and the adopted one that made Caribbean people feel as being not belonging to any culture, alienated and separated elements. One feature of the spread of English culture is the use of

English language instead of the native languages; this complicated the task to establish one's identity in such societies. We can say that the high jobs in the government and economy are dominated by those who adopted English language what led to the high demand to learn English language and neglect their own language and sometimes it is suppressed⁶⁹. So these acts helped the collapse of the nation-state building.

Singh links the failure of politics on his Island and all the disorder and anarchy to the effects of colonization. He says "*the career of the colonial politician is short and ends brutally. We lack order... there are no universities or city houses to refresh us and absorb us after the heat of battle*"⁷⁰. So to escape this situation, they choose to fly "*there is only one course, flight, Flight to the greater disorder? The final emptiness; London and the home countries.*"⁷¹

Even after independence, Englishmen still control their former colony Isabella. As they are considered inferior Caribbean people cannot make a decision by themselves. In London when Singh went to negotiate sugar estates, he is not given any consideration, they said for him "*you can take to your people any message you like*"⁷²

English colonization left political, economic and social environment very damaged on the Island "*the pace of colonial events is quick, the turnover of leaders rapid...and I know that the people who supplanted me are themselves about to be supplanted.*"⁷³

Singh says about the manners of an English man

His manner indicated clearly that our game had gone on long enough and he had other things to do than to assist the public relations of colonial politicians I said how can I take this message back to my people? He said you can take back to your people any message you like and that was the end.⁷⁴

This passage shows that Englishmen impose their superiority by not taking into account Singh as a political figure; they also did not care about the feeling or the ambitions of the Caribbean

people, the expression “*take to your people any message you like*” means that both Singh and his people are ignored by the Englishmen.

In addition to the colonial experience that caused Caribbean people to feel inferior, and separated elements, the lack of political awareness on the island causes many troubles. Anderson believes that “*it is the shared aspects that reinforce the feeling of nationalism as well as the belonging to a community*”⁷⁵. But on the island of Isabella there are no shared aspects between the individuals; religion, language, and mother country are different. The fact that they are different ethnic groups makes them act separately. Normally people are the source of power but on Isabella people do not care about politics, they are not interested in creating their own political system, or restore their political history, instead they follow English politicians and copy their strategy, this fact leads them to be controlled and exploited by the British Empire. The individuals lost their past and cannot connect themselves to it, as a result they cannot live a proper present or estimate for the future.⁷⁶

If we take the example of Ralph Singh, he is portrayed as acting in two different ways. The political figure, who seeks order on his land and the protagonist in the novel, is also portrayed as the antagonist who could not fight his weaknesses caused by colonial education; he considers his culture and community as being inferior to that of the English. He says “*to be born on an island like Isabella an obscure new world transplantation, second hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder*”⁷⁷. He considers himself as an English man; his political power lead him to feel superior; and to think about the act of naming government building, and roads as being a sort of power and leadership, these acts contradicted his nationalist dream. His education also makes him feel superior to his people; he says: “*This tainted island is not for me I decided years ago that this landscape was not mine. Let us move on. Let us stay on the ship and be taken somewhere else.*”⁷⁸

This passage shows that Singh detaches himself from his origins and tries to attach himself with the English; this act is not done only with the land but also with the family. He neglects his father when he says: “*my father was a school teacher and poor. I never saw his family and naturally suspected the worst*”⁷⁹. Instead he identifies himself with his mother’s family. “*I preferred to lay claim to my mother’s family. They were among the richest in the island and belonged to that small group known as Isabella millionaires*”.⁸⁰

Singh detaches him from his father’s family that is poor and identifies with the richest family of his mother, and similarly he tries to detach himself from Isabella the land of disorder and identifies with the great city of London⁸¹. This notion manifests Singh’s psychological problem of association; his problem of feeling inferior pushes him to identify himself with the reach and the superior.

Being a member of an ethnic group on the island is another factor that caused Singh’s isolation, he is an Indian who lives in an island that is not his own, so he is away from his origins, he says:

I was a Singh. And I would dream that all over the central Asian plains the horsemen looked for their leader. Then a wise man came to them and said, you are looking in the wrong place. The true leader of you lays faraway, ship wrecked on an island the like of which you cannot visualize, beaches and coconut trees, mountains and snow; I set the pictures next to one another.⁸²

Ralph Singh is confused between what he wants to be and what he must be, he wants to identify himself with London and adopt English culture, but he cannot do so because his community and his people saw on him their hope to reach their national identity and run a successful political career that may bring change over social and economic environment. However when he disillusioned with the dream of national identity, he became the hero of his people’s hope, but, just at the surface. In his political speeches he promises his people to help

them, his sayings are not accomplished by his actions, He says: “*we became what we see ourselves in the eyes of others*”⁸³.

His failure as a politician is a result of his incompetence, to restore his original identity he chose the wrong ways⁸⁴, as trying to copy his colonizer’s political power, this makes the situation more complex and made him be no more than a mimic man. He tries to persuade his people but even his political slogans and speeches are borrowed from his masters. In addition Singh makes no effort to run his island relaying on his own philosophy, instead he copies his master’s attitudes and political views, and this reinforces the fact of considering Isabella as part of the British Empire. He is disillusioned with his political activity when he says:

I see that the activity of these years existing as I have said in my own mind in parenthesis, represented a type of withdrawal, and was part of the injury inflicted on me by the two solid three dimensional city in which I could never feel myself as anything but spectral, disintegrating, pointless, fluid.⁸⁵

Singh’s movement is adopted by one small ethnic group, and could not get the support of the mass, which refuse any contribution concerning change because each group has its own goal on the island that is different from that of the others. The real matter with the new independent states is that they did not mark a new beginning; they are following the colonial system, and their present situation is not different from their situation when they were colonized, so their independence is just a new title without meaning.

To conclude, the nationalist dream failed on the island of Isabella, and Ralph Singh as an agent who assumed this task failed to locate himself within both London and the land of Isabella. He could not succeed to do so because of the bad effects of colonization and of the existence of many ethnic groups. Through his experience he comes to conclude that there is no perfect land to identify with, so he started writing his memoirs where he wrote about his past and all his experiences either on Isabella or in London.

Chapter Two: Mimicry

In this chapter we are going to deal with mimicry by focusing on the protagonists and the antagonists of the two novels. We discuss mimicry relying on Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and that of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Mimicry and the protagonists of the two novels

The protagonists in the two novels are unconsciously victims of mimicry. Even if both of them are nationalist and they work for reconstructing their nations by restoring a national identity, they fall in the same trap as their antagonists. Odili and Singh feel alienated in their societies. The two characters oppose the antagonists by defending their identity and traditions, but in fact they do the same with their opponents.

Homi Bhabha devotes a whole chapter to mimicry in his book *The Location of Culture*. In the chapter he titles "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse, he writes,

Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the other as it visualizes power⁸⁶

Bhabha means by "double articulation" that the one who is mimicking the other cannot define his belonging and lives in a state of ambivalence. He considers it a successful manner to get access to power. This definition of mimicry matches perfectly the description of the two protagonists. As their real counterparts, Odili and Singh consider mimicking the former colonizer as the best way to impose their authority on people. But in fact, the imitation of their opponents leads them to lose their real personalities and they follow another path which causes their failure to achieve their goal.

In Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, there is a comparison between the one who accepts what he is and the one that tries to hide his reality. He says:

One takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry⁸⁷.

The one who accepts his identity and his origins is the one who is proud of his nation and that is what we call nationalism. On the other side, there is the one who discards his identity and his nation. The strategy that he uses to escape from his origins is mimicking someone that he considers superior.

In Achebe's *A Man of the People*, the protagonist, Odili, who represents the new generation, is against the rulers of his country because they represent another form of colonialism:

Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honour of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation⁸⁸.

This passage shows that Odili is against the politics of corruption and bribery that rules the nation. He is also against the people who cheer for the prime minister when he visits his home village. Yet, in spite of this overt opposition to it, many signs show that he is in reality influenced by this political class.

Odili in the first pages of the book, when he starts to narrate, criticizes the people that applaud the prime minister. But when Chief Nanga comes to him, Odili shows the opposite. He considers himself as the hero in the eyes of the crowd. He does not react as he is supposed to do. He does not believe happened to him when Nanga talks to him.⁸⁹ The main character seems to be happy and very proud when Nanga remembers him. So he himself falls in what he considers strange and ridiculous. He loves the way the prime minister talks to him. This act can be considered as hypocrisy in itself.

The influence of Chief Nanga on Odili is clearly apparent when he invites him to his residence and Odili accepts. He is very excited by the luxury life of the minister. When he relaxes down in a room within the house of Chief Nanga, he becomes impressed by the luxury furniture of the house of his former teacher⁹⁰. He just appreciate his stay in that house.

The fact that Odili stays some days in the house of Nanga and he is very pleased for that leads him to forget everything about corruption in the country. He cares about the personal life of Chief Nanga. Everything seems well between Odili and his former teacher until the day Nanga sleeps with Elsie, his beloved. It is at this moment that Odili decides to take his revenge no matter how. He considers this problem as personal. He rebels against Chief Nanga and his party for personal consideration and not for the interest of his country.

When Odili leaves the house of Chief Nanga, he is no longer the one who cares for his nation or his origins, he states it clearly when he meets Max:

As we ate I told Max about Elsie and Chief Nanga, amending the story in several minor particulars and generally making light of it all, not only because I was anxious to play down my humiliation but even more because I no longer cared for anything except the revenge.⁹¹

Taking his revenge is the only thing that matters for Odili after leaving the house of his master. His humiliation and anger blinds him. He is thirsty of retaliation.

Odili's hatred toward the rulers of the country and against Nanga in particular makes him rebels to get rid of them. Frantz Fanon in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, speaks about the Africans and their post independent life:

The peoples of Africa have only recently come to know themselves. They have decided, in the name of the whole continent, to weigh in strongly against the colonial regime.⁹²

According to Fanon, African people would impatiently to get rid of the colonial regimes after the independence of the continent.

To achieve his purpose and get revenge, Odili enters politics to counter Nanga. He decides to create a new political party to take the place of his former teacher in government. This new party brings another vision which is different from the current government. Odili said:

if one believed the rumors---a little cash prize each as well. All that was well known, but I would have thought it was better to start our new party clean, with a different kind of philosophy.⁹³

Defending the social values of the African society, putting an end to corruption are the most important declared objectives of the new party. However, the hidden purpose of Odili Samalu is to punish Chief Nanga and his government by removing them from power. If Chief Nanga did not sleep with Elsie, this new party would not have been created. Odili's entrance to politics is for seeking revenge. He is just imitating Chief Nanga but without recognizing it. Creating a new political party for personal reasons is not fair neither for the government nor for the people.

Before the campaign for the elections, Odili is impressed by his wealth just like Chief Nanga. He speaks about his new car and the way in which he goes to see his girlfriend in Anata, "I decided to go home and have it washed first. Then I drove in style to her place".⁹⁴ we notice that Odili becomes blind and sees only a way to show himself as being superior just like the rulers of his country. He believes that money and wealth can bring to him a better life by becoming the one who can get his part of this nation. He wants to be the master by attracting people with money.

After entering into politics, Odili has lost his sense of nationalism and national consciousness. He discovers that everything is related to wealth and materials. The

protagonist of *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh, is also a nationalist politician who fights against the colonial regime in his country.

Ralph Singh is a politician in Isabella, and he wants to rebuild and reconstruct the identity of his nation. The long period of time the English colonizer stayed in the country led to the inability of the natives to establish order in the country. They find themselves without one unique identity, without national values. Singh as the main character of the novel, he strives to build an identity for the nation and reform the current situation of the country. However, he falls in the same trap as Odili in *A Man of the People*. He also finds himself without a distinct national identity and unable to cut bounds with the former colonizer.

In his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha speaks about the state of ambivalence, he said:

The discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.⁹⁵

This quotation shows us that mimicry is created through a conflict of ideas and attitudes. This means that the person who mimics another one becomes lost in a state of ambivalence. Since they consider their own identity meaningless, they imitate the master. In this case they do not accept what they are and they can't succeed in their imitation of the other in the correct way. This is what Bhabha means by the term "ambivalence".

This ambivalence is illustrated by the quest for identity of Ralph Singh. All what he wants is to find who he is. He states that in London, he has no guide, and his present is completely separated from his past. So he is obliged to choose the right character to get a better live in England.⁹⁶

Through what he states about his life in London, we understand that Ralph Singh is lost in England. He cannot place himself within this world. He does not know whether he is going to

stick to the person he is or to take a new personality⁹⁷. Since he is in London, it is easy for him to take an English identity. It is at this point that the main character begins to mimic his former colonizers. The need to belong caused by the loss of his original identity pushes him to create an English character he identifies with.

Becoming a mimic man is facilitated by the colonial education he received. He flashes back his first memory at school when he brought an apple to his teacher, but in fact that fruit was an Orange “we had no apples on Isabella. It must be an orange”⁹⁸. Although he knows that he commits an error by saying an apple instead of an orange, but his brain cannot accept to name that fruit an orange. The above quotation shows that Singh is influenced by his colonial education. This education shows to him England as a representation of civilization and order.⁹⁹ This is why he does not succeed in his political career. He enters politics in order to remove the English rulers. However, when his party takes the control of the island the relation of his country with the colonizer does not change because they do not have the capacity manage the different sectors especially the economic one. Fanon has accurately described such situations in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

Since the middle class has neither sufficient material nor intellectual resources (by intellectual resources we mean engineers and technicians), it limits its claims to the taking over of business offices and commercial houses formerly occupied by the settlers.¹⁰⁰

The inability to rule the newly independent country as it should be pushes the governors to appeal to their former colonizers. In Isabella, both the old and the new government remain dependent on the English because they believe in their superiority.

After Singh’s failure in politics, he finds himself exiled to England where he searches for identity and personality. In London, he becomes ashamed of his land. This is clear when he speaks about his birth in Isabella which he considers as an obscure world and a land of disorder “To be born on an island like Isabella ... was to be born to disorder”¹⁰¹

He considers his land as inferior and his identity is meaningless. He is ashamed of his birth in Isabella and takes it as a malediction. He does not want to accept neither his origins nor his nationality. The bad image of Isabella leads him to change many things in order to become an Englishman.

Since Singh does not have any feeling about his origins, he beholds the world through the eyes of the English.¹⁰² All what he can see or do is taken from the English world. His loss in this foreign country obliges him to imagine everything like England. This is clear when he speaks about his grandmother. He imagines her with her cow in a completely English Garden that he sees in a calendar picture. Then he links that landscape to his home village.¹⁰² Even though his grandmother has never set foot in England, he imagines her with her cow in the English gardens. His brain is controlled by the state of mimicking his former masters. The image of the superiority which he gives to the English makes him believe that imitating them will lead him to superiority.¹⁰⁴ Homi Bhabha writes:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite.¹⁰⁵

Through this quotation, Bhabha tells us that colonial mimicry is when the colonizer tries to make the colonized imitating him but this imitation should be limited in order that the latter perceives himself inferior. This desire to be different is based upon the imitation of the other to become like him but not completely. This what Singh does when he changes his name into one that sounds more English.

Mimicry causes mental problems for the colonized people after they find themselves deprived from their own identity and they cannot live with that of the other. This is evident when Singh realizes that he does not belong anywhere. He said:

That we live in a place that is not our own land, much more not ourselves and hard it is in spite of blazoned days we are the mimics.¹⁰⁶

This quotation shows that the main character suffers from a lack of place and loss of identity even if he mimics the English, but he cannot be English. Finally, he becomes alienated. He cannot get or feel home neither in Isabella nor in England.

The analysis of the two novels shows that the protagonists are victims of mimicry and they are influenced by their masters. They partake in the same thing they claim to fight in their societies. Both Odili and Singh, who share the goal of building and reconstructing their identity, fall in the trap of imitating the antagonists.

Mimicry and the antagonists of the two novels

The antagonists in the two novels are also concerned with mimicry. They are the cause why the protagonists fail in achieving the reconstruction of their identity. These antagonists are not only individuals but also events which are against the protagonists.

The antagonists of Achebe's *A Man of the People* are Chief Nanga and the highland tribes. These are the opponents of Odili in the novel. Chief Nanga and the tribes have shared the wealth of the country for their personal interests. They rule the newly independent nations with a complete unconsciousness. As Frantz Fanon said in the *Wretched of the Earth*:

The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression, that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity.¹⁰⁷

From this quotation, we understand that there is a lack of national consciousness in the newly independent states. Just after getting the independence, there is a race for governing the nation. In addition, in these countries the tribe is often preferred to the state. As it is the case in *A Man of the People*, when Chief Nanga invites Odili to the capital and tells him to take a job in the civil service in order to not leave everything to be controlled by the highland tribes “We shouldn't leave everything to the highland tribes.”¹⁰⁸

Through what the minister of culture says to Odili about the highland tribes, we understand that they occupy a very important place in the government. He means by the word “national cake” their country whose wealth is divided between the tribes and the ruling members. The tribes have a very heavy weight in the state, they get everything they want. This is why we consider these tribes as one of the antagonists in the novel.

The other antagonist of *A Man of the People* is Chief Nanga who is a minister of culture. It is because of him that the main character, Odili, get involved in politics and created a new party to defend the idea of nationalism. Chief Nanga is a perfect image of a new independent state politician who demonstrates his mimicry of the former colonizer.

Chief Nanga is considered as “a man of the people”. He with his political party promises their people to a better life. This is why he is the most approachable politician to the people. This case has been dealt by Frantz Fanon:

The objective of nationalist parties as from a certain given period is, we have seen, strictly national. They mobilize the people with slogans of independence, and for the rest leave it to future events.¹⁰⁹

These political parties are looking for gaining people to their side by promising them a number of goals which are for the interest of the nation. However, after their access to power; these parties work for their own interests and none for the nation. As it is the case of Chief Nanga; although he is the preferred politician to the people, he is not better than the former colonizer. He is so influenced by the English until he does not even trust his people. A prove about this is when Nanga speaks with T.C:

You know very well T. C. that you cannot trust these our boys. That is why I always say that I prefer to deal with Europeans... What? Don't worry about the Press; I will make sure that they don't publish it.¹¹⁰

This happens when Chief Nanga speaks with Hon. T. C. Kobino. This quotation shows the high regard of Nanga toward the Europeans. He does not believe in the abilities of his people

instead, he prefers the skills of the foreigners. In addition, he manages to hide this by corrupting the press and obliging them to ignore this act.

Chief Nanga does not limit his mimicry to politics. He does so also in his daily life with his family. This is clear when he speaks with his children in English. This is clear in the following quotation:

A small thing, but it struck me even as early as this: Mr. Nanga always spoke English or pidgin; his children, whom I discovered went to expensive private schools run by European ladies, spoke impeccable English.¹¹¹

Nanga doesn't use his mother tongue with his family. His children attend European schools. These acts tell us that Nanga is somehow ashamed of his mother tongue and his identity as well. This phenomenon is explained in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. He said:

The colonized subject is a persecuted man who is forever dreaming of becoming the persecutor.¹¹²

This is what Chief Nanga wants to become. His desire is to become the persecutor and to reproduce the deeds of the English colonizer who ruled his country for decades. The oppression that his country experienced leads Chief Nanga to believe that his national identity is inferior. The feeling of inferiority is the cause of his choice of English.

Although he is the minister of culture, he does not value his own language. He neglects everything which is related to the culture of his country. This is not ignorance but he does not care about it since he desires to resemble the English as much as possible. This is clear when he speaks with Mr. Jalió about the national dress:

If you want me to attend any of your functions you must wear a proper dress. Either you wear a suit... or if you don't like it you can wear our national costume. That is correct protocol.¹¹³

Through this quotation, we notice that Chief Nanga considers the European suit as the standard dress. And he considers the national costume as optional. This is a sign that shows

the superiority and the value that Chief Nanga gives to the Europeans and the inferiority that he gives to his origins

The best example that illustrates the psychology of Chief Nanga is his attitude toward the Nigerian literature:

For how else could you account for the fact that a Minister of Culture announced in public that he had never heard of his country's most famous novel and received applause---as indeed he received again later when he prophesied that before long our great country would produce great writers like Shakespeare, Dickens, Jane Austen, Bernard Shaw and---raising his eyes off the script---Michael West and Dudley Stamp.¹¹⁴

In this quotation, we see that Nanga compares the degradation of his country's literature with the superiority of the English one. Although he does not know about the writing of his country, he announces that he does not care about it. In addition, he mentions many literary works that belong to the English literature instead of speaking about the writings of his country.

At the very end of the novel, Nanga reveals his violent nature when he hits Odili. He wants to persecute every one against him. Odili said:

He pulled the microphone away smartly, set it down, walked up to me and slapped my face. Immediately hands seized my arms, but I am happy that he got one fairly good kick from me. He slapped me again and again.¹¹⁵

His reaction reveals his desire to be the persecutor. He reproduces the acts of the colonizers towards people who rebel against them. His authority leads him to see himself as the colonizer of his own country.

The antagonists in *The Mimic Men* are not very different from Chief Nanga. One of the antagonists in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* is the corrupt government that rules the country.

These politicians are always dependent to the English colonizer. This is found in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*:

The national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country.¹¹⁶

In this quotation, Fanon shows that even after the independence, the colonized nation stays dependent on its former colonizer to rule the different sectors of the country such as economy and education. The new rulers of the country in *The Mimic Men* are a perfect illustration of such politicians who cannot assume the responsibilities of the government they fought for. Singh summarizes the situation in these terms :

In a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not held together by common interest, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from the outside.¹¹⁷

This quotation clarifies the objective of the post colonial politicians. They are nothing more than individuals who mimic their former master. They ignore the consequences that can be caused by their dependence to the English.¹¹⁸ Their inability to govern the country pushes them to make appeal to the colonizer to help them in controlling the country. This is why Ralph Singh decides to enter politics to guarantee the self-government of Isabella. Unfortunately, he follows the same path as the previous governors.

Another antagonist of the novel is the birth of Singh in Isabella even though his origins are Indians. He does not feel home anywhere, neither in Isabella nor in England. This situation makes him search for his identity in England. He searches for order and a place where he can link himself to, except Isabella. He said:

As a child, Singh responds to his sense of abandonment by dreaming of India, the homeland, and

of his origins, he reads books on Asiatic and Persian Aryans and dreams of horse men who look for their leader.¹¹⁹

Since his childhood, Ralph Singh felt that he is an outsider in Isabella. His ancestors are from India, so he lives as a mimic man since his birth. In Isabella, he does not succeed to reconstruct his identity, so he goes to search for it in England.

The third Antagonist is his exile to England, a country which is far from India and Isabella. He complains about his lack of belonging in Isabella, then he finds himself in England which is the country of the colonizer. He said:

I was the dandy, extravagant colonial, indifferent to scholarship. In fact my income was small.....But I let it be known that on my island my family were bottlers of coca-cola.¹²⁰

In England, he tries to take the appearance of the English. However, his Englishness does not give him an English Identity. He feels as double mimic man, first in Isabella, then in England. The English identity is not something easy to get by a foreigner. Speaking English and changing the name does not mean that Singh is English, because his origins are Indian. So, he does not belong anywhere.

To conclude, the antagonists in both novels are the cause why the protagonists do not achieve their objective which is constructing their original identity. In Achebe's *A Man of the People* the antagonists stand in the way of Odili to prevent him from getting the national unity he fights for. And in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, the protagonists forbid Singh to link himself to a land or place.

Conclusion

Throughout our research, we have tried to draw a possible connection between two literary works from two different continents: *The Mimic Men* by V S Naipaul and *A Man of the People* by Chinua Achebe, we have discovered the struggle of peoples of the Third World, and the difficulties they tried to face in their project of recovering and building their nation state. To reach our aim we relied on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry, and Frantz Fanon's essay "*The Pitfall of the National Consciousness*". Then, we highlighted more interest on the failure of nation-state building in newly independent countries, and demonstrated that Achebe's and Naipaul's works are a satirization and problematization of re-shaped societies of Africa and India; thus they cast a deep reflection on their emerging modern societies with its challenges and experiences of growth and degeneration.

Our analysis has shown that the two works share some affinities despite the fact that the two authors are from different cultural, social, and political backgrounds. Our analysis has shown the manifestation of nationalist dream in both works; it was followed by disillusionment caused by political corruption, and politician's incompetence on one hand, and the people's loss of identity and their mimicry of the colonizer's values, views, and life style, on the other. In other words it showed how a post colonial society suffers from dislocation, loss of identity and its people's attempt to define them within the colonizer, and therefore they became mimic men. Both protagonists of the novels decided to engage in politics in order to fight their actual conditions and re-establish order among their societies, unfortunately and for several reasons they could not succeed.

Our study of the *Mimic Men* and *A Man of the People* gave us the possibility to read two novels from different nations and continents from the same perspective. Additionally, it allowed us to highlight the concept of national identity and nation building, to prove the

extent to which most of third world writers strive to reaffirm their national identities. The scope of our research, however did not allow us to deal with by the two authors in these works.

For further research, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and V S Naipaul's *The Mimic Man* can be studied from a new historicist perspective.

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