

**IDENTITIES AND SPACES IN SELECTED WRITINGS OF BLACK,
INDIAN AND WHITE EAST AFRICAN WRITERS, 1950S TO 1980S.**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents and to my siblings.

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Abstract

This study analyses identity and space in five works of East African Asian, black and white writers based on the reasoning that these are significant issues in East African literature that reflect the nature of contemporary social relations in the region. The study uses a post-structural and postcolonial conceptual framework. Using comparative textual analysis, the study examines *Going Down River Road* by Meja Mwangi, *Homing in* by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* by M. G. Vassanji, *In a Brown Mantle* by Peter Nazareth, and *Kosiya Kifefe* by Arthur Gakwandi. The premise of the comparison is that the writers' different races have a bearing on their representation of Asian, black and white characters. Consequently, the basis of selecting these texts is threefold: the writer's race (and place of birth); the presence of Asian, black and white characters; and setting. The main objective is to show how characters from each of the three races perceive their own identity and that of characters from other races, and how the characters' location influences their sense of identity in relation to these places. The study further aims to show how the process of identity formation is represented. The study concludes that all the texts recognise that place and place meanings are significant in the formation of identity and that it is for this reason that groups seek to dominate place. It is the meanings attached to place, race and other categories that denote community that determine the type of spaces that the same produce. Prominent among these meanings is tradition which is important both as a space within which identities form and as the discourse with which communities define themselves. The study finds that a writer's race is a discursive position that infiltrates texts in subtle but significant ways, and that for the studied texts this does affect some of the writers' ability to deal with characters from other races. In relation to this, the study argues that those writers who write from marginal positions are more sensitive to cross-racial representation than those from dominant races. It is further argued that instabilities in the meanings of the lexical items that characters rely on for self description and the description of others are responsible for the uncertainties in their identities.

Operational definition of terms

Dialogue: Dialogue refers to the presence of more than one perspective either within or between texts. It is the idea that issues that texts deal with are part of a broader discourse in which the texts participate. For this reason texts engage in implicit conversation with each other, as what each text says is just one among other perspectives on a specific issue. In this respect this study adapts both Edward Said's concept of affiliation and aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the *dialogic*

Identity: This is a character's or group's conception of difference, the markers of belonging to racial / ethnic group or place and the process that facilitates it. The study understands identity as an interaction between what one perceives oneself to be and what they are perceived by others to be.

Hybrid: This is understood to mean entities whose composition is a product of encounters and interactions, and therefore mixtures. It is consequently the antithesis of notions of 'purity' in the sense that it cannot be explained by reliance on just one of its features.

other: The dominant sense this word has in the study is belonging to a group that is different from that of the perceiver and to which it relates hierarchically. This is to be distinguished from the Lacanian 'Other', which when used in the study is, in keeping with poststructural conventions, spelt with a capital 'O'.

Place: Place is the physical location of action and the meanings of such locations; it is also specific sites, areas or geographical features that are significant to the

characters' perception of difference. Important to the meaning of place are the activities that occur therein and the significance attached to the same.

Self: self are the ideas that constitute the condition of being or belonging. An individual entity is perceived to be distinguishable from other persons by essential signifiers.

Space: Space is understood as the conditions that allow the co-presence of multiple, often contradictory, notions of being and belonging. It is the condition that enables ideas about self in relation to location and the control one has over the same. Space presupposes the ability of place and other entities to contain and express difference. One of these conditions is the discourse within which the presentation of identity occurs.

1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

East Africa is a multi-racial society, especially in the main urban areas like Kampala, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. This apparent cosmopolitanism is however not reflected in the relative attention that cultural productions by members of some of these races receive. For instance in the study of East African literature, it is common to consider only works by black East Africans while those by Africans of Asian and European descent are viewed as special categories. This may be a reflection of a general widespread attitude towards non-black races in the region, and is what Rasna Warah has in mind when she says: “Anti-Asian feelings apparently run deep among ordinary Kenyans who view this racial minority as a stumbling block to their own economic progress and as ruthless business people” (7).

This perception of the Asians, according to Warah, is also brought about by how the Asian community in Kenya perceives itself vis-a-vis the non-Asians. The community had been in Kenya for a hundred years at the time Warah wrote her book yet, as she observes, the community has not made any efforts at integration and so “even today, Asians remain culturally intact, and socially exclusive . . . (7)

Writers, like the communities they write about, are products of certain historical forces which to varying degrees shape the way they perceive reality and therefore how they represent situations. It is therefore necessary to briefly consider some aspects of East African political history.

Gideon Were and Derek Wilson observe that “the sort of country that people live in affects the way they live and develop” (3). This was the case in East Africa where, according to Were and Wilson, the geography determined not only which areas the early inhabitants settled in but also the interaction amongst them (5). This observation implies that ideas of nationhood and citizenship in East Africa that emerge in the Twentieth Century are indeed social and historical constructs.

East Africa, which this study conceives as constituting the three countries that formed the East African Community in the 1970s, is home to four major racial groups: Black Africans, Africans of South Asian descent, Arabs, and Whites¹. Each of these moved into the region at different times. Black Africans, who are the majority, were the first to settle in East Africa. Of the other three groups, which are today always regarded as immigrant communities, the Arabs came earliest, closely followed by Indians. Were and Wilson argue that though East Africa has been settled by many people over the ages, only a very small percentage of the present East African population are, albeit remotely, related to the two earliest racial groups to settle in the area (6).

The political history of East Africa can be viewed as a history of migrations, identity formation and transformations; besides the fact that all the groups currently living in East Africa migrated there, these migrations were marked by conquests and assimilations. This means that East Africa is a product of multiple processes and experiences: the initial migrations by those who later came to be known as the indigenous people; colonization, which carved out the spaces named Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania; the post independent affiliations

between these countries that have attempted to give it some homogeneity (legal-political, and economic); and the people's perception of this space and of who belongs to it. This last process is loose but can be discerned in such ways as how people in East Africa represent themselves in works of literature. While some aspects of this representation may be unconscious or even unintended, it can be a way of understanding the relationship between the people, their space (a political-cultural as well as a literary creation) and identity. Since Were and Wilson's arguments demonstrate that identity and the meaning of the word 'indigenous' are constructs that change over time, the representation of the same in literary works may be considered an example of construction.

Key in the perception of self and of the other is the issue of power, (economic and political, both of which are inter-dependent but exercised differently by each race). How the characters, within their communities, define the specific country they reside in also influences not only how they define themselves but also how they define others with whom they contest this space. East Africa therefore, as this study shows, means different things to different communities.

How to describe East Africa's non-black citizens is still a challenge; this is especially true of those of Indian descent. That the description of these people is problematic is attested to by the varied terms used to refer to them. On one hand, the single word descriptions like Kenyan, Ugandan or Tanzanian are often considered inadequate. On the other hand, the word 'Indian' is both misleading and inaccurate, but it is often unavoidable in any compound appellation used to describe them. One will thus find terms like Asian-Africans, Indo-Kenyans, and

East Africans of Indian descent. In “*A Microcosmic Minority: The Indo-Kenyans of Nairobi*”, Michel Adam finds it necessary to explain the term Indo-Kenyan. He defines them as “people residing in Kenya and who are originally from the Indian sub-continent (mainly India and Pakistan). Locally called by the English word ‘Asians’, the majority of whom are Kenyan citizens. . .” (199). The same may not be the case with white East Africans who are simply referred to as whites; race is in this case the primary category, not origin as in the case of East African Indians who, by being referred to as either Indian or Asian, are traced to some original place. Indeed, Peter Nazareth in “Practical Problems and Technical Solutions in Writing my Two Novels” dismisses the idea of ‘the Asian’ as a unitary concept: “The so-called Asian Community never was a community, so one cannot create characters who are “Asian”: they must be specific-Goan, Ismaili, Sikh, Punjabi, etc. I am a Goan” (56).

Since the texts studied are set in the same physical places, in similar or overlapping times, they reflect human experiences in the social spaces created within the places; and since the texts deal with different races that historically have laid some claim to spaces within these physical entities, each text is regarded as presenting a dialogue among the races in it; and because the different texts are written by writers from the different races that have been engaged in an epistemological contestation on what each race is in the context of the nation states, then their books, by adding to an ongoing, albeit unstated, debate on race and identity, engage in dialogue with other texts. Each text is therefore studied simultaneously as a self-contained dialogue and as an interlocutor in a larger dialogue.

The following are the primary texts in which this problem is investigated: M. G. Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Peter Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle*, Arthur Gakwandi's *Kosiya Kifefe*, Marjorie Oludhe's *Homing in*, and Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study investigates how selected East African writers represent character perception of self and others in relation to the characters' physical and socio-political circumstances. In furtherance of the above, the study considers how the kinds of textual and discourse interactions on race, identity, place and space that inform, and result from this representation and perception affect the identities and the processes of identity formation depicted in the texts. The study regards these interactions of discourses and texts as the context for the representation of character perception of identity.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study had the following objectives:

- I. To analyze how the selected texts conceive place and relate this conception to identity and space.
- II. To analyze the relationship between narrative structure and the characters' image of self and of others.
- III. To analyze how the selected texts interrogate each other on the notions of racial identity and character perception.

1.4 Research Questions

The study answers the following questions:

- I. How do the selected texts conceive place and how is this conception of place related to identity and space?
- II. How is the relationship between the characters' perception of self and of others presented in the selected texts?
- III. How do the selected texts interrogate each other on the notions of racial identity and character perception?

1.5 Research Assumptions

The study was predicated on the following assumptions:

- I. That there is a relationship between place, space and identity in the selected texts.
- II. That there is a relationship between narrative structure and the presentation of identity.
- III. That presentation of identity in the selected texts is affiliated to discourses outside the texts, and that this creates a dialogic relationship among the texts.

1.6 Justification for the Study

Justification for this study was considered in two ways: why these particular texts were chosen and the reason for doing a comparative study of character, identity and space. The authors selected belong to the three racial groups that this study is concerned with and therefore they may present events from varied cultural perspectives. In addition to this, these authors come from

the three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that the study focused on. The number of texts per racial group and country reflects the racial demographics of East Africa: the blacks constitute over two thirds of the populations of each of these countries. In addition to this, Kenya has a higher percentage of white citizens than Tanzania and Uganda.

In choosing to concentrate on East Africa rather than on any one of the countries that constitute it, this study upholds Roger Kurtz's view that "National categories are not always the most useful for defining postcolonial forms of cultural expression" (2). Such categories, he argues, treat regional dynamics lightly.

Though all the selected writers have written more than one work each, their selected texts have characters from at least two of the races playing significant roles. In addition to this, the studied texts are set in the formative years of the three East African states: before independence and in the first two decades after independence, a period the study considers suitable for studying the issues of identity and space because the nationalistic feelings that dominated it were associated with contestations over the meanings of identity and belonging.

The study is premised on the idea that identity formation and representation is an interactive process: there is interaction between the person and their experience, person and their environment, person and other characters who are themselves products of an interactive process. It was therefore significant that we investigate the presentation of the variables involved in the formation of identities and sense of belonging as a way of understanding inter-

racial relationships and presentation and also as a way of interrogating this presentation.

Since creative writing reflects human experience and the society, albeit subjectively, it is possible to understand how individuals in a multi-racial society view themselves and others through analyzing literary texts by writers from different races. The choice of prose fiction was made for two reasons: prose fiction, as has been observed by Hudson, is the most flexible of all the literary forms (130). Similarly, John Brushwood considers the novel as having the ability to express a nation's reality as it can "encompass both the visible reality and the elements of reality that are not seen" (ix). He further argues that novels, being cultural organisms, have ideal roles and how effectively such roles are fulfilled or not provides an opportunity to analyze a writer's understanding of reality. The novel may however, according to him, reveal some aspects of reality that would not be apparent to the specialists in non-artistic disciplines (ix). The significance of these observations to this study is not just that the critic vouches for the novel's representational abilities but also that there could be a relationship between the novelist's and others' perception of society. The flexibility of the novel enables it to explore many issues and different situations without appearing unrealistic. This makes the novel a suitable genre for exploring the complex nature of human relations.

The reason for choosing to relate space to identity is the recognition that identities conceived and presented within interacting discourses. Post colonial space is a layer of discourses; among these layers' important facets are contested geographies and histories. As Kurtz rightly puts it, though interest in

postcolonial literatures has grown, and so has “decidedly geographical imagery”, most literary criticism is more focused on race, language and gender in analysing “the construction of colonial and postcolonial subjectivity rather than on the geographical issues of spatiality” (4). This study therefore reasserts the importance of the spatial component of identity.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation

Four of the five writers that this study focuses on have written more than one work of prose fiction each: Moyez Vassanji’s novels are *The Gunny Sack*, *The Assassins Song*, *When She was Queen*, *The Book of Secrets*, *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, *No New Land Amriika*, *Uhuru Street*, *The Magic of Saida*. Majorie Oludhe’s prose fiction consists of *Victoria*, *Murder in Majengo*, *Coming to Birth*, *Chira*, *The Black Hand Gang*, *The Present Moment*, *Street Life*, and *A Farm Called Kishinev*. Meja Mwangi’s fiction comprises *Kill me Quick*, *Carcase for Hounds*, *Taste of Death*, *Going Down River Road*, *The Bushtrackers*, *The Cockroach Dance*, *Bread of Sorrow*, *The Return of Shaka*, *Weapon of Hunger*, *Jimi the Dog*, *Little Whiteman*, *Striving for the Wind*, *The Hunter’s Dream*, *The Last Plague*, *Mountain of Bones* *The Mzungu Boy*, *The Boy Gift*, *Mama Dudu the Insect Woman*, and *The Big Chiefs*. Peter Nazareth has two novels: *In a Brown Mantle* and *The General is Up*. Arthur Gakwandi has written one novel: *Kosiya Kifefe*.

This study concentrates on a comparative analysis of identity, race and space in M. G.Vassanji’s *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, Peter Nazareth’s *In a Brown Mantle*, Majorie Oludhe’s *Homing in*, Meja Mwangi’s

Going Down River Road and Arthur Gakwandi's *Kosiya Kifefe* and how these relate to narrative structure. The selection of these texts was on the basis that they are set in colonial and postcolonial East Africa within the period that this study focuses on and they have characters from the three studied races who play significant roles. The selection of writers from each of the three races and country was limited by the small number of both Asian and white East African writers, relative to the black writers in East Africa. The other consideration was their distribution in the three countries; Kenya has a higher population of both writers and citizens of European and Asian extraction than Uganda and Tanzania. East Africa is limited to these three countries because they formed the political and economic grouping called 'East African Community' in the 1970s, the period that the study focuses on.

1.8 Review of Related Literature

This section reviews three types of literature: literature on the primary texts and on their authors; and literature on the concepts of identity and space, especially in relation to the literary treatment of the same.

Most of the primary texts of this study have received some critical attention. Writing on the role of East African Asian writers in the development of East African Literature, Robert Gregory argues that though the Asians may have been involved in business, they played a role in the development of East African literature. The Asians' role, according to him, gained ascendancy in the decade before and continued up to the first fifteen years after independence when writings by indigenous Africans, which had been on the rise since independence, took over as the dominant written literature in East Africa. Writing by East African Asians therefore filled the gap left by white writing which had been dominant in the colonial era but waned in the last years of colonialism. Gregory's conclusion is that though this literature may not have been outstanding in quality, it certainly was in quantity (455).

In a paper that compares Behadur Tejani's *Day after Tomorrow*, Peter Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle* and Moyez Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack*, Dan Ojwang focuses on the thematic concerns in these texts and on the character type of the half-caste, a character type he argues that these writers are preoccupied with. According to him, this character type is part of the tropes of miscegenation that characterise the three books; these writers aimed to broaden their concerns in these works to characters that were not confined to a particular

race or origin, and that this was in order to deal with the accusation from the British that the Asian were unwilling to integrate with the other races.

Ojwang further contends that Behadur's use of half-castes influences Nazareth and Vassanji (149). He says that the idea of nationalism in East Africa is yet to comprehend a category like 'Indian African' just as those among East African Indians who insist on purity do not acknowledge their African experience (157). Ojwang's overall argument is that because these writers find the issue of race problematic, they want to dilute it and rob it of the significance ordinarily attached to it. Although Ojwang does raise the issue of character perception, it is just implied by way of explaining the three writers' preoccupation with miscegenation. For that reason, racial perception is not deeply explored.

Peter Tirop Simatei, in his analysis of how writers like M.G. Vassanji (*The Gunny Sack* and *The Book of Secrets*), Peter Nazareth (*In a Brown Mantle* and *The General is Up*) and Majorie Oludhe (*The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth*) conceive of the formation of nationhood and national identities through the novel, argues that these writers' reaction to the politics of nation formation are prompted by each writer's different historical conditions. Their confrontation of the issue of national belonging and identity is in his view already "problematized by their status as migrants or their descendants" (27).

Simatei observes that in their writings, Nazareth and Vassanji grapple with questions of identity, "contesting and redefining popular concepts of the nation, in order to accommodate hybridity and heterogeneity as essential elements of the East African identity"(27). This argument is comparable to

Ojwang's argument referred to earlier in that both suggest that the concept of racial and ethnic purity is untenable, especially in reference to the East African Asian.

The issues that Simatei raises in his analysis of *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* have a bearing on what this study examines in *Homing in*, especially because of the comments that he makes about Macgoye's writing in general. He contends that compared to Vassanji and Nazareth's fiction, Macgoye's fiction is presented with problems arising from her background. Simatei especially concentrates on how Macgoye presents women characters and their relationship to the nation. He argues that Macgoye is concerned with the marginalised woman from whose perspective she presents the history of the nation in an effort to merge the history of these women with that of the nation, resulting in "a narrative that reveals the individual as being perpetually denied identity with and within the nation" (134).

About Vassanji, Simatei's view is that in all his works, he "is not interested in constructing a discourse that is overtly oppositional to the colonial one" and that "This certainly has something to do with the position occupied by the East African Asians in the racially layered colonial system where they were more part of the colonising structure than a colonised people" (82). Although Simatei analyses the issue of identity, his concern is not how the different races perceive each other in the conceptualisation of their identity.

An argument similar to Ojwang and Simatei's, about lack of purity in the constitution of the South Asian East African personality in Vassanji's works, is discernible in Stephanie Jones' analysis of the way three writers use the novel

form to tell the relationship of what he calls class complicity and racial hierarchy that defined the Asian East African Diaspora during British colonial rule (16). His observation on Vassanji's work in general is that “. . . his subject is not so much the history of a people but a people as the history of their margins” (28). This analysis relates the Asian characters' experiences to their location in time and space but concentrates on how the Asian characters perceive themselves and their history, not on how characters from different races contest their identities.

Charles Ponnuthurai Sarvan addresses the issue of the representation of Asians in African Literature and reaches the conclusion that Asians are mostly referred to unfavourably, and this is particularly so in writings from South and East Africa. He observes that though these references may be brief, they are important because they reveal attitudes that may not be revealed through “sustained, self-conscious studies” (Sarvan). Unlike the other critics, Sarvan does address the issue of how black writers and, by implication, black characters perceive Asian characters, but he does not go further to analyse how Asian characters perceive black characters and themselves.

In his review of Moyez Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* in *The First Tanzan/African Novel*, Peter Nazareth implies that there is a connection in the novels written by Asian East Africans, even those written by other Asians on East Africa, when he says that in this novel Vassanji takes up a question asked by earlier East African Asian novels: “whether it is fate, fear, or choice that makes the East African Asian run away” (129). In Nazareth's view, Vassanji responds to Behadur Tejani's *Day after Tomorrow*, Peter Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle*,

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and V. S. Naipul's *A Bend in the River*. The general argument in this article is that these novels are involved in a dialogue; Vassanji's novel even has the same characters as the earlier East African Asian novels, though the names may vary slightly. Nazareth's observation lends credence to the idea that there could be a debate among some novels in East Africa. In other words Nazareth suggests that these novels are part of an Indian/Asian East Africa discourse, a discourse whose manifestations he does not however analyse. It is in this respect that this study investigates the interrelationships not just among texts written by writers of Asian descent in East Africa but those texts concerned with historical and political influences on racial identity in East Africa.

John Scheckter discusses the forms of identity that describe African characters of Asian descent in Peter Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle* and *The General is Up*. He argues that the use of filiation as a form of identity not only privileges legitimacy as a form of identity but also denies one the capacity to construct their identity, besides its constituting self accusation. Racial terms like 'Indian' or 'Goan' are, in his view, no better as they do not fully explain the characters in these novels and similarly suggest that the formulation of the characters' identities precedes the events in the novel, and therefore precedes the characters themselves (83). Being aware of such historically conditioned forms of identification however, the characters strive to reinforce their new identity as Africans, at times by dismantling those things which construct them as Goans (84). The dismantling of these identities and the construction of new ones forms part of this study's concern, so are the inadequacies of language, as manifested

through conventional terms of racial filiation, in expressing identity in postcolonial East Africa.

Jairus Omuteche shows the relationship between identity formation and geographical space in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Moyez Vassanji's *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. It is his contention that feelings of belonging and citizenship are ambivalent in the postcolony, with the result that identities keep on shifting because loyalties and positions in relation to power shift. He reaches the conclusion that Wa Thiong'o and Vassanji can help scholars analyse "the complexities of identities and claim to belonging in a country where colonialism has left fractured and embittered social and cultural players" (100). It is these kinds of complexities of identities in relation to the East African space that this study investigates.

In *Urban Obsessions Urban Fears*, Roger Kurtz's interest in *Going Down River Road* is in its depiction of Nairobi; therefore, he discusses it under the category of 'Kenyan Urban Novel'. His observation is that *Going Down River Road*, *Kill me Quick* and *The Cockroach Dance* draw their strengths from their settings, which smoothen their weaknesses and turn them into strengths instead. He also notes that the main character's social consciousness grows in *The Cockroach Dance*, unlike in *Going Down River Road* (Urban 129). Kurtz recognises the significance of place in the construction of character consciousness.

In *Nyarloka's Gift*, Roger Kurtz observes that the story in *Homing in* "explores the frustrations and small triumphs of making personal connection in society that is designed to keep people apart" (*Nyarloka's* 186). This argument

implies that *Homing in* is a novel about characters trying to belong, an idea buttressed by Kurtz' comments on the title: he says that it could mean either the process of Macgoye's own adaptation to Kenya or to the process by which one tries to belong to a place so as to make it home (187-8). Generally, his argument is that this novel falls within Macgoye's project of exploring Kenya's history through fiction, a history that is characterized by individual's attempts to define for themselves their real relationship with the country and with others. Looked at this way then, *Homing in* is concerned with individual and group identity. This could be further analysed in comparison with how other writers in East Africa try to belong, something that this study does.

Literature on space shows that it is crucial in understanding characters, as meaning is generated within particular contexts. Such contexts may for instance be the postcolonial city. The understanding of space is varied but this review concerns itself with literature on space as it is conceptualised in this study. Therefore, most of the literature on space is closely linked to identity.

Yi-Fu Tuan views space as a complex set of ideas and argues that since different cultures conceive their physical world, demarcate it and assign values to it differently, the sophistication and intricacy of demarcating space vary significantly across cultures. Nevertheless, there are cross-cultural similarities and these are based on the fact that human beings are at the centre of all considerations of space (34). Space is related to peoples' feelings of belonging. Tuan therefore asks questions regarding the relationship between the human sense of competence and freedom; "if space is a symbol for openness and freedom, how will the presence of other people affect it . . .?" (50) These

considerations affect the attitudes people have to a place, “The world feels spacious and friendly when it accommodates our desires, and cramped when it frustrates them” (65). Spaces become places when human beings imbue them with value, for instance when they pause in space. In this sense, place does not have to be a physical location; it can be anything that gives one comfort. This view of space informs the study’s investigation of how the characters from the different races relate to non-physical spaces in East Africa.

Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift use a post-structural approach in their discussion of identity and place. In their view, both terms are fluid and therefore lack stability. For instance, defining the subject depends on the kind of place one places such a subject. The reason identity is always contested is that understanding it means rejecting some earlier notions of reality (5-6).

Pile and Thrift point out that of the many approaches to identification, two stand out: the psychological and the dynamic (9). Since this study adopts poststructuralist thinking, it is inclined towards the dynamic rather than the psychological approach. The dynamic approach sees identity as something that is not fixed, as it is active and changes constantly (10). It can therefore explain the expression of identity with metaphors of space, particularly those of mobility, transculturation and diaspora. Pile and Thrift’s argument is that these metaphors are: “intended to capture the possibilities of hybrid identities which are not essentialist . . . The ethnic absolutism of ‘root’ metaphors fixed in place, is replaced by mobile ‘route’ metaphors which can lay down a challenge to fixed identities of cultural ‘insiderism’ . . .”(10).

By considering writers from different races, this study, rather than unproblematically confer on them the status of insider voices, interrogates the (in)stabilities of the identities they present in their works.

Postcolonial subjects are a product of the process of colonialism. Pile and Thrift argue that in postcolonial writing the postcolonial subject seeks new places to articulate his / their subjectivities from and that this articulation is an attempt to produce positive identities. The hybrid nature of postcolonial identity, in their view, demonstrates that subjects are located not in the centre of spaces but where the spaces connect, “‘in-between’ domains of difference like race, class, and gender” (18).

The liminal spaces in which the postcolonial subject operates are more than just literary allegories, however; they are “related to borders, frontiers, to migrants and diasporas, to the colonised . . . and to the consequent refiguring of the notions of ‘home’ and ‘nation’” (18). Therefore, notions such as home and nation cannot be used to refer to single physical locations; different characters have different notions of the meaning of home and the same is non-static. For this study, the spaces that the characters understand the world from are considered as multiple and variable both within and across races.

The constant idea in Pile and Thrift’s discussion of location and subject is that the way both terms are understood and applied in the analysis of experience has been changing over the years and that the general trend has been towards freeing the terms from essentialisms. To understand identity and how subjects view themselves in relation to other subjects, it is necessary to consider the subject in relation to their speaking position, the space(s) they occupy. Since

this position or space also changes, it follows that the identity of the subject will change in line with changed positions, so will their conception of other subjects. This thinking informs the study's approach to studying the characters in relation to East Africa.

Parin Dossa argues that identity is both an analytical concept and a subjective reality of people. There are two essential reasons why identity is a concern for marginalized people: the first reason is that marginalized people are forced to live with ascribed identities described as the other. The second reason is that subjective reality makes multifaceted identity part of the marginalized person's daily life. Therefore, such people have to shift between several identities daily, sometimes enacting different identities simultaneously (181-2).

Dossa then raises a question: “. . . how do we address the dissonance between ascribed identity and assumed identities?” Her contention is that there is no simple answer to this but it should be borne in mind that assumed identities are not formed within a discrete sphere unconnected to ascribed identities (182). The implication of this, and an idea that this study adopts, is that identity can be considered as not only multifaceted, even for the non- marginalized, but also as fluid and therefore an unstable concept.

Regarding how characters perceive others that they consider different from themselves, Mineke Schipper notes that though people usually perceive themselves and their groups differently from how they view others, “the interest in the ideas of others has never been intense. Usually we are significantly silent about the question of how Self and Other are described from the perspectives of other ethnicities, cultures, classes, or the other sex. . .” (21).

The interest of this study in Schipper's ideas is in how self and other are described from other ethnicities' perspective, and how collective identity is experienced subjectively and confirmed by members of the group (22).

Dialogue is a crucial characteristic of the subject's understanding of the world because this understanding is not done in isolation but in relation to others. ". . . dialogical action is a fundamental determinant of the intelligibility of social life, understanding comes from 'we' not 'I'(Pile and Thrift, 28). In relation to this study, the three races are understood as acting within the spaces they occupy and that their actions affect themselves and others. Their experience can therefore fully be understood only if one considers the contribution of each of the races to that experience.

Akhil Gupta and James Fergusson argue that there is no constant relationship between culture and space i.e. cultures do not belong to spaces. This may for instance be seen in the case of postcolonial cultures where the encounter between the colonized and the colonizer creates a new culture which can however be located in neither the country of the colonizers nor that of the colonized. In the same way, independent nations are ruptured spaces (open, unbounded spaces that freely communicate with other spaces) and no cultures are independent (7-8). This argument is important in considering postcolonial space in East Africa.

People's conception of space is related to how they conceive of themselves as a group. This is argued by Cristóbal Mendoza when he says that the concept of community is defined by social relations rather than through geographic entities (540). This implies that people across national boundaries

may still perceive themselves as a community and that people living in close physical proximity may not identify with each other. This suggests that identity can be considered beyond national boundaries, an argument that this study's analysis of community as space validates.

As may already be apparent, part of the difficulty involved in comprehending identity is its dynamic nature; it changes with context, which is both temporal and spatial. This is the point Richard Reid and Uoldelul Chelati Dirar make in their argument that since identity can easily change both in the individual and collective sense, it is necessary to interrogate some of the assumptions on the identity of some communities in East Africa and therefore open up scholarly inquiry on this issue. They suggest that the assumption that the identity of some communities in East Africa was as described by others or by themselves need to be rethought. Although the way people perceive themselves may change, Reid and Dirar point out that it may also be reaffirming and self-fulfilling, and that the aspect that makes identity both a group and a personal trait is that identity is experienced (234-5). Thus, this study analyses the identities of the selected communities in East Africa in relation to their experiences.

The literature reviewed on the primary texts shows that critics either looked at one or two of these books alone or when comparison was made among more than two of these novels, the emphasis was mainly on the issue of ancestry and identity. This review also shows that critics recognise the existence of inter-racial relations. However, most seem to concentrate on how the African writer of Asian descent reflects and projects the identity of Asian characters. There is

no conscious analysis of how the characters from the three races perceive and portray each other and how their language defines not just themselves but the other races. It is this gap that this study responds to.

The literature reviewed on space shows that space is the context that gives experience meaning and that space is dynamic, which implies that identity which is formed in relation to space is equally dynamic. The literature also shows that people experience space both as individuals and as groups, and that how they experience space influences how they perceive others and themselves.

The literature also shows that literary works deal with the issue of space and identity in different ways and studies have been done on some aspects of how writers construct identity in particular spaces. Although the literature shows that the construction of self and otherness can be spatialised, suggesting that locations may be contested, there had been no study on how writers in East Africa treat the relationships among race, identity and space.

Similarly from this literature, one may surmise that in analyzing the relationship between identity and space in creative works like the novel, it would be logical to use the geographical spaces occupied by the characters as the starting point for, as pointed out earlier, liminal spaces are more than just literary allegories but have a basis in reality.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The overarching theoretical thinking that informs this study is post-structural and postcolonial. These two are related bodies of theories in the sense that they question particular ways of knowing and describing the world,

including cultural productions like literary works, and provide alternative ways of reading texts and analyzing experience. Both are anti-essentialist since they reject the idea of authoritative or singular perspectives. The reasoning in postcolonial theory is “that all assertions of a cultural group about itself (i.e., values, traits, identity) are constructed under specific socio-historical conditions” (Pilario, 8).

Postcolonial theory rejects the polarity of the colonialist discourse of centre versus the periphery and views colonialism as a destabilizing experience that changes how both the colonised and former colonised, and the coloniser view themselves. It rejects the idea of purities. Chris Baldick encapsulates some of the central ideas in this theory when he describes it as a theory that “considers . . . cultural-political questions of national and ethnic identity, ‘otherness’, race, imperialism, and language, during and after the colonial periods. It draws upon post-structuralists theories such as those of deconstruction in order to unravel the complex relations between imperial ‘centre’ and colonial ‘periphery’. . . (265).

Post-structuralism rejects the idea of a text as a stable structure comparable to the binary structure of language and which can therefore be analysed as such. Textual meaning is instead viewed as characterised by instability; that there is no one truth in a text but several, so the meaning one gets from a text depends on the perspective from which one looks at it (Lodge, 88). In this regard, the study considers several perspectives: readers’ and other texts’ perspectives. For instance, to analyse character perceptions of their own

identity and that of other characters, the latter's views are considered both within the text and in other texts.

The view of language as a stable system ties it up in a way that compromises its ability to express others' experiences. It is at this point of closure that postcolonial theory intervenes by positing language as practise and not simply a conveyor of pre-existing meanings. The process of opening up the sutures can be described by what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin discuss in *The Empire Writes back* as abrogation. Through this process postcolonial literature in English of the kind that we deal with in this study frees English from the centre.

It is through devaluing the referential function of language by rejecting essentialised experiences that postcolonial theory promotes practise. This sense gives us a perspective with which we understand Edward Said's dismissal of the notion of exclusive experiences when he says that all experience that is historical and secular is accessible to analysis and interpretation (*Culture*, 35). If this argument is taken in the context of abrogation, a case is made for a flexible approach to analysis of language in literary texts.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that though postcolonial literature may use words that have a basis in a particular cultural experience, the meaning of the text in which such words are used is independent of the experience and therefore one needs not share in the experience to interpret the text. The use of such words expands the ability of English to articulate varied experiences and it is the context in which they are used that should concern the reader, not the origin (41-2). Origin ceases to matter because the experiences articulated

through such language are free from them. In addition to this, these theorists imply, the referents which may be alluded to by the words so used unusually in a text do not have an independent existence outside the practise of language. It is indeed for this reason that they are accessible.

The reasoning is that postcolonial literature, being intercultural, can be more profitably analysed by avoiding a referential approach to analysis of words so that the text becomes the guide to meaning, not some abstract knowledge of the entities supposedly referred to by language. “The ‘world’ as it exists ‘in’ language is unfolding reality which owes its relationship to language to the fact that language interprets the world in practice not in some imputed referentiality” (44).

The shared assumptions of Post-structuralism and postcolonialism that make the two compatible are poststructuralist’s deconstruction of modern rationality, and the rejection of the idea that identities are located in the volatility of linguistic signs. These are analogous to postcolonialist rejection of “the core/periphery binary essentialism, the ambivalence of liminal spaces and the subversion and mimicry now attributed to the subalterns” (Pilario, 65-6).

Another idea of post-structuralism that this study relies on is intertextuality; the argument that texts elaborate other texts, with which they engage in various forms of dialogue. In this connection Michel Foucault argues that “The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references, it is a node within a network” (97). The point Foucault makes here and which the following statement by Kehinde in a

way elaborates is one of the main tenets of intertextuality that guides this study: “[Intertextuality] refers to both the relationship among literary texts and the dialogue between them and other writings” (Kehinde, 374). Through this, the study is able to make a comparative analysis of the primary texts.

Intertextuality is important in the reading of some of the primary texts as postcolonial texts since, like Kehinde points out, it is “an effective postcolonial weapon used to reject the claim of universalism made on behalf of canonical Western literature (375).

Other arguments related to intertextuality that this study incorporates are by Michel Foucault and Edward Said. These two scholars’ statements on the relationships between texts are helpful in interrogating the discourses in the texts. Foucault argues that since texts are dependent on other texts, their borders are undefined “The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network” (25-6). The network that Foucault refers to here is that of discourse; therefore, to understand the interrelationships between texts it is necessary to analyse the discourses that inform the texts.

A similar argument is made by Said in *The World the Text and the Critic* when he distinguishes between filiation and affiliation. Filiation, in the context of literary criticism in which Said analyses it, is the assumption that the relationship between texts is linear, that texts flow naturally from preceding ones. These kinds of relationships among texts produce supposedly self-

contained entities that preclude the possibility of texts being connected to ‘non-texts’, to history, prevailing values and to other aspects of culture, for example (174).

In contrast to filiation, affiliation is the recognition that the relationships among texts are complex and not linear in the sense of genealogy where new texts automatically grow from previous ones. It is the realization that relationships among texts are established by authors, by history and by discourse. Affiliation, as Said discusses it, posits intricate cultural relationships between various aspects of human activities and society. The activities include “forms, statements, and other aesthetic elaborations” (174). It is a general interpretive principle that makes up for the shortcomings of the theories based on homology and filiation whose perception of the relationships amongst texts accounts for only one of the many types of relationships possible amongst them. Furthermore, while such theories see these relationships as existing only among texts, affiliation sees larger and broader relationships. Starting with a recognition of the unique qualities of each text on the basis of an array of circumstances, it seeks to “recreate the bonds between texts and the world” on the premise that this recreation makes manifest the ties that hold the texts. This way, Said argues, affiliation as a critical practice is a form of release which recovers the text from its isolation and obliges the critic to deal with the task of tracing through analysis “the possibilities from which the text arose”. The kind of analysis that affiliation envisages is therefore one that aims to situate a text in the context of its many relationships with other texts, classes and institutions. These relationships are not just homological: they could also be dialogical or

antithetical (174-5). For this reason the analysis of any one text is more profitably done within the context of other texts, and this includes non-literary texts.

Postcolonial and Poststructural tenets are complemented by concepts from dialogism and textual analysis. In his discussion of the dialogic in poetry, Kimani Njogu defines dialogue as “. . . a speech across, between, through at least two voices. It is reciprocal interaction; a passing through and a going apart. Dialogue is a relation characterized by tension; by similarity of presence and absence. It is the inter-relation between utterances. Used in reference to texts as discourse units, dialogue is inter-textual” (2). Njogu argues that the dialogic can exist in the same text, that a text does not need another text for there to be dialogue though there can also be dialogue between texts. What is necessary for the dialogic is “the presence of at least two voices acting as carriers of different perspectives” (4).

The main foundations of dialogic discourse are, according to Njogu, reciprocity, bidirectionality and the intersection of points of view (8). Thus, a text is located in history to which it responds and it also anticipates other utterances; a text belongs to a continuum. The interdependence that results from the bidirectional nature of texts is referred to as intertextuality. Indeed, Njogu’s conclusion is that intertextuality is critical to understanding of the dialogic in literary creation (11).

The idea that texts are involved in a conversation, a text is part of a dialogue, has been used to comparatively analyse the character perceptions of self and of others on the issue of race, and their perception of space.

Concepts from literary stylistics, especially lexical and semantic choices, and textual analysis/theories of narrative have been used to complement the two main theories in the analysis of use of language and narrative construction.

1.10 Research Methodology

This study investigated how selected writers represent character perception of self and others in relation to the characters' physical and socio-political circumstances and the kinds of textual interactions on race, identity and space that inform and result from this representation and perception. To achieve this, the study broke down the problem into three objectives from which three research questions were derived. Each of these objectives is tackled in a chapter.

The selection of the texts studied took into consideration the races and nationalities of the authors to ensure that the three targeted races and regions were represented. In this context race was understood as skin colour. Since most of the selected authors have more than one text, the selection of the writer's text to be studied was purposeful; the key consideration was the period of the text's setting and the presence of characters from the three races to enable the analysis of representations of character perceptions between races in a specified period in East Africa. *Kosiyá Kifefe* and *In a Brown Mantle* are set in the 1950s to early 1980s Uganda, the immediate pre-independence and early post independence period. The same period is the setting of *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* whose story traverses Kenya, Tanzania and Canada. Set between the late 1930s and the early 1980s in Kenya and Britain, *Homing in* too covers pre and post-independent periods. *Going Down River Road's* setting is the 1970s Nairobi.

The periods of these texts' setting are significant because they are characterised by heightened race consciousness owing to the various forms of nationalistic struggles in East Africa then in which race was a crucial component.

The study does textual analysis using the techniques of descriptive qualitative research. This involves selection of data in the form of statements from the texts studied; these are analysed, evaluated and compared within and between texts in relation to place, language and space in order to determine character perceptions. The analysis of each of the statements is done in at least two contexts: the immediate context of the statement and the overall, textual context. In order to evaluate similarities and differences in the writers' approaches to interracial perception of race the argumentative strategies are mainly comparative but with some variations and exceptions where it is deemed appropriate. We base our evaluation of the level of understanding that each text exhibits in relation to the issues under study on the writer's approach: the language, technique and discourse that informs the same.

To analyse identity across the texts, the study selected the main characters in the texts and their antagonists or characters that they interact with frequently in conflictive ways. One consideration in the selection of the characters, whether main or not, is their race as designated by the words black/African, Indian/Asian/Goan, and white/European. The purpose is to ensure a balanced representation of putative communal perspectives. The thinking is that to be described as a member of a given race places characters in situations from which views about that group by both those included and excluded can be analyzed.

To investigate narration of identity, the study considers the nouns that designate nationality, race, ethnicity, and other forms of belonging and pronouns and possessive adjectives related to them in order to determine their signifieds. The analyses consider whether these words have the same conceptual meanings as used in different instances by various characters in each text. For this reason, a minimum of two passages for at least two characters in each text were selected.

The two main comparative strategies are text by text and point by point. The bases of comparison are the main views of the principal characters on race and identity; their conception of location and sense of community; the character and writer's race; the dominant relevant narrative techniques in the text and the shared race of the authors and that of the principal characters. This latter basis impacts the comparative strategy as it is used in the analysis of characters' perception of the other race. For this reason the texts are paired and compared on an issue by issue basis. There are, for instance, three basic grounds in pairing *In a Brown Mantle* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*: the main characters are from the category designated Asian; the narrative perspective is first person; and they are written by writers with roots in India. *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road* are paired on the grounds of both having a third person narrative perspective, and that they are written by writers designated black African. While not paired with these texts in this respect, *Homing in* is both compared and contrasted to these two texts on the basis of its kind of third person narrative technique. The purpose is to show how narrative techniques

affect the ability of the narrator and characters to comprehend and portray characters in their complexity.

These comparisons are guided by ideas from theories of narrative, postcolonial and poststructural theories. Narrative theories are used to provide an understanding of the nature and function of first and third person narrative techniques and therefore to enable an analysis of the specific ways each author handles these techniques in the presentation of character perceptions. The postcolonial ideas are used to analyse and modify the narrative theories and incorporate them into postcolonial ideas of narrative. The same is done with the poststructural theories, to analyse how supposedly settled ideas of narrative can be deployed to conceptualise contested and therefore decentred realities.

1.11 Organisational Structure of the Thesis

The findings are discussed in four chapters. Chapter Two studies the physical places in which identity processes take place and examines the meanings attached to these places by different characters through identifying the significance of the activities that are carried out there in relation to inter-personal and inter-communal relationships.

Chapter Three analyses narration of identity. To do this, it focuses on narrative techniques and language use that communicate meanings on identity.

Chapter Four analyses how the interaction of discourses in the postcolonial text influences the representation of character perceptions of reality and how the handling of these discourses reveal the writer's awareness of the

discourses. Chapter Five presents the conclusion, summary and recommendations of the study.

The next chapter analyses the concept of place in the texts and relates the same to the characters' sense of identity.

2.0 Chapter Two: Conceptions of Place

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question. It discusses the concept of place in relation to space, belonging and identity. The argument is that certain places in the formerly colonised countries are suffused with discordant discourses. Place is therefore, to paraphrase Leonard Lutwack, more than simply a background to human action, and more than just setting; it is an active participant in human experience, in the practise and articulation of power, and in narrating of or challenging history (17ff). To understand the varied notions of place is crucial in appreciating persistent issues like ethnicity and belonging in postcolonial nations, and texts.

Though in “The Rani of Sirmur” Gayatri Spivak sees the idea of an uninscribed earth as contradictory, she realises that the imperial project of worlding is contingent on it. By purporting to give meaning to the land, worlding challenges the native’s perception of themselves by turning them into the ‘other’ of the coloniser. Spivak also demonstrates how in the process of subject-making, the coloniser projects heterogeneous images of themselves to the natives, whom they perceive as monolithic (254-7).

The postcolonial conflict is enacted and experienced in places and over places. It is for this reason that particular places are reified in narratives of belonging. As Edward Said argues, art is often implicated in geography even if this may not always be obvious. In his view: “Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which has meant that people have planned to have more

territory and therefore something must be done about its indigenous residents” (5).

The tendency to reify place and present it as the location of unique experiences is a feature of both colonialist and anti-colonialist discourses, thus part of the contestation over place is how it is to be defined in relation to claimants. Graham Huggan, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, when analysing what they call ‘crisis of belonging’ which characterises white settler’s relation to seized land in the colonies, distinguish between entitlement and belonging. Entitlement, a construct based on a ‘legal fiction’ often fails to produce the kind of affection necessary to transform possessions – land and house – into home (82). Possession, Huggan et al argue, differs from belonging. Belonging is dwelling in a place or inhabiting it while possession is a claim of entitlement; it results from an assertion of a right to live in a place (82). This crisis of belonging afflicts characters like Jack and other settlers in *Homing in*, and the white farmers in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*.

The conflict in these texts is over who has authority on land, who can speak for it and about it, whose story the land tells. By naming places, communities and individuals attempt not just to appropriate them to tell their histories but they also attempt to embed their identity within places so named.

For both the colonised and the colonizer, there is always need to form some relationship with a network of places, starting with the place of current experiences, in order to give meaning to life or advance an agenda, a political one, place in the colony and the post-colonial country is inscribed with various

political notions that either serve or counter the project of colonialism. This includes influencing the identity formation processes of the colonised by disturbing their prior relations to place through practices like the creation of the reserve and the white highlands, as in *Homing in* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*.

2.2 Dismantling the Hut Motif as Identity

Dismantling the hut motif is an attempt to theorise the preoccupation of the colonial subject with forging an identity in oppositional terms, since they are unable to break out of the restricting conceptions of place instituted by colonial ideology. In this motif the colonial subject seeks to locate themselves in the colonial and postcolonial state through various practises that can be read as escapes; mainly from places that the subject connects to a past that can no longer contain their new, mostly, aspired to status. This is a practice characterised by contradictions, for the subject can never fully leave these places, either physically or figuratively, and even when they think they have accomplished the departures, they realise that the new identity they seek can only have meaning in relation to the places they have ‘destroyed’ or escaped from.

To theorise this practice we consider Kosiya Kifefe in the novel by the same title as a character whose search of new directions is moored in a constant place: the village, whose symbol is his father’s hut. The destruction of this hut is the elusive goal that is expected to give his life meaning. His movements, both cognitive and physical, from the time he joins school till his death therefore get

their bearings from what he wishes to destroy. It is only through such demolitions that he can create the spaces that he considers necessary for re-imagining himself.

Kosiya Kifefe is the story of a man who, because he believes that nobody regards him with any respect, is determined to transform himself by destroying images of his childhood. Simultaneously he seeks to understand himself but the more he does so the more troubled and disoriented he becomes; he does not like what he thinks is an indelible mark on his identity: his humble and despised background. Therefore, knowing himself becomes a continuous movement away from the past. One image of this past that throughout his life he attempts to destroy by various practises is his father's homestead. Destroying his past however is difficult and mutilates him.

The text, which falls in the tradition of the Bildungsroman or the formation novel can, in the context of literary cartography, be read in both ways: as maps of the characters' lives created by the writer and as the writer's interpretation of the maps within which the characters operate, particularly the main character. Robert Tally, in *Spatiality*, captures this aspect of texts when he argues that the writer is both a map reader and a map maker. By imagining places and establishing relations among them, directional and semantic, the writer creates a world. However, since writers draw their data from the material world, they read the world by selecting from it, arranging and interpreting experiences and geography (49-60).

Given the period of its setting, *Kosiya Kifefe* is simultaneously a novel about individual and national formation. By choosing the Bildungsroman mode,

Arthur Gakwandi is able to trace the formation of national consciousness in Uganda and to analyse the perils of the process. To effectively do this he maps out several places of significance for apprehending Ugandan history and the identities that result from the same.

The places that the life of Kifefe moves through constitute maps of his experience, one that can be transposed to other elites in Uganda in that period. The movement among these places also gives the text its logic. According to Lutwack, “Place gets into literature in two ways, as idea and form: as attitudes about places and classes of places . . . and as materials for the forms he uses to render events, characters, and themes” (12). This argument describes the poetics of the Bildungsroman, especially one like *Kosiya Kifefe* that is set in a period of surging nationalist consciousness. It is a period in which both the individual and the nation are preoccupied with charting identities. For the individual, this includes re-establishing connection with newly liberated places; most often the newly independent character attempts to do this by retextualising the nation in an effort to erase the colonial inscriptions. This however, instead of being the supposed process of deletion, is actually a process of accumulation.

Kifefe’s growing awareness of himself and others cannot be separated from his movements through subjective-significant places. Indeed much of the novel’s meaning is embedded in the subjective arrangement of places. Some of the places that the formerly colonised subjects like Kifefe have to deal with are those through which colonialist ideology was circulated or reinforced. These also intersect with Kifefe’s personal interests. They include the city and the village, places of entertainment like bars, education institutions and residences.

Kifefe is confronted with the prospect of attempting to dismantle identities in which he is incorporated and which, therefore, whether he is aware of it or not, inform his world view in crucial ways. To dismantle the meanings that these places carry would consequently mean dismantling this postcolonial character. This task complicates Kifefe's concern with his personal past.

Land is associated with power and domination. Thus one of the cherished possessions of the new elite like Kifefe is land beyond his village of birth regardless of whether the land is owned by others or not. Although Kifefe lives in Kampala most of this adult life, he hungers for land in the rural areas and therefore acquires a large area in Rubanga, a place that is not home according to his and his community's conception of home. Though the land, which he acquires by "buying off" around twenty peasants, now measures around two miles, he still wants more and plans to arm-twist those who have refused to sell to him because they stand in his way of controlling this territory. He also lays claim to an unoccupied hill that is a communal grazing land on the grounds that it was allocated to him by the chief.

Kifefe's manner of acquiring this land, his attitude to those he bought it from and those that resist his attempts to acquire their land, and his use of the military to deal with this opposition re-enact colonialist practises and attitudes to land and its local inhabitants. Kifefe can only solidify his status as one of the elite in the newly independent nation by laying claim to land away from his birth place, dismissing those who inhabit the place as peasants, implying that they do not know how to use this land or do not have the capacity to use it profitably, a masculinist attitude that mimics the white settlers' attitude in

Homing in. This way Kifefe both differentiates himself from the peasants who he projects as his antithesis and in the process subverts race and community as categories of identity. Most important however is that by uprooting the peasants he vicariously destroys his peasant roots. This mocks nationalism and shared filiation to place, ideas that informed the struggle for independence, as primary categories of identity.

Alongside the desire to annihilate the image of what he now sees as his repugnant past – the hut – there exists a desire for an alternative place, conceived as an idyll rural place. This second, utopian, desire is behind his insatiable hunger for land. Thus Kifefe is torn between two contradictory emotions towards the rural place but underlying both of them is his association of rural land, and place in general, with notions of home and security; for though he may be preoccupied with the desire to annihilate his connections with his birth place and therefore consciously moves away from it, he moves towards another rural place, the place of fulfilment. Therefore as he wants to kill the personal history related to his village of birth he strives for an alternative site to construct a new history but finds this site elusive. Kifefe's desire for land is also an attempt to enter into a pre-constructed class identity but, as he realises, this is futile. "He felt like rebelling against society's expectation that he should own a banana garden, cows, goats and so forth and so forth" (184). For Kifefe, the quest for identity is largely motivated by external forces over which he has little control and it is this that contributes to the tension the next section examines.

2.3 Practices of Belonging

The conflict between the two forms of belonging, possession and entitlement, referred to in the introduction is not confined to the problematic category of race; neither does it end with colonialism. It is an intra-racial postcolonial issue as well, evidence of the continuities between colonialism and postcolonialism in the conceptions of place. Class, though not a new category, is emphasized as a form of social differentiation after independence. This continuity exposes the hollowness of the totalising hegemony of race that imposes unsustainable homogeneity in a bid to keep whole populations separate by describing them as different.

The silencing of race in Kifefe's dispossession of the peasants de-essentializes the categories of race and shared affinity to place as constituents of national identity. Entitlement, the former colonialists' tool, is now the basis of the African elites' claim; autochthony is rejected. This is authorised by the force of law, now controlled by the emergent elite.

Indeed the law dispossesses those unable to put up European-like or at least partly European-like houses on the land. According to Zisanga, "The law is very clear. Anybody without a title can be moved anytime when the land is allocated to a genuine developer. Only permanent developments are compensatable. . . Mud and wattle are not recognised in law as property, just like grass thatched structures are not" (168). The discourse of development is here appropriated to serve the new interests. This law's conception of development is structured by the same dichotomy of civilised versus backward

that informed the colonial expropriation of land on the basis that it was idle and needed to be developed. Law perpetuates colonial-era identities. It is this understanding of development that explains the settlers' activities in *Homing in*.

The law contemplates a different identity from the popular one based on race and autochthony. Indeed it rejects autochthony. It devalues and displaces Africans by categorising their houses as temporary and privileges the colonialists' concept of house and home. The description of grass thatched houses as structures buttresses the idea of the temporary nature of the Africans on the land as spelt out in the law about permanent possessions. The law therefore seeks to dislodge the sense of authenticity associated with traditional architecture and replaces it with a western one. This in effect others the Africans, through disregarding their knowledge. What they think is home is by law temporary; they never owned the land. If knowledge of the land and the consequent use it is put to are indicative of the closeness to it and possession of the same, then the law cited by Zisanga repudiates this. With this retrieval and deployment of Eurocentric colonialist language of development it can be seen that colonialism and racism are relative terms, neither is a fast category.

The notion of home is important in the politics of location and place in all the texts under study. For *Kosiya Kifefe*, in the conception of home, and belonging in general, the tension is between the rural area and the urban area. Whereas the village is presented as a place where the essence of African identity is located, this presentation reveals fissures when some of the places of communal significance in the village are subjected to analysis. One such place is the church, which is important in the Christmas celebrations, an event that sees

even those like Kifefe, whose attachment to the village is on the wane, go back to it, as Christmas can only be celebrated at home and home is the village. Though the putative reason for going to church on Christmas day is in keeping with the Christian tradition of honouring the birth of Jesus, the church becomes a place where many other meanings are inscribed and articulated.

To begin with, the church is conflated with home, as being home for Christmas is incomplete without the church. This situation is ironical and demonstrates the slippery nature of notions of purity. If going home is a simultaneous reconnection with the indigenous place and a rejection of the foreign one, the town, it is, metaphorically, a futile journey. In reality it is a journey to church – from one foreign place to another. Indeed those villagers like Bahemuka who consider themselves traditional regard the church as a foreign place and avoid it. That ‘Africans’ come back to the supposed core of their identity to commemorate an imported ritual is absurd. The contradictions in the situation, rather than show the village as a fulcrum of communal identity, both demonstrate that the notion of a stabilizing place is a construct (the Africans having left the town to the Indians and whites who they consider its owners) and illustrate the idea that, just like the town, the village lacks a unitary identity and cannot therefore confer the same to the different groups of people who associate with it. Further, it can be seen that the notion of home in the postcolony is dispersed and diffuse.

Kifefe’s evolving relation to places, especially his idea of home, is symptomatic of the instability of the notion of home in formerly colonised places. The attempt to establish firm connections to place is continually

undermined by reality, which Kifefe gradually, though not completely, comes to realise that he has not correctly apprehended. First he is caught in the communal definitions of home that firmly locate it in fixed places that apparently embody the essence of African ontology. It is frequently assumed that being black is synonymous with being African and it is this thinking that produces the village and rural places in general as essentially African and positions it in opposition to the city and towns as foreign. Thus, Kifefe's search for a sense of self is entangled with locating himself in communally approved places. This location is not just in the present but also in the past and is complicated by his own attitudes to these places. These attitudes reflect his experiences and are not always in agreement with dominant attitudes because to fully fit in those identities he aspires to, he has to erase aspects of his family history and replace them with others.

Home in popular thought among Africans in this text is in the village and, by extension, the rural areas. Africans associate the village or rural area on one hand with family, community and homogeneity; it is where the same tribe and clan live. These are the attributes that are supposed to underpin emotional attachment and identity. The town, on the other hand, is seen as a constitutively polluted place and is therefore incapable of sustaining the African identity that values pure communities. It is this idea that Kifefe at first accepts and uses in trying to understand his relationships to various places. This dualistic conceptualisation of place and how it relates to identity fails to apprehend the intensity of the interaction between places in the colonial and postcolonial

moment and the ability of places to reproduce themselves in other places, to reflect or refract other places in a reciprocal process.

By uncritically absorbing a calcified relation between physical place and the individual, what he believes to be the communal philosophy of place, Kifefe fails to anticipate his own shifting stances. The trajectory of his feelings is throughout characterised by ambiguity, starting from his days at Ntare School, the first time he has to live away from the village. While he thinks of the village-rural place as home and has not imagined of any other possibility, he hates the particular village where his parents live and has ambitions of relocating them to another one, something that represents his idea of erasing his embarrassing past that the village symbolises for him. This is a preoccupation that haunts him in various guises for long.

When he starts working and has experienced life in both Mbarara and Kampala, he realises that he cannot completely detach himself from any of the places he has lived. At this point he imagines an easy solution to the demands for loyalty that these places make on him because he fails to recognise the complexity of these demands; Mbarara however takes precedence over all the other places that claim his loyalty. He therefore feels that he belongs there. This is in spite of the majority of Mbarara's populace being Indian and therefore, in his view, Mbarara being a home for Indians. It is however partly for this reason that filiation to Mbarara does not substitute the village of his birth in his concept of home.

The moment of discovery or epiphany in Kifefe's experience, his quest to position himself socially in the world, is his final renunciation of the village

(200). The connection to the village, which is earlier presented as an essence of African identity, comes out as fiction and therefore as artificial. Here there is a contestation between the view that place has an inherent spirit that precedes human activity and the contention that it is human activity that gives place meaning. The former is, for example, the position held by Russell Pavlov in his introduction to *Border Crossings* when he argues that place is always significant, that its significance is not set in motion by some action. The village and town may be overloaded ideologically, in the sense that they signify many ideologies, but the two places are not mutually exclusive; neither are they immutable. The change of perspective or worldview in the narrative that comes with expansion of horizon challenges the supposed fixity of the relationship between place and identity; the idea which imbues the village with notions of permanence, security and home. These, apparently, are experiences that cannot be had in the city. Kifefe's inability to feel emotional attachment to the village – he instead feels that the village is so small a place to accommodate his new self – subverts the positioning of Africans against the Asians and whites on the basis of home place and also reveals the futility inherent in efforts at recovering or preserving places, especially the conception of home.

That presence of community in a place is a condition for the presence of home continually defers the meaning of home, for community is indistinct and changeable. This possibility explains why the experience of characters like Kifefe casts doubts on the idea of community that views it as constituting one's family and kin. As Kifefe realises, family may sometimes be fiction and community forms on myriad bases. Some of these bases are interaction and

shared interests – neither of which is static. In this context his family is not really his community as he barely interacts with them and neither do they share interests. His visits home are as a consequence rushed, brief and characterised by uneasiness. The stronger of his communities lies beyond the village, in Mbarara and Kampala, and though in some cases tribe is an ingredient in their constitution, it is neither key nor the only one. These communities instigate a dispersion of loyalty to places further than Mbarara and the village. He now simultaneously identifies with Mbarara and Kampala because of the presence of acquaintances in both towns; these are mainly fellow Ankole, and a few former schoolmates, but Kampala “can never be home” (105), yet he desires to live there and confesses that the village has nothing to offer him (121).

This rigid distinction between home and foreign place cannot withstand the effects of time and experience, which destabilise it. Thus the Manichean conceptualisation of the relationship between the town and rural place is untenable in this case. Later, for instance, Kifefe realises that he has unalterably become a city man, and his notion of home is, on the surface at least, similarly transformed and the village is divested with homeliness: “The village was a place to visit during weekends . . . and a place to be buried. Now not even Mbarara could provide the congenial social atmosphere that he needed to be happy” (200). The truth however, as he acknowledges himself is that it is his interests and therefore circle of friends that has changed. For the small business people who come to Kampala following Idi Amin’s expulsion of Asians, the village still remains home: “the city belonged to nobody” (217). The converse of

this is that nobody belonged to the city, and that the relationship between identity and place is tenuous.

Regarded as urban dwellers, Asians are constructed as homeless. Ugandans leave the towns to them in the evening when they retreat to the outskirts and during Christmas when they go back home: the rural home is the only true home and since the Asians have no rural homes in this text, their existence in this country is always precarious. Their status is that of guests. In the same way the city and most urban places are devalued by being divested for the kind of filial relationships that the rural areas are imbued with; the city is an artificial place suitable only for work. The occupants of such places are similarly rendered as homeless.

Indians are almost always presented either in business premises or out in the open, not in domestic surroundings; these places therefore define their identity. It is even suggested that Indians deliberately shield their domestic lives from non-Indians “The Indians came and went from their backyards whose doors were kept closed all the time as if they were hiding some racial secret” (45). This again is countered when after independence a number of Africans find themselves operating in non-domestic environments. The decay of the Indian shops juxtaposed against the emergence of African shops in the rural shopping centres on the way to Kifefe’s home is a metaphor of the decline in Asian presence and social power in the country, shop keeping being an integral part of the identity black Ugandans construct for them.

Indeed, trading is an identity marker that remains ambiguous throughout the text, suggesting positive and negative ideas. Kifefe’s own father is in the fish

trade. Though he gets little from it, he works honestly, but this tag is something Kifefe is embarrassed about. It is the reason, for instance, that the people Kifefe entertains on beer at the shopping centre on his way home for Christmas prevent one of them from bringing up the issue of how education had transformed the child of a fisherman. Many Ugandans later take to trading, even university graduates who initially looked down on it; it becomes a site of power and conflict.

Also set in Uganda in a comparable period is Peter Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle*. This is a novel set in the immediate pre-independent and post independent fictional East African country called Damibia which, from its history, is actually Uganda. It is the story of a young East African Goan, Joseph D'Souza, who grows up in Damibia, works in the colonial civil service but quits a few years before independence and joins politics almost by accident at the instigation of Robert Kyeyune, a prominent African politician. As Kyeyune's strategist and personal aide, D'Souza participates in the agitation for freedom. When Kyeyune becomes the Prime minister at independence he neither nominates D'Souza to parliament nor appoints him to the cabinet as he had promised earlier, ostensibly because he has realised that Damibia is not ready for an Asian minister yet.

Kyeyune instead retains him as an adviser even though he does not follow much of his advice. Apparently due to disillusionment, D'Souza is drawn into corruption, a very common practice that he has unsuccessfully fought. After making what he considers enough money, he flees to London as he fears that

corrupt and powerful politicians will eliminate him. It is in London that he decides to write about his life, as a confession.

D'Souza's life can be read as the story of the Goan in East Africa for not only does he locate his experience in the wider context of Goan history but also narrates other Asian and Goan experiences in East Africa whose lives frequently intersect, parallel or contradict his. His life is therefore a perspective from which the other Asian experiences can be analysed. This is a subtle rhetorical device through which Nazareth analyses, revises, and tries to understand both the collective and personal experiences of Asians in East Africa and how the same relate to the histories of Uganda and Kenya.

The Goans are entangled in so much historical and ontological crisscrossing that to lump them in the totalising category of Asian hardly even begins to describe them. Goa has over a period of four hundred years belonged to somebody else in relation to whom their identity has been conceived, as an appendage. They have alternated between being Indian and Portuguese and they almost became Chinese. The embedded character of Goa is aptly expressed by D'Souza's statement in reference to the situation in Goa after India re-conquered it from the Portuguese, who had ruled it for four hundred and fifty years, and China claims it: ". . . having got used to the idea of being Indian once again instead of Portuguese, Goans started wondering what it would be like to be Chinese" (3).

Both geographically and politically, Goa is a site of uncertain and contesting epistemologies, although for those Goans born in Goa and their descendants affiliation to the geographical Goa persists and compounds all other

identities that they experience in different places, including in East Africa. Home must always be conceived as a compound noun. Goa and its various compounds is therefore an ever evolving polysemous signifier. As a place, Goa is significant in how the characters who associate with it perceive themselves and others.

In spite of entanglements, East African Goans engage in practices that reveal the thinking that there is an essential Goan identity located in Goa, to which they must return in various ways to maintain the purity of their identity. The practices by which they return home include going to Goa on leave for six months after every four years, and belonging to local Goan Communities. The men, to ensure continuity, get their brides from Goa. These are practices of ensuring a constant presence of Goa in their lives even when they are away from it.

In the process of articulating their identity, some Goans ally themselves with the colonialists and deploy concepts from the colonialist discourse that portray Damibia as a jungle, incapable of being home. The colonisers therefore have an apparently God-given duty to civilise it. The corollary of this notion is that the occupants of the land before the coming of the colonisers were sub-human. This scenario exemplifies what Anne McClintock, in *The Imperial Leather*, considers a dominant trope in colonial discourse: “the symbolic displacement of the colonised into “anachronistic space” (30) so that though geographically the colonised live in a modern empire, they exist outside history, in an earlier time. Anachronistic space results from notions of empty and virgin land. The journey into this space reveals a basic contradiction in the colonial

mission: simultaneous movement in supposedly opposite directions, “proceeding forward in geographical space but backward in historical time, to what is figured as a prehistoric zone of racial and gender difference” (30).

Thus Bernie Rodrigues in *In a Brown Mantle* argues that colonies like Damibia were jungles before the white people transformed them into habitable places; Damibia which was “a mere swamp, a jungle, with a few mud huts, malaria and blackwater”, is “now. . . a veritable Jewel of Africa, the Apple of the Lord’s eye”(10). The British are here falsely credited with bestowing qualities of home on Damibia. This assertion is also supposed to affirm the East African Goans’ claim to Damibian identity.

The question that arises is if indeed Damibia is now a Jewel, why do many Goans other it? Since such Goans consider Damibia a foreign country and Goa as the only home, based mainly on memories of a Goa they hardly know, they are unwilling to identify with the Africans’ struggle for independence. This implies that they think they have no stake in reclaiming a foreign place, which in any case would deteriorate if Africans repossessed it.

Consequently for a number of Goans the independence of Damibia changes their relationship to the country, for among other reasons, the reason that the power over place has shifted to Africans and now notions of originality, home and citizenship are paramount. In a sense, the emphasis laid on originary narratives in the post-independent nations depicted in the novels under study can be understood as an appropriation and rebuttal of the colonial discovery narratives which, as Anne McClintock shows, is one of the imperial rituals through which male colonialists impose narratives on colonised land. However

since discovery is always preceded by other discoveries, its claims are always false. It is the colonialists' attempt to control the story of colonised land by designating themselves as its origin. Through these means they aim to control not just the story but also the origin and ownership of colonised land (28-30). Goans' scepticism of Africans' originary narratives may seem ironical because of many East African Goans' insistence in perceiving themselves in relation to the geographical Goa. The irony can however be explained by arguing that such Goans hope to weaken the blacks' Damibia-rooted identities that they think denies East African Goans a significant aspect of their identity.

The other reason for the change in Goan's relationship with Damibia is the idea among some of them that they are in East Africa to serve the British. The combined effect of these feelings is alienation. Even citizenship does not give them a sense of belonging, and inherited memory becomes a greater force for those born in Damibia than their lived experiences and personal histories. It is for this reason that some Africans interpret the occupations that the majority of the Goans and Asian are engaged in, business and the civil service, as removed from the land and therefore indicative of this group's foreignness. These occupations are contrasted to farming that is the main occupation among the Africans, which is considered as proof of autochthony.

Movement from some past home is a motif found in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *Homing in* too. Both texts present revisions of colonial narratives of land that were at the core of some colonial identities. The authors concurrently question what James Graham refers to as the idea of land

as nation (2), and, it may be added, land as home, implied in contesting nationalist narratives.

Demarcation of places and the concomitant empowering of some and disempowerment of others that is common in colonial practice and other systems of political domination is central in the process of conceptualization of home. Demarcations characterise spatial practices in *Homing in*.

Homing in is a novel about a middle class English woman's experience in colonial Kenya just before the Second World War through to the sixties. Most of this experience is on a settler farm initially jointly owned by her husband, Jack Smith, and his uncle before the latter's death. The farm is suggestive of the closed world not only of Ellen, the main character, but also of the white settlers who seek to create for themselves new lives away from England by establishing homes in Kenya, therefore homing in. This project is characterised by failures that capture the futility of the settlers' mission. Ellen relates to this mission both as a disinterested observer and an insider, by virtue of her being white and so, in the eyes of Africans, part of the oppressor class. In those moments when she seeks to understand the aspirations of the other whites, like her husband who shares not a small part of the patronising attitude that the farmers have towards the Africans, Ellen risks appearing as an apologist of the settler farmers' inconsiderate behaviour, by what amounts to her mitigating explanations of the settlers' conduct.

When Ellen moves to Kenya she is in her early twenties and is already a university trained teacher who has to resign from her job in England because of her marriage. She therefore does not come as a farmer but as a wife who expects

to make a home in Kenya despite the anticipated odds. She however quickly learns that the picture she was given by Jack, who has lived in Kenya for nine years, is incomplete. Likewise, she discovers that the gentlemanly mien that he showed in England was no more than a veneer; it cannot withstand the pressures the farm places on him. She therefore finds herself, against her wish, accepting a teaching job in the Asian school in Nakuru within four months of her arrival. Though the reason those who encourage her to take the job give her is that she will get bored on the farm, the real reason is that additional income is needed because that from farming is inadequate and unstable.

Her job and Jack's recruitment into the army to fight in the Second World War interfere with their family life, the setting up of a home she had imagined. They never get a chance to really bond. Their marriage is therefore characterised by regrets over unfulfilled wishes and missed chances but they manage to bring up two children, both born during the war. Jack eventually has to leave the farm to accept a job offer in Kitale in order to make ends meet. He dies there after which Ellen sells most of the land, leaving just the house and a yard. Later having retired, and the children having grown up and out of her hands, Ellen suffers a stroke that disables her and confines her to her compound. Until her death she lives on memories mostly triggered by the present that she shares with Martha, her servant. The memories are however mediated by her practical mind that accepts the futility of any efforts to replicate the conception of home as she knew it in her maiden days in England.

The main issues in Ellen's conception of her identity and that of Asians and Africans in relation to place are her changing ideas of home, citizenship and

her status on the farm. The irony of Ellen's position in relation to her ideas of home and citizenship succinctly capture the futility of the static conceptions of possession, belonging and nationality that inform these discourses. Ellen does not fulfil the legal requirements of belonging in either Kenya or Britain as she has not taken Kenyan citizenship and therefore requires an annual resident permit to live in her own house (165). At the same time, she has not fulfilled her tax obligations as a citizen in England; she confesses to not even understand how the system works. In effect, therefore, she has observed the legal requirements of citizenship of neither country. To her it is not the legal definition of home that matters but the memories and feeling she associates with the various places where she has lived. The effect of memories too changes and for her there's a point at which memories of her birth place lose their power to define home.

Although Ellen was born and brought up in England, she realises on her first and only visit back there after she marries and moves to Kenya that the England of her memories went with the Second World War. She can no longer feel at home in the present England and it is impossible to rely on a calcified image of England to sustain her relationship with the England that emerges after the war. Therefore when she leaves England after this visit she knows that she is not leaving home but rather going home (to Kenya). The Second World War is consequently important in our understanding of Ellen's awareness of herself, as it affects her perception of and relation to England.

Oludhe appropriates the war as a defining moment in the imagination of home though this sometimes risks producing rigid meanings of home. The war

is experienced differently by people in different places so that the British who are in Kenya during the war but are not combatants are forever cut off by disparate experiences from those who live through the war in England. Therefore, Ellen's conceptualisation of Kenya as home intensifies, for she now realises "that she was a stranger in Britain" since she had not been "initiated with the rest into war time experience" (95). This feeling, which is consistent with Ellen's attachment to her house on the farm, reveals that the home place is transferable. Her change of attitude towards England and Kenya also shows how events can become part of place meanings and contribute to perception of identity.

In the colonial context in which she entertains such notions her views are contestable for they clash with the majority of Africans' claim to the land as home and country, a stance which perceives the whites as foreigners. Considered in this context, Ellen's political and social identity, already complicated by her refusal to legalise her belonging to either Kenya or England, is rather unstable. In the minds of the Africans she is on the fringes of the Kenyan identity.

Ellen's relationship to England after she moves to Kenya echoes Salman Rushdie's observation that ". . . the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity" (12). The implication of this observation is however not that the past is irrelevant in the characters' conceptualisation of home but rather relying on fixed images of the past to imagine present homes, especially in a different (foreign) place, like is the case of the settlers, is misleading and produces inevitable frustrations. In the case of

Ellen, the past is merely a guide to her present ideas about self; she neither clings to it nor entirely abandons it.

Jack and Ellen's sense of belonging in relation to their dwelling differ in significant ways. For Jack the farm is his affirmation of belonging; therefore, home extends beyond the house to include the whole farm. Indeed for him the farm has more symbolic meaning of home than the house. In Ellen's conception home is conflated with the house and a sense of community, which in her view is not necessarily other white people nor is it her family; her perception of community is also not confined to those who live near her. Therefore her community is diverse, both in spatial terms and the type of people; it includes Martha, her former students and former colleagues, like Mrs Banerjee. It can be said therefore that Jack is fully incorporated into the settler masculinist perceptions of themselves as conquerors whose image is dependent on their ability to tame the land. While Jack is preoccupied with projecting difference in his relations to the land, Ellen desires to diminish the same and to, therefore, fully belong.

2.4 Places as Watchtowers

When certain places, especially small physically hemmed in ones are isolated to map assumed biological and social differences, they acquire the qualities of an observation post from which the other can be defined and described. When those who are included are within these places, they reassure themselves of their difference and view themselves as inhabiting an excluding zone. Presence in such places allows those inside to observe those outside. The

exclusion of the other from such places provides those who are included with ample distance from which to reflect on differences, in a way reinforcing their readings of the colonial subject usually done through everyday activities. Since the criteria for spatial exclusion is related to the dominant power, the most visible of these observation posts are those sanctioned by the colonial authorities, the 'members only club' being the most common.

The members' club is a multifaceted place in colonial and postcolonial East Africa, though one of its most overt meanings is as a metaphor for exclusivity, a marker of difference. This difference is initially racial, which the colonisers deploy to other non-white races but with the onset of independence, the new elites who take over power also inherit this infrastructure for demarcating difference. The club is hence a site for the articulation of power and class difference. Its new composition challenges race as constitutive of identity. Unlike in the Uganda of D'souza of *In a Brown Mantle* in which such a club is patronised by blacks, whites and Asians, that of Kifefe is mainly patronised by blacks because Asians have been expelled.

Although the members' club is most prominent in the texts that focus on race relations during and after colonialism, it is also present in different guises in those texts like *Going Down River Road* which may seem to be little concerned with colonial race relations. As shall be argued later, by zeroing in on the entertainment spots of the common citizens who are excluded from the 'conventional' clubs, Meja Mwangi provides a forum from which these citizens read themselves and by so doing imagine the life from which they are excluded, like the phony civil servant, James, who passes himself off as a big man yet he

cannot pay for his drink at Karara Centre. It is in *Homing in, The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* that the club inserts itself most obviously in politics of place and identity.

In *Homing in* the club is allied to the farm; it is an ideological position in the colonial spatial imagination of society. Its function as an ideological signifier is less subtle than places like the settler farm. The elevated terrain that the word ‘highlands’ implies reinforces the idea of observation post, just like the club. It is space from which the settlers can watch over the land and exercise control over the rest of the country; the focal points from which the most intense observation is made is the farm house. It is where, like the club, the settlers reassure themselves of their difference from the blacks whom they mostly keep out of the houses except as servants, and whose houses are located at a distance from the farm house, referred to by the reductive phrase ‘the quarters’ in *Homing in*. The elevation motif is particularly clear in the contrast implied between the Valley Shopping Centre and the highlands in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. The Indians’ residence and shops are in the valley so the white clients from the farms “trundled down” to go there (8). Figuratively the whites come down from their level, condescend, in order to mix with the Indians. The highlands are in a symbiotic relationship with the valley for they provide the main clientele for the shopping centre while the highlands in turn rely on the shopping centre for supplies, not just for provisions but for credit facilities. The attitude that the settlers go with to the valley however belies this relationship.

The very idea of club implies membership, and evokes the dichotomy of inclusion / exclusion. In the case of *Homing in* the membership of the club

before independence is on the basis of skin colour. All the white farmers, for instance, seem to be members of the club so that it consists part of their racial entitlements. The use of the definite article to refer to it and the absence of a modifying noun to limit the range of reference of the phrase ‘the club’ suggests that it is so central in the lives of the white community to require elaboration. It is the place from where those are included ‘observe’ the excluded through their conversations at the club informed by the duality of ‘us versus them’ as the following passage shows: ““These days I feel quite comfortable about helping with the clinic,”” a farmer’s wife commented at the Club. “The *bibis* are trying so hard, some of them even teach one another to read. You see, in the long run they want to be like *us*”” (*Homing* 132). It is such talk that marks the club as an observation post from where the whites read the blacks and assure themselves of their difference and superiority. It provides a setting for articulating white characters’ perception of non-whites.

The club is also the place where certain meanings of empire are reinforced, through racial rituals that are posited as national events, “On Bonfire Night or Empire Day you were expected to trek into the Club” (35). The pronoun ‘you’ by referring only to whites is exclusory. The suggestion that going to the club is the normal (expected) behaviour in these circumstances echoes the essentialist binary of civilised versus barbaric that conflates Western experience and values with human experience and values. By extension those not in the club on such days are similarly excluded from human experience. The club is a place of conversation, though this is a one sided one that risks contracting into a monologue; it is the kind of conversation that Trinh T. Minh-

ha describes as “ a conversation of ‘us’ with ‘us’ about ‘them.’(67). In Minh-ha’s discussion, this kind of conversation takes place between white people. It silences the othered ‘them’ whose presence in the site of conversation can only occur if authorised by the whites. The implication of this is that the type of the other that appears in these places is a mediated other, one that is distilled through the eyes of the observing ‘I’. The settlers’ perceive themselves as models of humanity, and simultaneously imply that black characters, by attempting to learn some aspects of the white people’s culture, are aspiring to the status of civilised human beings.

Although conceived as homogenising or a homegenic space, the club is actually a multifarious space that allows those it excludes to inhabit it through the anxiety of the club members over their differences, thus the need to reinforce the differences by using distancing words like ‘they’ and ‘us’. The seclusion that the club provides is, thus, inadequate to shield the colonialists, in the case of the colonial setting like in *Homing in*, from the disruptions in identity threatened by proximity to Africans and Asians. These contradictions reveal the futility of practices that attempt to monopolise space.

2.5 Difference and Resisting Geographies

In resisting colonialism and its ideas, Africans too sometimes endorse the colonialist discourse of difference by simply reversing its binaries. For instance Kyeyune’s construction of Damibia as heaven and England as hell risks masking the varying and changing conceptions of place. Place is associated with rigid ideas that suggest the incapability of such places to be identified with

anything else other than what the constructed place stands for. This rigidity simultaneously constructs these places as ‘other’ and promotes the race and place of the perceiver as the normal one. For instance, the policy of the post-independence government to “turn the towns of Damibia into visible African areas speckled with Asian and Europeans” (128), authorises displacement by merely reversing colonial practises. It is an artificial autochthony, so to speak, and therefore a futile practice. As mentioned elsewhere, many Africans do not regard the city as home. In any case the presence of Africans in the city does not by itself erase the discursive and ideological identities conflated with the place.

D'Souza's construction of the relation between geography and belonging among Africans is comparable to the perception of the same in *Kosiya Kifefe*; D'Souza thinks that urban areas constrict Africans and make them unable to be their true selves so that to know the real African one has to observe them in their *natural* context of the village. Since Africans' own people are in the village, D'Souza argues, it is there that the organic nature of the African identity is experienced. In the village, he says, the African is “more than an individual: he is part of a complex organism” (46). It is in the village therefore that, according to D'Souza, Kyeyune truly connects with the people and where his political campaigns are most effective. It is the place he can “reach out to the very soul of the organisms” (46). D'Souza's combination of spiritual and biological terms risks implying a fixed relation between African identity and the village. He takes this even further when he describes the growth of his relationship with Kyeyune and Africans: “And as I became part of him, I became part of them. One was continuously rewarded and refreshed by their faith and lack of sophistication”

(47). In this case, D'Souza seems to invoke a notion of purity that echoes the romanticised colonial ideal of the unspoilt African. This is the colonialist image of the unproblematic African.

D'Souza's use of the phrase "the people" in reference to rural Africans is equally significant as it concurrently depicts rural Africans as the authentic source of political power and divests Asians and urban Africans of qualities of authenticity. When D'Souza's picture of the rural African in Uganda is placed against Kifefe's in the same period, it is obvious that Kifefe's unflattering description of life in the village captures the complexity of social relations in the African village, and this does not allow for the possibility of a singular African village identity.

Such an identity, as Kwame Appiah has demonstrated, is problematic. He argues that though the African has an emergent identity (one that was non-existent before), the grounds on which the same has been premised are misleading. He consequently rejects such categories as race, history and "a shared metaphysics" as parameters for defining African identity (174). To buttress this argument Appiah demonstrates, through analysis of pan-Africanism, that group identity only works because members consider it natural. To validate this naturalness, however, the members resort to mystification. For this reason, there is a disjuncture between theory, beliefs in affinity, and practice. Proclaimed group identities have for instance failed in practice to produce harmony between groups among which, going by the stated grounds of affinity, it should have (174).

In light of such arguments as Appiah makes, it is difficult to reconcile the associations that D'Souza makes between African authenticity and location of political power if one considers the contradictory portrayal of the city in regard to the same arguments. Just like in *Kosiyā Kifefe*, blacks associate Asians with towns and all the negative connotations that towns carry. This is why, in *Kosiyā Kifefe*, blacks disassociate themselves from Mbarara and Kampala. But it is D'Souza's image of town in *In a Brown Mantle* that implies the deceptive nature of reality and how the same may lead to misreading: "At independence the economy was visibly in the hands of Asians and invisibly in the hands of the British and other Europeans. The Indians owned most of the shops and a few Indians were large industrialists" (110). That the city, and towns in general, are the putative seat of power but the same places, like Zindere, are rendered as places of African invisibility and Asian visibility problematises the dominant meaning of independence in the novel. Africans interpret independence as their reclamation of the entire Damibia in order to reconstitute it as an African country. A contradiction between the supposed source of power and where it is exercised is therefore a cause of Africans' misunderstanding of the role of Asians in the development of Damibia.

The portrayal of the city is generally dense but rarely are the its various layers deployed simultaneously; instead the city is often presented on different instances as the bastion of some exclusive experiences. But a recurrent portrayal of Zindere and Abala is a metaphor of power, and satiation. It is, therefore, the centre of the epistemological universe called the nation. Its connection with those identities that form around it however implies that it is characterised with

discord. Asian identity, it is assumed, is cosmopolitan and is situated in the city but the city is antithetical to African identity. It is also around the city that the elite or aspiring elite of all races assert their identity. They mostly do this by invoking the notion of centre and periphery; in this case rural area is constructed as remote and accessible. This inaccessibility should, however, be read as a metaphor if its nuances are to be appreciated. For the Asians, the city is their source of power but it is power that they can only exercise inconsistently through proxy. Asians in practice therefore have no independent or firm power base; even their relationship with the city is marked with anxiety because it is temporary. The contradiction here, as D'Souza puts it is that "Whereas the Asians were non-existent politically, physically they were too real" (128). To navigate this existential dilemma, those Asians who have economic power have to establish spaces in which this can be exercised; the common ground in this respect becomes the bar and the members' club.

2.6 The Settler Farm and Perceptions of Racial Identities

How individuals think, act and relate to the physical environment is crucial to perceptions of power, knowledge and belonging. It is within the physical environment that various forms of knowledge are contested and reaffirmed, and the dominant ones are perceived to possess power over that particular place. This could range from the whole country to smaller places like farms.

In considering how such places affect relationships, this section analyses how the settler farm and related places are incorporated into various discourses

that disseminate ideology. The dominant spatial arrangements in colonial Kenya are related to the manipulations of place that is instituted by colonial spatial strategies in the form of the reserve and the settler farm. These segregationist policies relate geography to inaccurate biological notions of difference, resulting in futile racial boundaries that are crossed more than they are obeyed.

In *Homing in*, Marjorie Oludhe invokes what may be called a counter hegemonic historical narrative of colonialism to creatively present settler life in Kenya. Through the realist mode, she weaves a narrative that sometimes veers into the realm of history; the trajectory of the narrative mirrors the economic and social situation in colonial Kenya as discussed in such historical texts like Bruce Berman's *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*. This is not to say that Oludhe merely retells history. The point instead is that hers is a narrative firmly grounded in history but one which utilises a complex narrative style to negotiate between material and creative history. For instance, the effective deployment of subjective narrative techniques gives the text the tone of a mediated memoir. The text can thus be read as a character's personal experience that is, inevitably, intertwined with other narratives of the period, collective and personal ones.

Oludhe maps the colonial and post-colonial characters' lives in order to reveal those places that inform their experiences and which their actions influence. A close analysis of the geographical aspect of this mapping shows that the particular types of white characters that Oludhe deals with, settlers and their affiliates, operate in a fairly circumscribed territory that has particular points of significance to their project of creating a homeland and defining,

reinforcing and legitimising the identities they wish for themselves or which they imagine they have.

The irony of the colonial settlement as, for example, seen in Jack and Ellen's search for an ideal holiday destination is that when they settle on African land they attempt to transform it into home by creating equivalent topologies of significance like the house garden. This attempt, while intended to make the strange place familiar, also estranges them from the place, as part of the motivation for leaving Europe was to seek adventure in mysterious Africa. Bored on the farms through which they have tried to reproduce home, they hunger for more authentic places in the colony for relaxation (82).

The farm is a significant place in the settler colony as it anchors the relationship of the settlers to the colony; it is an enactment of European property laws, as through the farms the idea of private property is emphasized and fiercely protected by the settlers. This can be seen in Jack's fierce defence of his right to the land because he had inherited it from his uncle and paid his mortgage and taxes "like a man" (68). Farms, therefore, enact difference not just between Africans and the settlers but also among the settlers themselves. Among this latter category such issues as the size of one's land, its productivity and how one manages their labourers are identity inscribing practices. Indeed Jack on more than one occasion cites his farm management practices to show how different he is from the typical settler.

The farm is also a territory where racial statuses are enacted, through its layout. The centre of the typical farm's topology is the farm house which because of its poly-signifying qualities acquires the status of metaphor. The

farm house is both the commercial and cultural centre of the farm; both the activities on the farm and the labourers' lives are controlled from it. In the case of Jacks' farm, for instance, Njoroge, the headman, and Musa, the clerk report on activities of the farm to the house and take instructions from it. The farm house can also be seen as a node in the colonial government's network as it is through it that policies are relayed to the labourers. Jack's disapproval of Ellen's offer of tea to Njoroge illustrates the integral position of the farm house in the spatial articulation of difference and, therefore, identity; the labourers can only be served food, if at all, at the back. This restriction puts them in their place. The sequence of Ellen's introductory tour of the farm maps hierarchical relations that structure the various places on the farm. After the house the first place is the pasture, then the maize field, the oat field, the vegetable garden, the dairy and the barn. "They saved for another day the little conical huts that housed the staff" (31). This tour can be seen as Jack and Uncle's spatial statement to Ellen on their conception of the social reality of the farm, their place in relation to their physical and social environment.

The farm is heavily implicated in the colonial politics of identity and entitlement, for it is one of the means through which colonial racial ideology is given physical form. For this reason, the state of the farm reflects the state of the empire; their fortunes are entwined.

Although identities on the farm are a construct, they are fairly rigid. Africans cannot be on the farm as anything other than as servants and this situation requires that they accept the whites as masters, an arrangement the settlers enforce through pretence and demonstrativeness because they are not

really masters of the land, as seen through their failure to make it yield. Indeed Jack and Uncle's farming venture is a failure. While it would be simplistic to argue that failure in farming is confined to the settlers, it is all the same true that their failure is more significant as they anchor their identity on their supposed superior farming skills, and the same are at the base of their claim on the land.

Since the farm and what it stands for is the reason for the presence of the settlers in Kenya, it means a lot to them, as its fortunes are linked to their own destiny and identity. The failure of the farm is disastrous not just in a commercial sense but also in a political and social perspective; it implies collective and individual failures of some of the key underpinnings of the colonial project. For colonial ideology in general, such failures challenge the notions of racial supremacy that held that the natives had no use for the land since they lacked skills to make it productive and therefore they neither occupied nor owned it. It is through the supposed superior skills of the settlers that the land would be brought to yield; the land, therefore, becomes a site for articulating Eurocentric identities.

At the individual level the farm carries a strong sense of colonialist masculinity. It is the concretisation of the aspirations of the white machismo whose image is crafted around adventure, grit and fearlessness. These concepts are intended to portray white male farmers as self made men who dared go and succeed in wild Africa. The failure of their farming ventures thus collapses such identities in the eyes of their women and the non-farmer whites both in the colony and in the metropolis. The resulting frustration is dealt with through aggression. Jack, for instance, drinks a lot and becomes uncommunicative and

arrogant. His marriage whose passion has been on the wane now practically dies; there is almost no love at all left between him and Ellen so that his decision to accept the job offer in Kitale is an escape from both the farm and the marriage. Since his family and friends in Britain know him as a farmer. He however abandons this occupation when he becomes a storekeeper and supervisor, which are non-farm based duties. The new occupations suggest an acceptance that his ideas about the land, his ownership of which he has always aggressively asserted, were wrong. That Jack's failure is not isolated but shared by many white farmers challenges the settler farmers' belief in their superior skills and knowledge of the land. Such failure can be read as a resistance by the land of the epistemological assumptions of the settlers that totally disregard African epistemologies. It is also a challenge to the identities the settlers construct for themselves and for the Africans.

It can also be argued that the machismo image enacted in relation to the land is subverted by the tenacity of women like Ellen who recognise their own limitations as human beings and encourage a consultative approach in managing the affairs of the land. Unlike Jack, her identity is not entangled with the farm and the masculinity with which the same is invested.

The forest is a metonym for the struggle for freedom and the colonial government's response to it. The Africans' choice of the forest as a site for their struggle can be read as a resistance against the colonialists' dualist view of civilisation and the identities related to such a view. By voluntarily positioning themselves in a place marginalised in colonialist discourses, Africans undermine the authority of such discourses, in which the forest or jungle connotes the

barbaric. The forest has positive implications for those Africans that resist colonialism in various forms; it is a place where myths of resistance emerge. Whereas this aspect is only alluded to in *Homing in*, it is extensively referred to in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*.

The image settlers like Jack portray of themselves among the Africans is more of an aspiration to the status of aristocracy than an indication of their real worth. Bruce Berman describes this aspect of the settlers in Kenya thus: “The upper-class character of white settlement in Kenya was more a matter of social origin or aspiration than actual wealth; aside from a few wealthy individuals . . . the vast majority of settlers suffered from chronic cash shortages” (132). Jack goes through this kind of situation although in his case the middle class status of his family was already threatened even in London. In reality, he goes to Kenya in search of a means of survival, for there are not many openings for people like him in England. Contrasted to him, Ellen comes from a fairly stable middle class family which survives the vicissitudes of the Second World War. Unlike, Jack, Ellen actually gives up a stable job in London to go to Kenya. In her case, therefore, relocation is an act of sacrifice. This difference in background partly accounts for the contrasting styles in the management of the workers on the farm. Jack is temperamental and is driven by a desire to assert his superiority over the Africans, a most likely consequence of his apprehension about social security; he is on the brink of the white middle class and his unsuccessful farming threatens to see him slide further down. Ellen is more considerate in her dealings with the workers of whose humanity she is always conscious.

Through the farms and the reserves the colonialists engage in a cartographic practice by segregating the land into racial and class spaces. Berman argues that colonial settler farming in Kenya was not so much aimed at creating a profitable venture but at recreating a life based on non-capitalist and pre-capitalist values, and that the nucleus of this way of life was the smaller settler group (134). This is the group in which Jack falls. According to Berman, the settlement was supposed to create a white man's country in Kenya. In relation to this, he adds, those settlers with aristocratic leanings attempted to reproduce an aristocratic-like life in Kenya to compensate for their inability to lead such a kind of life in Britain because of either dwindling finances or their ineligibility for family inheritance. The standards that this type of farmers set in Kenya became the aspiration of most settlers. This style of life included annual leave at the coast, educating children in Britain and membership to clubs (134-5). Indeed to distinguish themselves from the African farmers, the settlers regard only themselves as the real farmers and construct the Africans as peasants, so that 'farmer' is a privileged and boundary inscribing term that excludes the Africans from the high status it implies. At the Nakuru Festival the Africans who keep sheep are described as shepherds while the whites who rear cattle are farmers (131).

This dichotomy shows how the farm is a site for the articulation and enactment of varied but interrelated discourses of identity, the underlying principle in all of them being exclusionism. In addition to its other meanings and symbolism, the farm is, thus a signifier of aspirations, one of the places in a constellation of places, that is supposed to validate an image that the white

settlers have constructed for themselves. This is the image authorised by the invented tradition that Terence Ranger discusses in “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa.”

The reserve, from which a number of the servants at the farms come, is, in the binaries that were characteristic of colonialists’ perception of places, the opposite of the farm. The settlers think of the reserve in terms of disease, poverty and general backwardness, a perception undermined by the advances that reserves have made in the education of Africans. The African children on the farms have no access to schools and so whatever formal education they get is crude. The farmers themselves disapprove of, and therefore discourage, formal education for Africans. By spatial segregation the colonialists seek to draw cultural maps in which the places designated black are devalued. The segregation that the creation of reserves in Kenya results in is what J.D. Overton considers as manipulation of space for social control (163).

Spatial manipulation is indeed employed by the colonialists in various forms to confine the colonised within certain geographies and identities. Besides the reserves, the colonial authorities relocate whole villages to new villages. These new villages are meant to control Africans and limit their contact with both the past and the forest, which is a synecdoche for the armed struggle against colonialism. As Martha reminisces in *Homing in*, the old villages were burnt after the relocation; this form of destruction was meant to completely destroy the past that Africans had lived in this village, including the sense of community and memories that sustained the people’s relation to the place after the many acts of displacement they had been taken through by the colonialists,

including eviction by the settlers. It is through memories of their activities in the now changed places that the Africans can maintain a sense of autochthony, which is an important element of their identity. So the transplanting into new villages is in essence supposed to indicate the beginning of the Africans' history in these places and to elevate the colonialists to the position of creator of this history.

This simultaneously validates the colonialists' claim to the land as it implies that their settlement on it predates that of the Africans, whose narratives of origin are apparently annihilated through the process of translocation and burning. Additionally, these processes reinforce the colonialists' claim to special knowledge of the land and of Africans. However, as seen through Martha's reminiscence, the memories of Africans were not contained or tied to specific locations, the burnt houses, and could therefore be continued elsewhere "The family hearth [itself a symbol of communalism] and the evenings of storytelling lay far beyond that" (182). This destruction and construction motif is replicated in post-independent Kenya, as seen in *Going Down River Road*.

In *Homing in*, the demarcation of places as a strategy of initiating discontinuities in knowledge and sense of community are futile. The demarcation reveals the colonialists' misapprehension of the relationship between place and memory in the minds of the colonised among whom the different acts of dislocation makes the need to remember greater in order to sustain resistance and justify their efforts to reclaim lost territory. The old and new villages can be understood in the context of spatial manipulation of the colonialists: through this practise they intended to instigate discontinuities in

affiliation to place and thus invalidate the possibility of claims being laid on land on the basis of traditions developed in places by virtue of extended occupation. In this regard such spatial disruptions are concomitantly temporal disruptions.

A crucial aspect of tradition that this manipulation disrupts is the African land tenure system, mainly based on inheritance and one of whose functions is to ensure a sense of community. The intended effect of the disruption is to disorient Africans and prevent the formation of land based identities. This disorientation, conversely, serves the purpose of portraying the colonial authorities as benevolent ancestor-figures and elevates them to legends. It is through such practices that modern myths are supposed to be created in order to cement the settlers', and other colonialists' claim to the land, and to overwrite earlier texts of location and originality. Thus the ideas of the old and the new village become important signposts in the affected Africans' memories of family life. Their lives are effectively divided into two so that they have to frequently demarcate experience as belonging to either the new or the old village.

The absurdity of the colonial philosophy expressed as spatial manipulation is succinctly captured in Ellen's analysis of the whites' fierce defence of the need to keep the Africans in their 'place'. This defence translates to denying blacks any chance to improve their material circumstances and possibly change the current servant-status of the majority of them. Indeed Jack's statement on this reflects a common way of thinking among the whites: "Give these Kikuyu an inch [. . .] and they'll take an ell" (100). It is this patronising attitude that Ellen deconstructs:

She supposed the separate land units were meant to make it easier for people – separate school, separate housing locations, separate entrances in some shops. And yet when she used to study the Gazette, back in the war days, to find out about controlled prices and scheduled crops, she had been surprised to find out how much was not differentiated – notices of bankruptcy, court cases, probate, all in one list, regardless of race, and no doubt charged at the same rate. Even contributions to war charities were gazetted – ten shillings was a lot for an African worker to give. So why not one staff list, one ration card? (100-1)

The import of Ellen's statement is the perceptions of blacks by whites are variable. Whites view black people as people with similar obligations only in those legal contexts that require payment of levies.

Spatial differentiation or allocation of separate places as a way of articulating difference is here revealed as fiction, for in reality the differences that such places indicate are erased by practices in everyday life. It may even be argued further that lived experience not only subverts but also reverses the hierarchies that the separate places impose

The settlement of the colonialists is one of the practises in colonialism that ignores pre-colonial norms and other meanings associated with land. This involves the (re)naming of the land, usually with the names of the white owners. When the white owners give up the land, as is the case of Jack Smith, their imprints still remain because the effects of their occupation is so strong as to overshadow the meanings it overwrote. Thus, Africans who buy Jack's farm are

referred to as the settlement people and the farm is a settlement farm. This name implies transplantation and is intended to supplant the indigeneity narratives of the Africans with the entitlement narratives of the colonialists. Such entitlement narratives have the potential of making mythical figures out of the white settlers like Jack since they acquire the status of founders. That the cooperative which buys this land is largely constituted by Jack's former employees buttresses this image; these employees could be read as a community or family whose ancestor is Jack. In this way the white settler farms produce counter originary narratives, which contest the African ones. It is through these narratives that the Africans, who, by implication, had been shunted from human experience, are reabsorbed into human history and designated as descendants.

Independence therefore disrupts conceptual maps that most of the whites had relied on in their social navigation of the land. This is a map that excluded black places. The existential map of the settler world in Kenya has, as seen in their lives, clear coordinates that unsuccessfully passes over the meanings of those places associated with blackness and emphasizes 'white' places. The points of significance in the colonial world presented in *Homing in* are the farm, school, club and the office all of which interact and reinforce each other. The centre of this is the mother country. The mono-racial schools and the club dramatise not just the idea of racial superiority but also class status. In this regard some whites do not think the local European-only schools capable of producing the right kind of English person and so sent their children to England for school. The folly of this conceptualisation of place, as seen in *Kosiya Kifefe*

and *In a Brown Mantle* is that it assumes a steady relationship between place and particular identities.

The farms are a practise of ‘worlding’, a concept which, as Gayatri Spivak explains it, is a form of inscription on a supposedly unscribed (colonised) territory. (Rani, 253-4). The mere presence of the farms in *Homing in* is supposed to signal that it is English territory. For this reason no effort is spared in eradicating other presences within the territory designated white. The white highlands in this case are a trope for the imperial gaze as they suggest a metaphorical high point from which the land is suffused with whiteness. To reinforce this mission Africans are relegated to the lower lying areas, metaphorically below the whites, from where they are to receive the civilizing influence of the whites. Any presence of Africans in the highlands in a status other than that of a servant is considered pollution, an idea given authority of law through the term ‘squatter’. Thus all those Africans practising farming in the white highlands, unless they are wage earning labourers who farm part time on small plots of land on their bosses’ land, are classified as squatters and, therefore, liable to eviction. Even for those full time labourers who do some farming on the side, it is not permitted for them to grow certain crops. The metaphor of pollutants in this regard gains more potency in its association of Africans with disease; they cannot keep cows in their quarters on the white farms because they pose a threat to the pure breeds of the whites, breeds whose decimation would be a setback in the purist identity of the highlands. It is for this reason that the workers on Jack’s farm have to either send their native breeds of cattle to the reserves or dispose of them. The word squatter is therefore

not only a devalued form of identity but also one which white settlers use exclusively to describe a category of Africans.

Another strategy employed in retaining the identity of the highlands is the enticement of more whites to immigrate; the soldier settlement scheme after the Second World War is part of this strategy: “to keep the white highlands white” (96). Since these practices are inseparable from notions of the palimpsest with which the settlers and the whole colonial entourage approach the colony, they constitute a form of ‘worlding’ through which the settlers falsely believe they give meaning to the colonised place and therefore bring it into the international economy. The palimpsest, a critical concept in postcolonial studies, is, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin explain it, the idea that culture, and even place, is a dense text because it contains various ‘inscriptions’. In colonised places and cultures, the inscriptions are in many cases a result of assumptions by colonisers that whichever meanings they give to these cultures and places are the first and only ones. Such an approach to colonised places and cultures implies that colonialists must first engage in a kind of erasure of previous meanings before they inscribe places and cultures with their own meanings. According to McClintock in *The Imperial Leather*, the emptying of colonised land of meaning is achieved through designating it as empty or virgin. “Within patriarchal narratives”, she argues, “to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency”. This condition thus invites “male insemination of history, language and reason” (30). Since it is however not possible to erase existing and previous meanings, the new meanings, Ashcroft et al elaborate,

just add to the latter to produce layers or accretions of meanings (*Postcolonial Studies*, 159-60)

The settler farms in *Homing in* are in the context of the palimpsest regarded as integral to Kenyan economy but the African ‘gardens’ are a threat. The contrast in terms of identity translates to white farmers versus black squatters. This view is supportable from, among other issues, the focus given to the white owned farms in the war period; they are the ones given subsidies and allowed to grow what are classified as crucial crops. On the contrary African farming is all but criminalised and the areas they can engage in farming severely restricted. The relative success of African farming compared to the settler farmers however undermines the colonialist presumptions. Indeed as some white farmers reveal, they fear competition from the Africans if they are allowed to grow the same crops as whites. In this respect the farms once more come across as sites where colonial discourses of identity are dramatised and resisted.

The settler farm’s significance in relation to colonial discourse derives not just from its material form, as geographic space, but more from the cultural meanings it is imbued with and which it is meant to communicate. So implicated are these meanings in the colonial project that many times the settler is conflated with the colonialist, which undermines the image of a professional farmer and businessperson that the settler imagines for themselves. One consequence of this conflation is that the settler farm has to be, among other significations, seen as a political place. Caroline Rosenthal’s observation about how spaces gain meaning is in this regard apt: “Spaces are not significant in and by themselves but are produced as intelligible entities by how we organize them, by the social

practices and symbolic ways in which we set them off from other spaces” (11). Thus the significance of the farm emanates from how it is distinguished from the un-reclaimed, and thus, non-humanised land around. The farm is an invasive image, albeit a versatile one, that Oludhe appropriates for various purposes.

2.7 Landscape, the *Duka* and Asian Identity

More than in the other texts, the *Duka* receives a sustained treatment in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*; it's a depiction that may, given the race of the author, be considered an insider perspective. This text is the story of Vikram Lall, a Kenyan character of Asian extraction. It is what could be called a fictional autobiography, one conceived as a confession. The need to confess is not just a product of Vikram's sense of guilt at how he hurt his country but it is also an elaboration of the mitigating circumstances that necessitate the wrong doing. Thus the text is simultaneously an admission of guilt and its denial. The impression Vikram Lall creates of himself is that of a misunderstood character caught in a situation he could do little to change. The story spans the colonial and postcolonial periods in Kenya and partly Tanzania. It is a story of growing up in a racially segregated colony in which political and cultural forces threaten to destroy sensitive personalities seeking to express their individuality against a background of cultural conservatism. In narrating his story, Vikram also tells the stories of Deepa, his sister who falls in love with their childhood playmate, Njoroge. This love is fiercely opposed by her family which manages to scuttle it but with tragic consequences. The text therefore also narrates the story of Njoroge, a boy who lives with his labourer uncle, Mwangi, because the whereabouts of his parents are unknown.

The places in which the characters operate are as important in the formation of their sensibilities and organisation of their social relations as are the events they are involved in. A dominant theme, one which preoccupies

Vikram and a number of the characters is the desire to understand oneself and to belong. In these endeavours a number of places are significant. Besides the physical terrain, the railway and the activities around it are significant. The other places are residential areas and the houses, the shop and places of worship.

Landscape in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* is both shared and contested ideas: it can be argued that the most significant landscapes in the text are those constructed by various groups; these constructions overlay the physical topography with metaphorical ones. It is in this context that such places as the shopping centres, and even the railway, need to be analysed.

Positioned in what may be regarded as an in-between, the *duka* (Asian shop) is often a trope for contradictory ideas about the Asian. These ideas range from thrift to exploitation. The *duka* is what sustains the white farmers' sense of home, as the shops stock items through which the whites can connect to England. In another sense, the shop represents what the conservative white farmers regard as the unbridled ambition of the Asians. In *Homing in*, Asian identity is constantly constructed in relation to the business of which the shop is a metaphor. Due to this linkage, the shop is a devalued place in the opinion of most white farmers, who think of it as an occupation below farming, yet it is the shop that sustains the farms. Indeed the shop and the farm are interdependent. The close association of Asians and shops however threatens crossing into stereotype.

The shop is a central metaphor in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. On the surface it is the work place of Indian families like Lall and Sheila; it is also the main shopping place for some of the white settlers. These surface

meanings however both suggest and conceal other meanings. In the first place, the shop is an ideologically saturated place in relation to the Indian identity in colonial and post colonial East Africa. It is often used in popular narratives as a synecdoche of the Indian's avarice, disconnectedness from the mainstream of the East African socio-political life and as evidence of their alliance to colonial exploitation. This thinking about the Indian is strengthened by the prominent role that the Indian shop plays in the colonial economy. In *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* however, the shop is sometimes deployed as a counter hegemonic image that revises the figure of the shop as a dehumanising place and instead appropriates it as a humanising one. For instance in the case of Vikram's grandfather, establishing a shop was an act of reinvention, not continuity. Through it he takes a step further from the past that defined his lineage in India, and one his son is reminded about by Sheila's father when he visits him to ask for her hand in marriage. Such traditional lineages had defined him as a member of a caste and through this circumscribed his identity, since his personality is supposed to automatically feed from the attributes of his caste. It is through becoming a shopkeeper, something that he is only able to do after working as a labourer, that he frees himself from his Indian past and sets a new tradition for his family.

In view of this endeavour, the shop is integral in the founder narratives that inform the colonial and postcolonial stances towards land and belonging to the various nations. It is the closest monument of Vikram's ancestors' thrift and assertion of belonging, for though the railway may be the primary architecture by which the Indians inscribe their contribution to the construction of the

modern Kenyan nation state, they are not in control of the process. They are just labourers, whose presence on the rail or its property is even disdained by the whites after its completion.

The shop is however their own initiative which presents a new phase in their lives: emancipation from the status of labourers. In this way, therefore, the shop can be read as part of the material history of the Indians. As in most of the Indian dwellings that the narrator presents in this text, the shop encompasses both the secular and the spiritual, aspects which are enmeshed in the Indian consciousness making it possible to think of any of their dwellings simultaneously as a place of worship and home, in addition to the other functions the place may ordinarily have.

The shops are hence composite images that also function as a bulwark against cultural and economic invasion. This characteristic is perhaps best captured by Vikram's description of the relationship between his mother, Sheila, and Mrs Bruce. Sheila dislikes Mrs Bruce but the two have to meet often during the latter's weekly shopping at the Lall's shop. In this case the shop is both a contact zone between these two races whose relationship is marked by ambiguities, and a buffer zone that precludes any possibility of total acceptance by the two of each other. It also provides them a medium for expressing difference.

The image of the shop when Vikram says that her mother "would look peevisly from behind the sanctuary of our shop" (16), is effective in its multiple suggestiveness of exclusivity, spirituality, aloofness, domination and superiority. The shop in this case affords Sheila a vantage point of superiority

from which she can contemplate Mrs Bruce and yet remain immune from her gaze or influence. It is a position of power authorised by culture and history as interpreted by the individual (this distinction is important for it would be erroneous to argue that culture, whether Indian or African, authorises uniform interpretations of reality, including the meaning of places. Indeed in the case of Sheila, her reliance on cultural images to make familiar what is unfamiliar and therefore domesticate it can be partly attributed to her relatively recent arrival from India, whose myths, legends and deities she seamlessly transposes and adapts to the new land. Her reading of the colonial and the postcolonial place is as a result markedly differently from Lall, who seeks to close any gaps that may exist between him and the mother country, England, in the comprehension of the colony. His integrationist strategies are also meant to signify difference between him and the othered blacks.). The sanctuary is a position of power in this context as it implies knowledge of the self and the other, Mrs Bruce. It provides Sheila with armour that she uses in her steely dealings with Mrs Bruce.

The shop is simultaneously a trope for Lal's quest to locate himself within the values and aspirations of the empire. This is a contradictory quest which, if it is to be realised, requires him to renounce certain aspects of his Indian identity and history that he cherishes, and which he often deploys as a bulwark against cultural contamination— as he does when he opposes the possibility of Deepa choosing whom to marry on the grounds that they are not Europeans. The shop, for Lal, is a site where the varied sides of his subjectivity can be practised; it affords him the chance to enter the lives of the whites – through the knowledge he gains about their financial difficulties, and the

observations he makes about their lifestyles from their purchases. This knowledge, combined with the frequent contact he has with the white shoppers, enables him to vicariously live the lives of his white customers and still be able to analyse the same from different cultural standpoints. He is simultaneously different from the whites and affiliated to them.

As is the case for Sheila, the shop gives Lall knowledge and power, but unlike Sheila who is able to utilise this power by retaining her dignity, Lall thinks of himself as inadequate; his identity is incomplete if it is not tied to England in concrete ways. He therefore cherishes relationships with Europeans, initiated at the shop. Whatever memorabilia he can gather from them –like the postcard –become his link to the European world he yearns for. Lall’s attitude to place exemplifies how images of the metropolis influence and structure conceptions of place and self among some of the colonised. Indeed Lall’s case imitates colonial discourses’ centre-periphery binarism. London is the “centre of his universe” (104). The emphasis on place as an orienting metaphor in the formation of identity is achieved by the string of images that parallel London: “It was his Mecca, his Jerusalem. A visit there conferred status . . .” (104). This rigid, and hierarchical, attitude to geography cannot allow Lall to leverage the apparent power that the centrality of his shop in the lives of the white farmers gives him, as by confining himself within the imperial grid, he decentres himself and consequently has to accept subservient status. It, therefore, often appears as if the white families do him a favour by shopping in his shop.

The shop as an enactment of power is a motif in this text that often revises the codified hierarchical power structure of colonial ideology. That the

shops are necessary to the survival of the farmers in times of economic difficulties, like in cases of crop failure, casts the shopkeepers as both accomplices to colonialism and as power brokers. The items which the white farmers purchase and the terms of purchase are indicators of how well or badly the farms are doing. The supposed racial superiority of the whites and of the occupations, on which this superiority is hinged, like farming, is undermined by the centrality of the Indian shops in their lives, and the stability of the shops in comparison with the instability of the farms. In connection to this the contradictory images, of the farm as a masculine image and the shop as an ungendered one, complicate the colonial hierarchical and dualist view of place in which the privileged significant places in relation to the colonial state are associated with the putative superior values of the colonisers and set in opposition to the devalued ones.

The shop, in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* can in this context be contrasted to Jack's farm in *Homing in* to show that Indian enterprise, one of the aspects of Indian life in the colony that the shop reveals, is a more integrated place (than the farm) that deemphasizes gender, especially masculinity, which the farm emphasizes. Jack consciously tries to keep Ellen from the management of the farm which he considers his domain and whose success would validate the desired image of the self-made colonial adventurer, a builder of the nation. He is therefore resentful of Ellen's inquiries about the affairs of the farm, even though it is clear that it is failing. The inevitable failure which leads to the sale of the land mirrors the unravelling of the unsymmetrical colonial spatial narrative. It is in contrast to this contrast, without however essentializing either,

that the shop emerges as a counter hegemonic image for its ability to reveal an alternative that does not simply respond to the dominant colonial one, but instead captures the dynamic and multifaceted nature of social reality.

In a slightly different context, Lindsay Aegerter describes a comparable scenario when she argues against the sort of postcolonial and feminist criticism that merely reacts to colonialism and therefore ends up reproducing its binaries. Such criticism, she adds, fixes the colonised “into a single moment of their history, and fails to recognise the larger historical context of their cultures, traditions, and languages” (67). The shop is not a mere reaction to the colonial places but rather part of the lived experience of some Asian families. That the Lal family later relocates and abandons shop keeping divests the shop of any essentialist qualities that would have implied a codification of the relationship between place and cultural identity. This change of place is also indicative of the discontinuities that characterise the notion of Asian cultural identity in East Africa.

2.8 Places, Myth and Rooting of Identity

The idea of discontinuity in relation to place, which differentiates the second and third generation Asians in East Africa from the first generation like Sheila is challenged by all these generations’ attempts to bind themselves to the ‘new’ land through such practices like memory and cultural translation. Anand Lall and his progeny’s claim to Kenya is on the basis of his and other Coolies’ sacrifices, through the railway, to the making of Kenya. These coolies’

involvement in the railway transcends the physical and merges with the realm of legend and myth, therefore initiating a historical reference point from which they can assert a sort of autochthony. The effort expended on the construction and the perseverance it called for are deployed as images of sacrifice that bind the lives and histories of the Coolies to the land. The merger of the physical into the spiritual and mental in this construction shows a total bond between the Coolies and the land, one that mirrors the vicissitudes of the country and imitates its topography. The result of this relationship is knowledge of the land, the lay of it, its dangers and opportunities. It is by this knowledge of place, something comparable to the settlers' claim of knowledge of the land through the farm in *Homing in*, that belonging to East Africa is negotiated. This tempestuous engagement with the land is captured by Vikram Lall in this lyrical passage:

The railway running from Mombasa to Kampala [. . .] was our claim to the land. Mile upon mile, rail next to thirty-foot rail, fishplate to follow fishplate, it had been laid by my grandfather and his fellow Punjabi labourers [. . .]recruited from an assortment of towns in northwest India and brought to an alien, beautiful, and wild country at the dawn of the twentieth century. Our people had sweated on it, had died on it: they had been carried away in their weary sleep or even wide awake by man-eating lions of magical ferocity and cunning, crushed under avalanches of blasted rock, speared and macheted as proxies of the whites by angry Kamba, Kikuyu, and Nandi warriors,

infected with malaria, sleeping sickness. . .They had taken the line strenuously and persistently six hundred miles from the Swahili coast, up through desert, bush, and grassland into the lush fertile highlands of the Kikuyu, then through forest down the Rift Valley and back up to a height of eight thousand feet, before bringing it to descend gently and finally to the great lake Victoria-Nyanza that was the heart of what became beloved Africa. (16-7)

The motif of sacrifice can be extended to read the construction of the railway as an indigenising ritual that blurs the notion of difference on the basis of race, black and Asian. It is, as pointed out earlier, an initiator of ordinary myths and legends, some of the strategies with which the Asians attempt to deal with the discontinuity implied by relocation. Myths and legends are similarly important for the Asians like Sheila whose lineage has nothing to do with the railway, as they come to East Africa long after its completion, in locating themselves and sustaining a sense of home. Unlike the railway group, Sheila imports myths and legends and adapts them to the new land to ensure continuity. For her efforts to succeed local places and events have to be roped into this imported grid that implies hierarchical conceptions of reality in a manner comparable to colonial ideology.

Myths are significant in the characters' construction of identities; it is what links them to the past—giving their experience and identity depth—and enables them to make sense of the present. This significance of place-related myths is true for both Indians and Africans, as seen through Vikram and

Njoroge. For these myths to really make sense and give the characters the stability that they yearn for, transplantations and therefore transformation have to occur. Njoroge appropriates the Biblical story of Moses to counter the colonialists' portrayal of Jomo as the devil. He instead presents Jomo as Moses. This subverts the colonialists' hierarchy of values by linking the black people's aspirations for freedom to that of the Israelites. The meaning here is that Jomo's fight is God-sanctioned and, by extension therefore the blacks are God's people and their oppressors are the antithesis of salvation—the other. Since Moses is supposed to lead the Israelites out of bondage to the promised land, there is a further suggestion that the Africans are exiled, displaced through the altering of their relationship to the place by the colonial laws which remove their authority over the land. It is to this former relationship with the land that the Africans wish to return but the same is never achieved.

Similarly Indians born in Kenya like Vikram have to transplant myths conceived in relation to a place that is itself a mystery. They have to double decode for the myths to give them the sense of identity that Sheila and Mahesh derive from the same through the shared memories of the enactment of the myths in lived places. Since in the racial politics of colonial Kenya Indians occupy a privileged position relative to Africans, those among them like Sheila who share in this conceptualization of racial relationships easily transplant the myths to the new place. Since a hierarchy of colours is crucial to Sheila's view of the world and the need to retain her position in it as the opposite of darkness, it motivates her evaluation of others and self.

Her relocation to Africa, rather than alter her attachment to the myths, actually strengthens it. A performance of the myth of Rama, for instance, in which Africans and Africa occupy a devalued place, seems to reinforce her longing for India in order to occupy the real top position in the colour scheme denied her in Kenya by the whites. This attempt to recover the past and deploy it as a means of constituting self in the present is however complicated in various ways: her home city is now no longer India, but Pakistan, and she cannot go back to it; and the images that she uses in a bid to concretise the reality-endorsing view of myths is irreversibly hybridized and syncretised (the performance of *anantakadi*, relay singing game, shows by its hopscotch of songs how mixed the supposed pure cultures are) and therefore challenges not just her view but also, subtly, her apprehension of reality. Her husband and brother, the two males that she values because they anchor her in a cherished past and who she therefore elevates to mythical heroes, undermine this action when they doubt the logic of the myths and therefore their identity-constituting power, and through their ambivalent attitudes to India.

Lal's India is constructed mainly through images of revulsion while for Mahesh India is the place of his father – for most of the main characters, relation to India is traced or remembered through the father; the mother figure is absent for various reasons. To Lal, India is the country of his father; to Vikram it is the land of his grandfather; Sheila's longing for India is because, among other things, it will reunite her with her father. This is contrary to the common image of mother country. In Sheila's importation of the myth of Rama, Africa is the evil forest, the othered place. This corresponds with the white colonials'

identification of the forest with evil, which Mau Mau represents as it fights the white's mission of inscribing white values on Kenya.

Through decorations, the house in Nakuru can be transformed into the mythical Ayodhya, the enchanted place of ancient India (78). For Vikram and other Indians that were born in Kenya, India must remain just a name which is invoked from time to time in order to reassure themselves of their roots and to interpret the present place and events. It is the source of their spirituality which is therefore rendered even more abstract by the fact that it is tied to a land that exists mainly in their imagination and the stories that they are told about it. Even to those born in India like Vikram's grandfather, it is now just a vague memory, continuously dimmed by time which relegates it to the realm of myth but it is a contested myth, since those like Vikram's father who visits India for the first time as adults bring back mostly negative images.

The Lals' house accentuates the multi-dimensional character of the Asians by suggesting that the business place and the dwelling place are not really separate but rather a continuation of each other; they are complimentary. What differentiates them is the degree to which certain elements of their lives are emphasized. This is so given that family life extends from the house to the shop. All the same, as pointed out earlier, the house encompasses the social and the spiritual in its material contents. The statuettes of Indian gods that Sheila keeps incorporate the spiritual realm into the daily lives of the Lalls. Borrowing Rita Barnard's argument about the white suburban home in Nadine Gordimer's fiction, it can be argued that, as the farm house on the settler farms in *Homing in*, the Indian family house reproduces racialised and gendered subjectivities.

Middle class Indian houses such as Lal's are meeting places for the extended family where family and communal history are reasserted and emphasised but where in the process fissures emerge challenging the image of the house as an image of a communal Indian identity, as seen in the ideological differences between Mashesh Uncle and Anand Lal's family. Lal and his brothers consider Mahesh a communist, a devalued term that describes anybody whose ideals are antithetical to the capitalist aspirations of the emergent Indian middle class, aspirations that are modelled along those of the white middle and upper classes in the colony.

On the basis of his political views Mahesh is excluded from the communal identity but on the basis of his skin pigmentation, is included. He is seen as a threat to the interests of the Indians, especially their claims on the land, which in the colonial times, at least in the eyes of characters like Lall, his brothers and his wife, are dependent on the continued British control of the country. That Mahesh's being referred to as a Bengali by Mr, Innes annoys his sister more than his being called a communist because Bengali's are dark skinned but the Punjabi that Mahesh is are not, reveals yet another fissure in the attempts of the Asians at presenting a united communal identity. Though the Bengali too may be Indians, they are excluded from Sheila's perception of communal identity. Indeed colour images and the varied social meanings they suggest are motifs in this house and they influence how, especially Sheila, relates to the rest of the house.

Notions of racial purity are therefore reinforced in the house with its various racial ideological images of which religious symbols and diet are

integral. It is a house designed to produce racially conscious individuals as the race is deemed to be under siege from the white and black races. This explains the emphasis on racially acceptable marriage partners, for marriage is conflated with the establishment of a house. In this connection, the house also emerges as an ambivalent image, capable of suggesting contradictory ideas. It is at once the multiracial place that is able to accommodate the black child, Njoroge, as a member of the household and refuse to countenance the possibility of his joining the family through marriage, for Sheila wants to have a 'normal' family (214). It is also the house that has had Annie's picture as a valued memento because of Vikram's attachment to her but which cannot envisage the possibility of a white bride for Vikram.

This kind of ambivalence-characterised house produces individuals that are unable to reconcile the contradictions in their lives. Vikram finds it difficult to love any woman because he cannot overcome his childhood love for Annie, a white child killed together with her family by the Mau Mau. In Vikram's view, the attachment to Annie is an affliction which has deformed the 'essential core' in him "so that for a large part of my adult life I remained detached from almost everything around me" (11). Deepa too falls in love in childhood and though this love grows stronger with time, objections by the family cannot allow it to lead to marriage. Like Vikram, Deepa is unable to overcome this relationship and therefore is unable to live a happy married life.

The different places around the house and within it similarly carry different meanings, some of which defy the passage of time. One feature of the Asian middle class family such as the Lals is the garden; the garden acquires

many meanings that make it an integral part of the family heirlooms. It is both history and a narrative, and it carries different memories for the family members. Vikram associates the plants in the garden at their Nakuru house with the different personalities that have played central parts in his life: his parents, Mrs Bruce, Annie and Mwangi. Indeed the garden is crucial in the characterization of Mwangi as it expresses an aspect of his nature that the colonial government wishes to erase. He values life and tends to the vulnerable, like children. His act of placing champeli flowers in Deepa and Annie's hair shows his kind nature that cannot be confined by the racial stereotypes that the colonial government has constructed of blacks like him. Vikram recognises this kind nature of Mwangi and indeed the two incidents, placing flowers in Annie and Deepa's hair and Mwangi's comment that "they are evil those who kill children" (132), are etched in his mind.

While some places speak to communities, others speak to individuals in the process of negotiating identity and in the attempts of characters to reconcile conflicting loyalties. The physical qualities of Valley Shopping spatially represent the fragmented nature of the colonial society and the resulting unequal power relations. That the hierarchical thinking about race should be concretised in the positioning of shops on the basis of the race of their clientele, an arrangement that occludes the African from the economic sphere of the country, shows the essentialist tendencies of colonialism in regard to social relations.

The shopping centre is zoned; the side of the mall where the Lals' shop is located is a European zone. The opposite end of the mall is the Indian section. Like the European side, the Indian side is marked as such by the kind of stores,

for example, an Asian owned sweet shop. This territorialisation is reinforced by the English brand names, in the case of the Lal's shop, and indigenous Indian snack names in that of Lakshmi Sweets (8). In both cases the names of the merchandise are synecdochic; they gesture to various identities, memories and related ideologies. The merchandise invoke reductive stereotypical images of race for effect, as seen in the contrast that Vikram makes between the two sides: "Lakshmi Sweets was always bustling at midmorning, Indian families having stopped over in their cars for bhajias, samosas [. . .] and tea, which they consumed noisily and with gusto. By comparison our end was sedate, orderly. . ." (8).

This description is trapped in a discourse of the orient, the kind that Edward Said analyses in *Orientalism*; the European, with whom Vikram, mockingly, identify in this passage define themselves in relation to the Asian who is set in opposition to them (European). The African is neither a consumer nor an owner in this spatial organisation which is supposed to mirror the economic structure of Kenya from the perspective of the colonialists; Njoroge, for instance, cannot be with his Asian friends at Arnaunti's, a white place, because of his skin colour.

It is significant that the shopping centre should be the place where children from races that are kept apart from each other by colonial policies should meet to play, especially in the Indian subsection. This place reinforces the perception of Vikram as situated in the In-between. The Asian shop is a place of convergence of the three races; the whites as customers, the Asians as

the business people who take pride in serving the whites and the blacks as the servants of both.

That the children play together though they are from three different races undermines both the stated and unstated social boundaries implied by the geography of the shopping centre and the seemingly fixed roles the adults from these races occupy. The children are however not entirely outside the grip of colonial ideas; the games they play and the roles they assign themselves point to the pervasive nature of colonial ideas on race. Their games not only reveal the meanings that the adults attach to place but they also both subvert and reinforce the same. While the physical relationship of the different shops to each other and the racial ideas that they suggest, represents the dominant map of racial relations as conceived under colonialism, the traversing of the same by the children is an attempt at remapping. The understanding and demarcation of place in this novel is therefore characterized not by a duality but several overlapping dualities that show the instability inherent in attempts to assign fixed meanings to places based on constructions of reality rather than on lived experiences. The images that each race has of the other are subtly projected in the children's plays.

While *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* deals with both the natural and constructed, environments, *Going Down River Road* mainly focuses on an environment that is a construct both figuratively and metaphorically. The writing of such an environment is therefore more nuanced.

To place the discussion of these environments in context, it is necessary to briefly comment on the text first. *Going Down River Road*, which has already

been referred to in earlier sections, is the story of Ben and Ocholla, two friends who work on a construction site. Ben, the main character is a former soldier who lost his job after falling for the temptation of easy money offered by criminals who needed weapons to stage a bank robbery but the deal goes wrong when the criminals die in the course of the robbery through mishandling the weapons. After Ben is discovered and loses his job it is a spiral down the social ladder. His efforts at getting a decent job are frustrated so he ends up a manual labourer. His situation becomes worse after Wini, a woman he has been living with, deserts him to marry her white boss, leaving him with her son, Baby. Later he is kicked out of the rented room they shared with her because the landlord claims he was not part of the tenancy agreement. He then moves in with Ben in the latter's shanty. The trio's life is circumscribed by the places they operate in. This life metaphorically goes down River Road, as the title suggests.

The suggestively named Development House is the place where Ben and Ocholla spend most of their time. This building is significant to the plot of this novel for the progression of the two is linked; indeed its completion only happens at the very end of the text. It is a trope for the constructedness of the city whose progress is antithetical to the progress in the lives of the two, for as it goes up floor by floor the lives of this pair either deteriorates or only progresses superficially. The obvious irony here is the contrast between the deprived lives of the workers who can barely afford their basic necessities like food and shelter – Ocholla actually has nowhere to sleep one night since his shack has been demolished by the city authorities so he has to wander about in the city after

work (74) – and their participation in developing the city. This is a city in which they cannot live; they exist and move on its margins.

Development House can be seen as a microcosm of postcolonial Kenya, especially its socio-economic spaces. The edifice that is the building is akin to the totalizing categories used to describe social reality in post independent Africa, in the process masking the many differences within it. The confined place in which the characters act highlights the racial tensions that characterise relations between Asians and Africans but also reveals the constructed nature of such racial identities, therefore showing the fissures that characterise them. Neither ‘Asian’ nor ‘African’ is a singular identity. Regional, economic, familial and individual differences disrupt and therefore problematise these categories. For instance interpretation of past events, whether public or personal affect present relations, like that between Onesmus and Ben, both Africans. Onesmus blames Ben for his dismissal from the army following a botched deal with Mbugua, a criminal that approached Ben for weapons and was killed by the same weapons while trying to use them. The invocation of this incident causes tension at the construction site which only dissipates after Ocholla kills Onesmus in an apparent accident following the latter’s previous failed attempts on Ben’s life.

The constant conflict between Yussuf and Kanji Bhai though both are supposed to be Asians in a place where skin colour is the putative primary identity marker further reveals the fickleness of such identities. Kanji Bhai is really offended at being referred to as a goddamn Indian not because of the word ‘goddamn’ but because he is not from India but Pakistan. Yussuf is actually

closer to Ben than he is to any of the Asian characters on the site. Ben is the only person he almost understands on the building site (99). The site is therefore a place where racial prejudices are perpetuated, especially because the characters are cast in roles defined by such prejudices. Yussuf, the foreman, is cast as a representative of Indian exploitation while the labourers, all Africans – for the other Indians on the site are specialists – are the exploited. This attempt at calcification of identities is however challenged by the reality at the site. Yussuf and Kanji Bhai, an Asian foreman, are actually as frustrated and harassed as the labourers. Yussuf is the object of the workers' frustration. Indeed searching for him is a constant activity at the construction site. The same is appropriated as a motif that organises the worker's spatial practices. As the narrator observes about Yussuf, "Foremanship could be fun if he did not have so many desperate labourers crying his name so loud" (89).

The construction site is also the place where race as a category of analysing exploitation is rendered deficient; both Kanji Bhai and Yussuf refer to each other in racially derogatory terms, showing how the word Indian and related terms like Punjabi and Gujarati have predetermined negative connotations. All the same, the social relations and identities at the site are too complicated to be explained by dualist ideas about race that tend to simplify it into the 'exploited' and 'exploiter' race. Kanji Bhai, though superficially presented, manages to come through as a complex character who is as much a victim of the economic difficulties in the city as are the other workers. He is doubly a victim because, unlike the black workers, he is discriminated because Africans consider him strange and make fun of his dietary habits. He cannot,

unlike them, voice his frustration at the rising cost of food at the workers' parliament because they regard him as an outsider; neither can he enter into racial solidarity with any of the so called Indian characters with whom he is lumped into one racial category. He is one of the most misunderstood and therefore the loneliest character on the building site.

Kwame Appiah's argument on race *In My Father's House* is articulate in its understanding of situations such as prevails at this construction site in which people seem to be abbreviated as products of racial experiences and therefore manifestations of racial identities. He argues that race is an underdetermined term which is, therefore, of little use in understanding the real world, as attempts to define it almost always lead to contradictions and exclusions, and that though it may be possible to define it from a biological perspective, the resultant concept fails to meet the demands of the diverse dimensions the term has acquired in the real world, for race, being an ideology, falls in the realm of culture. In other words, race as a concept for understanding and explaining the world is of limited value. It may start from the physical but its real ramifications are meant to be felt in the concomitant social sphere, but in this area the concept becomes too clouded (28 ff).

The racial relations articulated through the building site may be understood in terms of Anthony Giddens' argument about place. In his view place is the setting of social action but the difference between pre-modern and modern place is that space and place in pre-modern societies are synonymous but in modernity place is severed from space so that "locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them.

What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the "visible form" of the locale conceals the distanced relations which determine its nature" (18-9). The presentation of racial relations at the construction site in *Going Down River Road* is thus an articulation of discourses that precede the characters' presence in this site. However attempts to articulate ideology through Kanji Bhai and Yussuf at the site constantly comes up against obstacles that reveal its shortcomings. In this regard, one can argue that individual places through their own dynamics may counteract influences from distant places.

The contestation of meaning of place in *Going Down River Road* is most stark in the renaming/ naming of destroyed places like the three hotels. In the place where the hotels formerly stood is to be built Sunshine Hotel. The construction board that announces the proposed hotel is ideologically burdened. What it says effaces the labourers, and by extension those low class blacks that had either owned the hotels or eaten there. The names on the board show the interlocutors over the controversial site as tourists, whites and Asians: the message addresses tourists or would be patrons of the hotel, and the senders are the white and Asian architects, contractors, electricians and decorators. The local elite speak in the background, through issuing work permits to the contractors, a suggestion that the contractors are not citizens. The boldness of the construction board seeks to conceal the meanings that the previous users attached to this place. The job classifications at Development House parallels the construction board of the proposed Sunshine Hotel in what it implies about racial hierarchy:

There were different job classifications on the site. The highest-placed were masons and carpenters, a mixture of Asians and a few Africans who did specialised jobs. There were the electricians who just hung around and made sure the sockets and switches were taken care of . . . There were the lorry drivers who spent most of the time riding in and out of the compound . . . The labourers' class constituted the majority of the people on the site. Ben and Ocholla belonged to this group. (13)

The labourer class is constituted by Africans only. Far from depicting racial relations as static, this stratification hints at the changeability of power relations. The misleadingly named policy of Africanisation is a conscious effort to de-essentialize race roles but it is involved in the essentialist discourse that conflates geography with race, for it is part of the purist endeavours to reclaim place in which 'African' is an unproblematic category that can be easily described by skin colour.

Through the building, the workers create a sense of place. They appropriate the site of capital's accretion to inscribe their own meanings (225) but these are always under threat from the impersonal nature of the places that capital creates. With the completion of the building they will be alienated from it (224). In this case race, especially Asian and African, is irrelevant. While for the developers of these buildings a construction site is just a business place to be regarded impersonally, for the labourers it is a community-constituting place. The narrator philosophically grasps this situation: "It is bad to finish anything; worse of all a lovable giant like Development House. With its completion also

comes the extinction of a familiar atmosphere” (225). This atmosphere is not transferable to a new site, for it involves familial relationships built alongside Development House. The divisions that keep the workers apart actually narrow towards the end of the novel so that even those that had been considered reclusive like Ben, Ocholla and the four Banianis find common ground for engagement with the rest of the workers, so for the first time they all join in the workers’ parliament.

2.9 Movement as Reading and Writing

Since colonialism, as presented in *Homing in* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, is enforced in spatial terms, among other strategies, it has implications for movement. For this reason travel and walking are activities that accrue layers of meaning; the overall resistance against the discursive practises of colonialism can itself be conceived as a journey, and this is mirrored in various acts. The travel motif thus constitutes a significant element of the idea of cultural mapping, in which memory is a crucial text.

The train journey that the Lals make from Nakuru to Mombasa lends itself to a number of interpretations besides the touristic motif that it situates itself in. It can be interpreted as both a reassertion of belonging to the land and a pilgrimage; it is also discovery of the self through knowledge of the physical environment. The new feelings that their experience of the places they pass through gives them is captured by Vikram thus: “It was to become aware of one’s world, *physically*, for the first time in a manner I had never done before, whose universe had encompassed our housing estate and my school, the shop

and my friends, the tree lined street outside that brought people in and out of our neighbourhood” (105).

The place imagery in the passage above expresses Vikram’s realisation that Asian-Kenyans’ identity, though related to place, cannot be defined by the constricting geography of his family’s Nakuru neighbourhood which, since it is mediated by segregationist norms of colonialism, obscures the real world. Similarly the imagery articulates the idea that the physical journey is a metaphoric expansion of horizons that enables the characters to establish their coordinates from outside the racial strictures of the valley where they live. Figuratively therefore, they rise out of the valley to face the full range of potentialities of their environment. Considered this way, the journey is simultaneously a survey, an act of gaining knowledge, and a liberation from colonial spatial control. The kind of mapping that Vikram and his kin undertake is subjective and reflective. Unlike the colonial project, it does not impose totalising meanings on the land, but instead reads it in relation to their personal and communal identities. Indeed as Robert Tally observes, albeit in a different context, there is a complex relationship “between space and literature, mapping and writing, description and narration” and that “In order to know a place, one maps it, but one also reads and narrates it” (50-1). Thus, it can be said that Vikram’s description of topography is not so much an accumulation of visual detail as it is an elaboration of subjective meanings. Reading, narrating and becoming aware in this case are combined.

As a trope, the train encapsulates the spatial practices that underpin colonial ideology: its segmented form allows the colonial authorities to exhibit

their hierarchical conception of race by confining the blacks to the third class. The train is also, as Vikram witnesses on one occasion, part of the means used to transport blacks to reserves; it is thus in this regard an imperial tool which though ostensibly meant to open up East Africa for the whites and other races, closes places for the blacks. This image of the train in colonial East Africa is comparable to what Rita Barnard says of the same in Apartheid South Africa when she notes that it is one of the ideologically saturated places within the South African sociospatial text, though it is not always among the obvious examples; that from the perspective of the blacks, “it was clearly a tool of oppression, indispensable to the maintenance of residential segregation and to the exploitation of labor” (7). By participating in ‘bringing into existence’ colonised space through transporting Africans to the reserves, the train is imagined in the mould of an ancestor figure (one that concomitantly disrupts myths of origin) that transforms those transported into particular types of colonial subjects. The use of the train as a means of displacement points to its capacity to fragment identities and keep them in a state of constant fluidity, which is crucial to the colonialists’ desire to invalidate any claims to place on the basis of autochthony.

The train is thus implicated in an irony of colonial practice in relation to place and identity: the disruption of all connection that the colonized has to the land. The product is meant to be a perpetually transitory and, therefore, malleable subject. The two related spatial practices, moving blacks around and confining them to specific locations, construct whites as the focal point in the compass of black characters’ experience. The colonizers cling to specific places,

like the farm and certain residential areas which they rely on to establish their imagined communities and to differentiate themselves from the colonized whose sense of community they try to erase through a legal system that legitimizes and invalidates those identities that threaten colonial identity. This situation prevails in both *Homing in* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. In the former text, for instance the farms, like Jack's, are a point from which the black servants depart and return. The parts of their lives that are significant are only those lived on or in relation to the farm; to leave the farm is to enter anonymity. Likewise the shopping centre, the Indian residential areas and the settler farms are the places through which the black characters are 'known' in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*.

All the principal characters' in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* are formed in relation to place and it is the different attitudes that they have towards the same places- partly as a result of dissimilar experiences or lack of the same in these places that is responsible for some of the most intense conflicts in the novel. The text abounds with historically charged places but this history means different things to different people. The historical significance of the railway line and towns like Nakuru to the Asians and the Africans is, for instance, varied. The Nairobi that this text presents is a middle class one. To see the other Nairobi that this text only hints at, the Nairobi of the lower classes, we now consider *Going Down River Road*.

Motion characterises the lives of the principal characters in *Going Down River Road*, figuring them as nomads, but it is motion that produces little progress; their deprived situation allows only for circuitous movement. The little

vertical change that occurs is mainly downwards. Their daily lives are characterised by monotony; it consists of going to and from work, moving up and down the floors of the slowly progressing building they work on – where they are engaged in meaningless activities for long stretches so that moving about the place is an attempt to get their bearings—and roaming the streets looking for some distraction. The roaming though is not random and has its own coordinates: Karara Centre, The Capricorn, and The New Eden. Apart from the practical needs for motion, the characters' movements are also an act of defiance, a resistance against the norms of the city that is implied through, among other things, its spatial organisation. Thus when they walk in the city they prefer back lanes and alleys; these are invariably dirty and deserted. The entertainment spots that they frequent are the places where those who are outside the mainstream economy operate. In a sense therefore Ben and Ocholla operate in an alternative world, one that is parallel to that circumscribed by the map and regulations of the city. Their efforts consist in attempting to find ways around the difficult economic circumstances: since they cannot afford conventional beer on a regular basis, they resort to Karara; unable to afford food in the hotels and restaurants recognised by law, they eat in improvised hotels; because rents are high and landlords are a problem, they resort to living in shanties. Theirs is therefore an alternative reality that both vies with and complements the dominant reality that is presented by various spatial organisations of the city.

The narrator maps characters' lives on the city landscape so that concurrent with the story of the characters is the geographic narrative of the city.

This reveals not one map but several overlain maps. In other words although one can trace the map of characters like Ben and Ocholla fairly clearly, the descriptions of the physical movements that they make daily not just within their place of work but also within the city, the coordinates of Kanji Bhai and Yussuf's lives are rather hazy, going by the physical points of significance for each of them. Kanji Bhai, for instance, seems to oscillate between the toilet and whatever spot he happens to be working on in Development House at the moment. The toilet is therefore one of the coordinates in his identity. It is indeed an image of the contempt with which the narrator conceptualizes Bhai, the position of his race in the racial hierarchy perceived by some Africans, for whom the narrator sometimes seems to speak, and a whole range of other attitudes towards Asians and Bhai. The toilet seems to be a place that tells the story of a whole class of people, especially the toilets at places of residence and the ones at entertainment joints, like Karara Centre.

Yussuf's movements and the coordinates that define his character show a man who is preoccupied with hiding; consequently many characters on the construction site become preoccupied with both finding and understanding him. His race is the most common reference point that the others make use of in describing him but even this is grossly inadequate to pin him down as the word 'Indian' means a multiplicity of things in the text. His frequent hurried movements and the difficulty others have in locating his elusive identity, illustrate the frustrations that the construction workers go through in trying to understand him. Yussuf and Bhai can therefore be seen as characters who defy attempts to pin down their identity by confining them to narrow and even

despised places. In the case of Bhai, the attempt to tie him to the toilet and to devalue the same is undermined by the crucial role the toilet plays in the lives of the central characters, some of whom fruitlessly try to avoid it but end up in other toilets, albeit unconventional ones. At Karara Centre for instance, Ben's movements are always between the toilet and his seat. He invariably finds the toilet revolting but ends up using it somehow or resorting to the nearest hidden place. At home too he cannot avoid the equally nauseating toilet. The toilet may be an ambiguous image but it certainly does not define the essence of ethnic or racial identities. It is a potent reminder to the poor, across races, of their shared and ubiquitous circumstances.

Though most Asian characters are caricatured and flat, Kanji Bhai resists this. His positive work ethic and practical nature, as contrasted to The Hyena, his African assistant, undermine the image some characters want to portray of him; however by denying him the language with which to articulate his worldview in a way that makes sense to the others, the writer intends to silence him. Bhai nevertheless manages to come across as a fairly complex character.

Identity in *Kosiya Kifefe* too is in a sense conceived as a movement. Kifefe can be considered as a travelling character in the sense that his life is a journey from the village to the city through various centres. His arrival in places like Ntare High School, Mbarara and Kampala represents a running away from other places and a search for stability. In his case there is no single stabilising place in which his knowledge of the world is anchored. His alienation from his village of birth which is supposed to authorise his conception of other places

makes it impossible for him to rely on it in his quest for identity-defining places.

As Lutwack argues:

The quality of a place in literature is subtly determined by the manner in which a character arrives at it, moves within it, and departs from it. The general impression of a place often depends on its position in a series of places visited by a journeying character, whose moving point of view confers comparison and climax on otherwise static places. (59)

It can be argued that the places that Kifefe moves through or visits already have some apparent quality but it is not this which always defines him. He indeed challenges some of these qualities. For an extended period in the text, Kifefe perceives other African characters, especially former school mates, in terms of their attitudes towards Kampala.

Kifefe's mobile life makes him adopt a coping mechanism that enables him sustain multiple identities. Indeed the other Ankole in Kampala try to reproduce the Ankole homeland through farming in the city, associating with fellow Banyakole and through social gatherings. This way they create spaces that enable them to be at home in Kampala, Mbarara and their villages.

There are two basic forms of identities that compete with each other: national and individual. The former is unreal and as rigid as the latter. Both, being constructs, are undermined by existential reality. Though the experience of living in Kampala and the later killings that the military government engages in have made Kifefe to re-evaluate his notions of home, he is very reluctant to include places across the border in his conceptualisation of home. When in

Kenya, he gradually identifies with the other Ugandan exiles whose shared condition of exile becomes the basis of a community, though there are really many communities among them. He is therefore able to envisage the possibility of delinking geography from home, and sense of self. Indeed even before his exile he had already realised that the connection between geography, nation, community and belonging is arbitrary; that the idea of difference on which national boundaries are founded is unreal; and that there is nothing natural about national identities. These are realisations that he had however been unwilling to admit.

His experience in Nairobi shows that place has meaning independent of social relations that occur there. Thus Kifefe's experience in Kampala is easily transposable to Nairobi:

When he had paid his first visit to Nairobi, it had looked to him like a place which was already familiar. He had gone to a few entertainment places which had reminded him of Kampala during his youthful days. He had gone to those places and many more without getting the feeling that he was in a foreign country. It was just like going out in Kampala to a place where there happened to be no acquaintances on a particular day. (234)

This feeling of familiarity is, however, not enough to bond him to Nairobi when he is in exile there, showing how complicated the connection between place and affiliation to it is if one conceptualises place within the mapping discourse of colonialism. Since Kifefe is yet to comprehend this, he wonders why it is that, despite his awareness of the inability of the names given

to Uganda and Kenya to inscribe any difference between the two countries, the two defy the transformation implied by naming and therefore mock the colonialists' assumption of epistemological superiority over places. He still wonders "Why then [. . .] were the buildings, the landscape and the weather in Nairobi making him feel so depressed? Why was it that familiar surroundings had turned alien in a week?" (235).

The variability and therefore instability of meanings and identities produced by national borders that the events in the text reveal contradict the conceptions and utterances of exiles like the university sociology lecturers and Kifefe and render the same almost unintelligible. African as an identity is disturbed by the meanings these characters associate national borders with. The exiles experience a sense of home in Kenya yet simultaneously construct it as a foreign place. Kifefe realises that home can exist as memory, just like it has done for Gupta and his wife who were expelled from Uganda by the military government.

That feelings of belonging are capable of transference from a place to other places is an argument that Sarah Gelbard makes in relation to the Jews when she argues that their dispersal in many places around the world has not produced a sense of homelessness, for the Jews have been able to ". . . identify with a multiplicity of places simultaneously, carrying a sense of the familiar into the foreign" (Gelbard, 221). This ability to carry the familiar into the foreign is indeed a coping mechanism not just for the Jews but for communities living away from places which they consider ancestral homes. The Ankole in Kampala try to reproduce the Ankole homeland through farming in the city, associating

with fellow Banyakoles and through social gatherings. This way they create spaces that enable them to be at home in Kampala, Mbarara and their villages and therefore in a sense maintain an Ankole identity that must, however, co-exist with their Ugandan identities.

2.10 Entertainment / Urban Places as Alternative Worlds

Besides land in general, the other significant locations are places of entertainment. Their ubiquity inundates the urban areas where the same are found with discourses of exclusion and inclusion, just like the movements that their patrons make between and within them. What was discussed earlier about the colonial members only club is true of some post-independent entertainment spots. They are where class status is exhibited and racial exclusiveness is demonstrated. It is in restaurants that Kifefe aspires to middle class status and where he sometimes invents his biography. However the quality of adventure and promise that restaurants, especially in Mbarara hold for him in his youth disappear gradually as the military government tightens its hold on power. In this respect the restaurants are metaphors of diminished expectations, of the false promise that Kifefe associated with them. The state of disrepair that Agip Motel is in, for instance, when Kifefe goes to Mbarara to meet Zisanga is symptomatic of different levels of decay, but most importantly it shows how places can be devalued and, therefore, that there is no essential identity of place.

Instead of being the sources and signs of exuberance of youth, and sites where class and racial consciousness is exhibited, negotiated and even rejected, restaurants become the site of enacting of power and a statement of the

economic collapse in the country; they question the power conferred by education and material possession. Kifefe and elites like him who had predicated their claim to high status on education find it difficult to accept the new balance of power: the status that education confers is undermined by the ascendance of brute force that deemphasizes education. The restaurant is no longer the site for highlighting difference and practising power; it is a site for negotiating new forms of subjectivity. So although Kifefe rants at the waiters due to what he considers sloppy service, his words lack the power that they had in such establishments before. Indeed both he and the waiters are aware of this.

In place of the freedom that they were associated with, social and political, bars and other entertainment spots are now confining and disempowering. Kifefe who is in Mbarara on a mission to bully some peasants into surrendering their land to him feels caged in Agip Motel when he finds military and security agents there: “ The naked absurdity of life rudely thrust itself in his consciousness, and he was deeply hurt by his powerlessness and vulnerability at the hands of organised terror” (173).

Equally significant are the changes that have taken place at Lobo’s Bar, once the site of Kifefe’s middle class dreams, and of his initiation into the life of that class. In the make-believe world of the middle class that is anchored in binaries which set the places frequented by this class against ‘lower’ places, Lobo’s Bar is the opposite of Zulu Bar but the deterioration of Lobo’s Bar is indicative of the susceptibility to decay of class based identity. Race, level of education and salaried employment now lose their border-constituting powers. Identity is instead conferred by closeness to political and military power, and to

illiteracy. The Indians against whom the African middle class earlier compared themselves are no longer there as they have been expelled from the country. The effect of the changes on Kifefe in the once familiar places that have been rendered foreign by time and history displaces him in a process similar to what Lutwack refers to as placelessness: “the dwindling importance of fixed places in lives of individuals, or change from a life influenced by locations to a life governed by mobility and communications” (213).

In the case of Kifefe, and indeed of the Uganda presented in the novel, it is a life governed by deterioration. The owner of the bar is no longer the Goan who was elliptically presented and therefore dehumanised by the implication that he lacked the essences of humanity. A soldier’s widow now runs the bar, having inherited it from her husband, a likely beneficiary of the expulsion of Asians. The irony, and one which reinforces the fiction of the connection between race and home, is that the place now feels foreign and it is repellent.

Part of the reason for the difficulty Kifefe has in comprehending the changes in Uganda is that he had used fickle standards to apprehend life and mistaken the same for reality; it is within the constricting dichotomies of this value system that he locates himself and evaluates those he considers as different from him. Kifefe believes too much and, therefore wrongly, in nature and providence; that his identity and that of others is a given, something predetermined which he simply enters. He for instance believes that going to school places him in the middle class which he conceives as a well and clearly defined group. That is why he is disappointed when he experiences no tangible transformation in his life even after entering this group. He realises that the

preoccupations that the visible members of this group engage in, like patronising certain bars, is vacuous.

As in *Kosiya Kifefe*, night clubs and bars connote, among other ideas, race and class, *In a Brown Mantle*. For this reason clubs like the New Jazz Club are tropes of a whole range of racial ideas, and indeed going by the distinction D'Souza makes between Goan and African dances, The New Jazz Club can be read as a synecdoche of the Asian image of African wildness, prejudice that is both produced and sustained by minimal racial mixing. In D'Souza's view, dances in African night clubs break rules of civilization; therefore to him and other Goans, the clubs are one of the places at which Goan civilization distinguishes them from Africans. In the eyes of some non-Africans, the difference in the character of the clubs is another endorsement of the colonialist notion of barbarity versus civilization.

Bars are however also significant as sites of political mobilisation where political communities form, and such communities are the nucleus of political parties. These communities also frequently articulate class interests, a role that is even more intense after independence for in this period, while their role as spots of racial mobilisation by no means diminishes, they acquire the added role of being the common ground for politicians and business men, and therefore they reveal the position of these two occupations in the mismanagement of post-independent Africa. Often when this aspect of bars and clubs is activated, race ceases to be a primary consideration.

Karara Centre, the bar in *Going Down River Road* that Ben and Ocholla frequent, represents the world the two understand. Through it, an opposing

definition of people is presented: “Stuffy Karara Centre, stuffy as hell, warm as home. Here at last were people. People he understands, people who are people, human beings. Struggling, working, drinking, eating, hungering, living men” (135). These statements insinuate that real people are the type found in Karara Centre, an essentialist conception of human experience. By the same token, equation of Karara Centre with real human experience celebrates poverty and deprivation as the ideal human conditions. It is an understanding of humanity that locks it in a historical moment and applies the same oppositional principles to assign identities. In this regard Karara Centre and the related establishments are in opposition to places like African Hotel that are seen to represent the other world. Since the world imagined through Karara Centre is a racially ‘pure’ one, an apprehension of social reality through the prisms of this centre results in a false image of society, and identity.

The perception of the world that Karara Centre represents is an intersection of masculinity and class identities, and this explains the patriarchal worldview that structures Ben and Ocholla’s perception of identity. That they operate within a circumscribed world, partly a conscious choice, points to their own limited frame of reference in conceptualising their identities and of those they consider different. Though limited, their unstable parameters also apprehend the complexity of the situation. When at the work place, they define themselves mainly in opposition to the othered ‘Indian’ but when at Karara Centre, or similar places, and at home, the common dividing line is social class. Neither of these potentially totalizing categories is watertight; they are crisscrossed by many fractures. For instance, the only common thing among the

patrons at Karara Centre is their desire for alcohol; otherwise their limited relationships are marked by anonymity and even barely concealed hostility. The same can be said of the relationships among the tenants in the plot where Ben lives with Wini.

The characters with whom both Ocholla and Ben interact on the streets and mainly at night are black but these, though sometimes described in generic terms as drunks, are by no means an undifferentiated mass. The occasional zeroing in on one of such characters, like James and Simon, who Ben encounters at Karara Centre on different occasions, reveals the desperate desire these characters have to forge individual identities, identities that would challenge those their presence in Karara Centre confers on them. James therefore introduces himself as a civil servant with a lot of money, and Simon presents himself as an honest worker who is presently temporarily out of work. Through his criticism of the prevailing social values and political system, he casts himself as one who is morally above his society and who seeks to transcend it. These attempts by James and Simon to appear different however only serve to confirm the image others like Ben have of them; they are just a type of the characters that patronize Karara Centre. All the same, it is plain that such characters want to dissociate themselves from their surroundings but lack the means to. They are trapped in an identity which though they reject, is upheld by others and confirmed by their circumstances: when the bar crew search James, after he fails to pay his bill, they discover that he has no money at all. Physically these characters may be trapped but discursively, by thinking of the places they operate in as spaces, they are able to envisage fluid identities.

Ben and Ocholla's conception of identity and place, since it consists of exclusions and inclusions, is what, in a different context, Doreen Massey, borrowing from psychoanalysis, in *Space, Place and Gender* calls masculine. She argues that "the need for the security of boundaries, the requirement for such a defensive and counterpositional definition of identity, is culturally masculine" (7). This shows how race is sometimes just an alibi for articulating identities that serve personal interests, which are subject to change. In places where relationships are characterised by domination, whether it be economic or political, some men are likely to feel that their masculinity is at stake, and these men equate political resistance, or the assertion of their communal identity, with an assertion of masculinity, since in their conception of reality, it is a man's world. This image is what is portrayed of Karara Centre and Development House. In the former place, the words human and people are synonymous with men. The presence of women there is to gratify men; yet they are simultaneously the constant threat that hangs over men's heads.

As may be evident from the foregoing argument, race is not the only category that informs Ben and Ocholla's claim to places like Karara Centre, Development House and the Capricorn; women constitute another, one which represents a threat to men's relation to these places. Men view women as a threat lurking in all places ready to harm them. In this respect, women are not only othered, by being viewed as strange, but are also seen as more dangerous than Asians and Whites as the form of threat they represent is insidious and constant. They are all potential threats to men. Ocholla on many occasions calls them evil.

The above places, especially the entertainment spots, resemble the colonial and postcolonial members' clubs to the extent of their being observation spots. It is where those who consider themselves as living in an alternative world observe those in the conventional places like Africa Hotel. Indeed Karara centre is equated to home and portrayed special.

2.11 Tradition as Transient Space

Tradition, which can also be understood as history because it is a product of time and experience, is a fusion. As Edward Said argues, to understand particular experiences, even though the same may be posited as discrepant, in the sense that they appear unique to the concerned group, it is important to understand the experience in question in relation to comparable ones if they are to make sense (36). No human group experiences can be fully understood in isolation, for, according to Said, both cultural and historical experiences are hybrid and "they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains. . ." (15). For this reason, he adds, "Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more 'foreign' elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude" (15). This argument suggests that tradition, a significant component of culture, cannot be the source of unique identity, being hybrid as it is. The argument becomes even more compelling when considered in light of the idea that all experience is mediated and therefore bears the marks of this mediation, in the form of residual ideologies

for example. Therefore identity that is based on experience must also be considered as a product of interpretation.

Understood as space, tradition is capable of carrying different meanings that relate to how characters conceive themselves and their others; if seen as open space, tradition can support various identities, for then it becomes a space for inter-cultural and even inter-personal communication. Viewed as exclusive space however, tradition is related to essentialist ideas about group and individual identities. The more meaningful view of tradition is that of an open and dynamic space, akin to Homi Bhabha's a third space (37-9) and bell hooks' idea of marginality as a creative space (146-53) where thinking about identity ceases to be limited to either or and instead becomes an accommodative and live space, for identities relate to life.

There may be a temptation to see tradition as sedentary, something settled, because it results from accumulated experience, and it indicates repetition. While this may sound a logical explanation of tradition, it is not satisfactory and if left to stand, it encourages a perception of tradition as an exclusive concern with the past. This in turn yields little knowledge about the present and the possible future, for it posits the present as solely the product of past; the same cannot therefore be changed, for to change it is to change the past. Such an approach takes away the role of agency from those who are subject to any form of tradition, which in reality is everybody. A more progressive and useful view of tradition is that which sees it as a movement, one that involves a dynamic exchange between the present and the past.

Whether as static history or as movement, tradition is a textualized space that tells the story of societies and individuals. However, it is only when considered as dynamic, movement, is it best suited to tell complete, though ever developing stories. It is the ability to carry many stories concurrently that makes tradition, just like the experiences and practices that constitute it, amenable to interpretation. For us to appreciate the complexity of the identities of the characters in the texts under study, it is necessary to move beyond the sometimes narrow deployment of tradition by the characters and discover the silences that just as much narrate these characters' identities. At the same time we must be aware that, because it is constructed, tradition is liable to deceptiveness. Equally important is that traditions, as argued below, must be approached as spaces of inter-cultural communication and not signifiers of unique experiences and with the understanding that, as narratives, they presuppose movement but one whose plot can never be pre-determined nor be closed; it is an open ended plot.

Tradition cannot be taken to be equivalent to truth, for being a product of experience or at least having a significant relationship to the same, for it is a function of interpretation. However this does not prevent societies that want to project common or communal identities from resorting to tradition as the evidence of such identities. This is the point Bhabha makes when he says that the authority of culture as referential truth is the main concern in the concept and moment of enunciation. His argument is that this process of enunciation produces "a split in the performative present of cultural identification". This split may be between what he describes as "the traditional culturalist demand for

a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as practise of domination, or resistance” (35). This split informs the conflicts between some of the principal characters in the texts under study and sections of their societies. The need for some sort of community is a source of anxiety in those characters that desire certainty in their relationship to the colonial and postcolonial states. Such anxieties are products of the movements within and between countries that result in both voluntary and forced interactions. The dominated or those who perceive themselves dominated seek a return to the past which is posited as the bulwark against the threat of possible dissolution. Identity in these circumstances is both a genuine desire and a political tool used to inscribe essentialist differences.

In the texts under study sometimes identity is attributed to certain places; there is a temptation for some characters to associate certain values to particular places and to use this value to ascribe the same qualities to themselves or to their others. In this system of thought identity and place of origin are viewed as the same. However, as Leonard Lutwack has argued, there are no emotions that are inherent to a place; the same are humanly induced; therefore they are subject to change. He gives this as the reason “traditions fail to assign constant emotional responses to certain physical properties . . . Places are neither good nor bad in themselves but in the values attached to them, and literature is one of the agencies involved in attaching values to places” (35).

Just as traditions may produce ideas about places, tradition itself may be the space in which ideas about places proliferate. Traditions produced in relation

to places are susceptible to totalizing ideas that attach unchanging meanings to the places, people and their traditions with the result that some of these people are unwilling or incapable of self-understanding divorced from some original place. This, for example, partly explains the symbolic intrusion of the motherland in the daily lives of characters that are physically distant from such homelands.

Tradition is affiliated to the continuity discourse in most of these texts; it is deployed to assert difference and resist dissolution of identity. However the very definition of tradition, and therefore its constituents, is not always clear. This is the case not only for the migrant groups who are supposed to have imported traditions but also for the 'indigenous' communities; in both cases tradition is characterised by fissures. The migrant communities in particular cherish tradition because it is their link to the past, and the past is the custodian of their identity. This is the case, for instance, in *The In-between World of Vikram Lal* in which family history and the traditions the same is supposed to communicate are dominant.

There are two strains of traditions that, though they supposedly both draw from the same source, often contradict each other: the traditions that Anand Lal Peshawari, the family patriarch of the Lals, who is a founding-father figure, establishes or at least attempts to establish and those traditions represented as essentially Indian. These latter traditions are associated with the later immigrants like Sheila who literally bring with them 'Indian life' to Kenya. Indeed that many Indo-Kenyans of Lal's generation go back to India to get wives can be read as symbolic of regeneration and renewal, a means through

which the Indo-Kenyans not only maintain links with India but also reassure themselves of their Indianness and reinforce it. It is an assertion of their identity and a check against possible impurity. This going back to India ensures that the household and the house are sites in which tradition is inscribed and which in turn inscribe tradition and ensure continuity.

The later generations return to India for brides metaphorically by marrying tradition-sanctioned brides. The returns however, by failing to recognise the role of lived experience in the evolvment of traditions, attempt an impossibility, seeking to have even the younger generation live in an India they have never known, the India of their parents' memories. The result is that the returns are accompanied with resistance and are never complete; for instance the India that the brides bring turns out to be a strange place to the would be returnees like Lal for whom even the physical return is an exercise in endurance as the following passage attests:

He found everything in India dirty and poor, and for the most part he had a miserable time of it. Even to see the Taj Mahal you had to walk over gutters and push through a street fight, he would say. Beggars and touts everywhere; men standing around openly picking at their crotches. Even a taxi! he would exclaim. Even a taxi! You hail one, you want to feel posh and escape all the scum around you, you open the door and what happens? You step into a lump of fresh shit! (20)

The images of dirt in this passage are compelling evidence of Lal's alienation from India (this echo the images of the toilet and dirt in *Going Down River*

Road), and that, therefore, the return flounders so that neither Lal nor his son, Vikram, associates India with notions of home; it remains a fairyland for Vikram (20). Since these images represent Lal's idea of India, it is reasonable to say that he rejects the physical India and clings to a metaphorical one to which he returns in defence of his identity, as he does when he tells Deepa that they are proud Indians and not Europeans and that it is their custom to marry with the permission of their parents; that they cannot marry who they choose (174). Here tradition is invoked in the name of Indian customs to assert an identity but the assertion draws its force from an assumption that is wrong because it is contradicted by reality: that there are essential Indian and European identities, which are therefore exclusive. It is difficult, for instance, to reconcile this argument with Vikram's description of his father as "proudly Kenyan [but] hopelessly . . . colonial" (20). Lal's use of tradition here springs from an idea of cultural purity, the same notion that informs his physical return to India for a wife, a return that is undermined by the irony that characterises it.

Lal returns to India not to marry a wife chosen for him but to get himself a wife, and Sheila marries him not because he is chosen for her but because they love each other, a situation that contradicts Lal's admonition to Deepa and his claim that one of the areas that distinguish the Indian from the European is that the former only marries people approved by parents. If this were true then their marriage would be a violation of the tradition that they seek to impose on the children. The other irony of his visit to India emerges in the comparison alluded to above between his image of India as a dirty place and the link the black

labourers make between Kanji Bhai and the toilet in *Going Down River Road*. It is a shared stereotype that disavows India and Indian as the other.

Sheila's sense of the traditional, and thus the acceptable, vies with the pragmatic concept of tradition of which Peshawari's experience is an example. The rhythms of his everyday life, his habits and hobbies, is a source of some family traditions, and his experience of departure and migration become important metaphorical counterpoints of the return enacted by some among the Indo-Kenyans. In a literal sense, his departure from India is final, for he never returns to India and it is his experience after he leaves India that becomes an important reference point for his descendants. The family tradition he initiates is characterised by adventure and thrift motifs, expressed by the legends built around his experiences on leaving India for Kenya, and especially during the construction of the railway. In a sense, leaving India is an attempt to forge an independent identity, away from the traditional identities in the India caste system.

That he becomes a labourer violates the expectations of the caste system that would expect him not to go lower than his caste, but the adventurous trait in him will not be bound by traditional sanctions. This leaving and the start of a new life are important signposts for his descendants, for he symbolically gets out of the anonymity of his caste and charts his life on his terms. This anonymity is what Inspector Verma hints at when he tells Lal, Peshawari's son that "his antecedents in India amounted to nothing, being village banias at most, and that his father had demeaned himself further as a labourer" (21).

Though he seeks a new life, Peshawari never intends to fight Indian tradition but rather adapts it to the new circumstance to which he comes. He gestures to the possibility of change or expansion in tradition and its capacity to accommodate the 'untraditional'. It is in this pragmatism that he differs from Sheila for whom tradition is an inviolable and closed space for it is the custodian of identity, and identity is a pre-given, a set of inherited qualities and characteristics. The in-between that Vikram occupies in respect to tradition is a space between on one hand, the 'pure' Punjab tradition of his mother and on the other hand, the pragmatic traditions of his grandfather, who, for example, though in marrying a Punjabi wife participates in the continuity narrative has no qualms about accompanying his friend, Juma Molabux, to marry a Maasai, an action that can rightly be read as approval of the marriage. The traditional space that Vikram lives in is thus a liminal one in which there is constant interaction among the different pasts and presents of his life: the pasts of his grandfather, father and mother; and his and their present. He cannot draw any clear distinctions between the traditions that constitute him and the ones that exclude him. Although his parents strive to give him an Indian upbringing, through for instance, the constant presence of Hindu religious symbols and rituals, food, language and customs, this does not and cannot shut him off the flux that is the reality of the multiracial place he lives in, whose earliest image is the shopping centre in Nakuru.

The complexity suggested by Deepa's contradictory, albeit, symbolic relations to Njoroge, as brother and wife, illuminates two issues; first her being his sister acknowledges their common humanity and shared lives – this is an

idea that a statement in a letter by Njoroge to Deepa earlier points to: “The most wonderful thing about us is that we have learned, we’ve discovered a new terrain in human relationship, a new trait that proclaims that we can get as close to another human as to become one in body and spirit – no matter how different the details of our birth” (193)”. Secondly, her marriage subverts racial boundaries perpetuated by essentialist ideas of tradition. That the symbolic marriage takes place in a Hindu temple frequented by Deepa and Sheila (197) undermines Sheila’s arguments about the inflexibility of racial identity. In the postcolonial place tradition has to remain a borderland in which varying experiences interact; it cannot therefore be the site of inscribing identity derived from singular experiences or carried over from other places. Thus the traditions that inform Vikram, Deepa and Njoroge’s lives are a liminal space.

While the language, food, religion and some customs of Vikram’s daily life in the house repeatedly insist on Indianness, the reality outside the family life, as concretised through the various family houses the Lalls live in, show him a different truth, the futility of trying to live solely on the basis of customs and worldviews that may not always adequately respond to his circumstances. His grandfather and Juma Molabux in various ways, including the latter’s marriage, gesture towards the mutability of tradition and resist the idea of tradition as mapping of individuals, a claim to a knowledge of characters that casts them as products of tradition rather than as producers of the same.

Since Anand Lal Peshawari’s life in Kenya is a continuous dialogue between his Indian background and his Kenyan experience, he is not tied to the traditions of his birth place, neither does he seek to protect and pass them on to

his children for the simple purpose of maintaining racial or ethnic purity, at least not as overtly as Sheila does. It can be seen, for instance, that he exercises no control at the culturally critical moment of his son's marriage. Instead he lets him go to India where he gets a bride of his own choice, a contrast to the kind of control insisted on by Sheila and other Indo-Kenyans of her generation in influencing the choice of marriage partner for their children. The traditions he follows are mainly those that result from habit rather than what has been passed down to him. Therefore though he is the family patriarch, he is by no means the central reference point of the traditions by which the family defines or identifies itself in relation to the nation; the most he confers to the family in this respect is family history: his contribution to the building of modern Kenya.

Although not in the same mould as customs, language is an important aspect of tradition for it can transmit the same. That is why, for example, to get the full implication of the scorn a marriage between Deepa and Njoroge would attract, the same has to be rendered untranslated: other women would say that Sheila has "a pukka kalu for a damad" (205). However even though Sheila, and presumably others' desire to talk to their grandchildren in a language of their land, India, is one of the motives for opposing interracial marriages, it can be seen that even language is not immune to the hybridity of the postcolonial place; therefore the purist sense of belonging that would be suggested by the ability to speak in Hindi or Punjabi is deceptive. Vikram feels left out of his Grandfather and Juma Molabux's conversation because the two speak in a Punjabi that is "fluid and too quick for my ears and the words and phrases I grasped were often alien to me" (61). Language is therefore the site for transmission of experience

and the translation of the same and which in the process inscribes difference. The horror of a damad who is a Pukka kalu, for instance, is thus assumed to be so enmeshed with the Indian experience that only an Indian would understand; it is an experience that cannot be translated, just like the term that expresses it. This assumption is however undermined by the hybrid lexicon of this sentence, an insistence on the accessibility of its meaning.

Homing in and *Kosiya Kifeke* best illustrate what we have called the pragmatic notion of tradition, that it is a function of time, place and event. The principle characters in these texts come to places that call for the production, accumulation and continuous revision of traditions in order to meaningfully live there, as new life, metaphorically, starts in these places. It is only when these characters' previous habits, values and customs are freed from the places where the same evolved and get into dialogue with the habits, values and customs of the present in the new places that their lives start to have some meaning. For Ellen, the new place is the colonial settler farm while for Kifeke it is the colonial school.

The farm is a complex society not just because it is an amalgamation of traditions but also because it is a place where traditions have to be created and sustained. Its newness results from the disruptions it brings to the established ways of life both for the colonial farmers and for the Africans. Most of the farmers, like Jack, come to the colonies with no prior experience of farming, and no knowledge of the places where they start their farms, so they literally create new identities yet to sustain the images of themselves that they project to Africans as knowledgeable and experienced farmers, they come up with what

Eric Hobsbawn, in a different context, calls invented traditions (2); they have to invent a past that legitimatises and therefore authorises their present identity. Hobsbawn's definition of invented traditions is important for explaining how the past can be appropriated to justify a present that is contested so as to lend authority to a particular way of interpreting the same. He defines invented traditions as "a set of practices . . . which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past . . . where possible, *they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past*" (2). [my emphasis].

The settler farm is indeed a trope for invented traditions. Created on the model of an imaginary farm in the home country, the farm is simultaneously a no-man's land and an over-inscribed space. The meaning of the first sense comes from the idea that both the settlers and their workers are practically immigrants to the particular places the farms are located even though for some of the workers their going to the farms may be a form of return from places they had earlier been evicted. Even for such characters, however, the places they return to cannot have the same meaning. For this reason, neither Jack nor his workers bring continuity; what they take to the farm is assumed knowledge. However since Jack and other farmers in similar circumstances have to remain bosses on the farms, they present an imagined image of themselves to the Africans. In this image the settlers mask the differences among them as individuals and instead represent themselves as homogenous. For this strategy to succeed, they also must construct Africans as one undifferentiated category.

On their part, the African labourers on the farm are new not just to the particular places where the farms are located but also to the ways of the settlers, and to some of the crops and farming techniques. Coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the Africans have no common traditions yet their race and common status on the farm yokes them into a supposedly homogenous community. The lumping together is another way in which the settler wishes to demonstrate their knowledge but which in reality reveals the deficiency of their knowledge, for the African identity conferred on the labourers masks the heterogeneity and discontinuities within this group. To understand this group, one has to look beyond skin colour to what is behind their presence on the farm.

The political events in the country, the daily routines on the farms, the abilities of the individual farm, the personality of each labourer, and the seasons of the year – and these vary greatly in some years – combine to create the rhythms on each farm and are more significant in whatever traditions are established on each farm. Tradition on the farms is therefore, just like it is the case for Vikram, a liminal space in which many forces interact; the farm is a place of discontinuity which breaks from rather than continues traditions. Thus, for instance Martha, as she acknowledges herself, learns to do house work from her father who himself learns it from his experience working for a European family; it is not part of any family tradition and she cannot therefore be described as a typical African servant. To do so would be to essentialise a mutable identity and suggest that the status of servant that many Africans have in this text, and indeed in the colonial state, is ‘natural’.

The farm thus invents traditions as a means of regulating the labourers by confining them within fixed racial identities and bestowing on the settlers the power to establish and to know. The language of the settlers as regards the African workers is evidence of how restricted their world is; the 'they' deployed to refer to Africans, especially the labourers, is a transparent signifier because of the extent of its generalisation that leaves no possibility for any individual differences among them. This 'they' therefore signifies a category already so well mapped as to allow for any surprises. Against the African's supposedly simplistic tradition is ranged the complexity of the settler's tradition whose main symbol is the farm, supported by various rituals of which the most important are the holidays like Empire Day.

Whereas Ellen's attempts may not always be successful, she all the same tries to assume an insider perspective in order to relate the labourers' and indeed all other Africans' experience with her own. This way she unravels the narratives of continuity with which most of the settlers mediate their relationships with the Africans. For most of the settlers, the farm represents a running away from something, an attempt to give their lives some meaning; it is not a continuation but this is masked by a public image of themselves as a people whose farm lives are a mere extension of their England lives. Uncle aptly describes the discrepancy between the settlers' previous and present lives when he says of Jack that the latter did not know where milk came from when he first arrived on the farm "Thought milk was made in a bottle and grass was something to play cricket on" (30). Yet this is the same Jack who later creates

the impression that he is a born farmer by his patronising attitude towards Ellen when he thinks she is intruding on his territory, farming.

In this sense the farm is comparable to the school in *Kosiya Kifefe*; the school initiates him into a new world and he sees in it an opportunity to reinvent himself. In school he is symbolically reborn; for by inventing a past for himself in school through such things like coming up with a birthday for himself whereas he does not know the day and year of his birth, he seeks to give himself a new identity. Indeed the imagery of rebirth that permeates the story of his school life highlights his obsession with erasure of the past, for instance, besides the invention of a birth day, he reinvents himself through the act of buying shoes; to actualise this, he intends to “walk back to school a new person” (3) in the shoes. The trajectory of his actions after he joins school is a movement away from the past rather than a reconnection with it, a contrast to some of the Indo-Kenyan characters in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and the Goan Characters in *In a Brown Mantle*.

The Goan characters experience what may be called a crisis of traditions in their endeavour to define and understand themselves. Thus the incessant conflicts over whether to owe allegiance to India or to Portugal, and the frequent shift in loyalties both signal this crisis and is a trope for the instability and mutability of tradition when the same is conceived as an anchor of identity. That the Goans have always belonged to someone in their recent history and that they cannot agree on who they belong to now undermine the suitability of tradition as an ingredient in self-understanding, and also show its temporal aspect, its relationship to time and place. Whatever tradition that may constitute Goan

identity is fluid and exists not as a discrete entity but in relation to many interacting traditions. Like it is for the Indo-Kenyan characters in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, the traditions of the Goans in *In a Brown Mantle* are experienced as a liminal space in which identities are in continuous formation as illustrated by the shifting of loyalties between India, Portugal, and even Africa. The marker of this liminality of tradition is also to be found in the use of the concept of 'African', which as deployed by Gombe-Kukwaya suggests an exclusive condition.

To fight colonialism, some Africans find it politically expedient to project a unified image of African, the victim. Since in practice African is not a harmonious or even unified entity, one has to be created to serve the needs of these moments. It is for this reason that politicians like Gombe-Kukwaya in *In a Brown Mantle* conjure an image of a harmonious African past in which the patriarchal concepts of fathers and grandfather as markers of continuity are highly romanticised and made ideological sites. They are the authority that legitimises the supposed shared identity of the Africans, who are all constructed as nationalists fighting an equally constructed common foe. The basis of the image of the African is the power of tradition, the idea that in fighting colonialists or by engaging in certain acts that are construed as fighting colonialists, Africans are participating in a long tradition of racial pride. Conversely, by refusing to do so they would be abandoning their Africanness. Identity is in this sense defined through political action or lack of it. In the case of Gombe-Kukwaya such invented traditions and the identities they support are self-serving, for it is a rhetorical strategy in his efforts to portray himself as the

real Damibian (Ugandan), and therefore exclude the Asian-Ugandans from political activity, actually lump them together with the European in the category as the enemy.

Tradition is space through which discourses crisscross; it is capable of carrying contradictory discourses and yet it is the anchor of certain identities. Space presupposes movement, however limited, for to be in a space is to be able to move, change position or shift. In this context, tradition, as the site where identities are affirmed, claimed and inscribed, may be conceived of as a place, something settled that does not admit of any movement. This is the purist approach to tradition that sees it as a transparent narrative whose course to the present can be easily traced. This notion of tradition associates it with fixed feelings and ideas and also ties the same to physical places. Like all aspects of human culture however, tradition is overdetermined for it is a site of multiple actions, contradictory histories and incongruent experiences, whose particular contributions to the whole are not always easy to determine. Therefore the hybrid approach that conceives of tradition as space in which there is constant movement – multidirectional movement, for the present and the past communicate with each other in tradition – is more plausible.

bell hooks' understanding of space is illuminating in its suggestion of the flexibility associated with it. She argues thus: "Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice" (152). Like hooks' space, traditions tell stories and unfold histories and since these histories and stories are products of and subject to interpretation, the same can be

appropriated and transformed. This argument is true for *Homing in*, *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, *Kosiya Kifefe* and *In a Brown Mantle*, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Tradition in these texts is often deployed as politicised spaces that are intended to rationalise the status quo or the opposition to the same.

The things that Kifefe disapproves of are at the same time supposed to be signs of Africanness, the life he knows before he goes to school. His situation is an expression of the dilemma that must attend any pretensions to continuity narratives, by revealing the discontinuities in the same; Kifefe's quest to project himself as a member of the new African elite is so riven with contradictions as to render it an impossible quest. The main sites of his identity, tradition and race, crisscross each other in ways that make it vain to proffer them as the planks on which the differences he posits, between him and the non-elite African and the non-African, as the indicators of his identity rests. His aversion to peasantry and all ideas associated with it can be read as an act of inventing a tradition to prop up his status.

Gombe-Kukwaya's invocation of the atavistic is mainly through the phrase 'our fathers' which in his usage refers to a faceless past rather than to blood and flesh fathers. It is a strategy by which he hopes to alienate and other the Asian-Ugandan by appealing to what he considers the core of his audiences' sense of identity.

Marginality, according to bell hooks, is a creative space where binaries such as coloniser/colonised dissolve. In this respect therefore it is a place where new forms of being are imagined. Thought of this way, marginality, according

to her is not deprivation but a space of resistance where one participates in the centre without becoming part of it (146-153). It is also the space where what she calls counter-hegemonic discourse can be produced. This discourse encompasses words ‘habits of being and ones way of life’ (149). One sense of hooks’ argument is that the everyday can constitute resistance and that the same i.e. the everyday, is what develops into ways of life or tradition. Therefore traditions can be sites of resistance of hegemonic discourses such as that projected by dominant traditions, whether real or invented ones.

2.12 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to analyse how the selected texts conceive place and relate this to space. The discussion shows that place is instrumental in the conceptualisation of subjectivity in the colonial and postcolonial state as places are both the object and the agents of ideological dissemination. Since, however, several discourses form the same places, the involvement of place in ideology is conflictual and contributes to their non-essential nature. It can further be said that the colonial and postcolonial states rely on material places to sustain certain discursive practices that posit the society as inherently bounded in hierarchies of enclosures whose transgression is prohibited by those it benefits and desired by those it oppresses.

The chapter also shows that it is in relation to place that notions of belonging are conceived, as place suggests continuity. For this reason several types of continuities are constructed and invoked to support claims of belonging.

For the colonial settlers this includes spatial manipulations that decentre the indigenous populations to disrupt these people's claim to autochthony and replace it with the colonialists' narrative of legality. The principal characters in all the texts that this chapter focused on perceive themselves and others in relation to some place or places. The only difference is that some of the characters conceive place meanings as stable while others regard the meanings as unstable.

The analysis of place in these texts reveals that one of the most sustained conflicts in East Africa during and after colonialism is over the meaning of place, and, consequently, the spaces that particular places can contain. The struggle over meaning of place attests to the significance of place to identity. That the East Africa of these texts is inhabited by different races with both separate and connected histories means that when one of these histories or memories is projected to the land at the exclusion of the others then various forms of contestations occur.

The tension between the view that multi spaces occur simultaneously within a single place and the one that places are mono spaces, pure, characterise the conflict over places in the texts. Comparable to this is the tendency to codify places and the resistance of the same by what can be called liberal spatial practices that see places as fusions.

To assert their belonging to a nation and concurrently silence competing claims, dominant powers, whether it is political formations like colonialists, cultural communities or individuals, create an array of inter-connected ideology-disseminating places. Since the practises of asserting belonging are

contestations, they involve displacements. In other words as individuals and groups create places, they discursively create spaces so that although discursive practices are involved in both place and space, space is exclusively so. One of the characteristics of spatial practices in colonised and formerly colonised countries is the constant efforts to monopolise space. These practices do not contemplate the possibility of single spaces containing multiple identities but in practice they not only carry multiple identities but the same experience frequent mutations. By showing these relationships between place and space in the texts under consideration, the analysis has fulfilled the objective of the chapter.

To relate these discussions to the narrative practices that produce them, the next chapter will consider how the narrators in these texts narrate identity.

3.0 Chapter Three: Narrating Identity

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the conception and contestations over the meanings of place in the texts under study and argued that place is significant in the identity formation process and that it is therefore the site where meanings of self and community are enacted. This chapter furthers the analysis of identity by examining the narrative strategies that the authors in the five texts employ in the portrayal of the various ways the characters designated by the labels of black, Asian and white perceive themselves and others. Of particular interest is to determine the comparable strategies in the texts and how the same effectively or ineffectively carry out the functions the authors assign them. The chapter considers how different narrative stances constitute knowledge of the self and, by implication, knowledge of the others.

Significant in the process of articulating subjectivity is language; certain language choices, especially in relation to form of address of self and others, are ideologically involved in the discourse on identity and cannot be read as innocent referents. The most notable of these words are nouns and pronouns which imply inclusion and exclusion; an examination of these words reveals unease in their deployment, an uncertainty that renders them only tentative because what they include and exclude is by no means definite. The effect of this tentativeness is that claims based on instances when the range of reference of these words denote certainty are undermined by various other instances that shift the range of reference.

Language use is strategic to the construction of identities; the language in which identities are articulated in the five texts under study is one of the ways through which the writers open spaces, by posting language as space. The choice of point of view, for instance, is embedded in the subject matter of each of these novels especially in connection with negotiating the narrator's or protagonists' identity in the matrix of social and racial borders of the societies of each text.

To select a point of view is to participate in the experience narrated, to interpret the experience. This is the point F.K. Stanzel makes in the argument that the most important use of the mediacy of narration is “to reveal the biased nature of our experience of reality” (11). The implication of this is that narrators are subjective and so is the experience that they relate. Indeed one may extend this argument by saying that the act of the creation of a narrator constitutes a choice of a manner of experiencing reality, and since this selection is also a stance towards reality, it is simultaneously an adoption of an attitude towards the experience of the narrator and all that the narrator represents.

3.2 Narrative and Location of Beginnings

Combined with the reflective mode such as we find in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, the first person narrative accentuates the process of self recovery in the sense that the narrator simultaneously remembers, narrates and analyses. As it is with autobiographies, this supposed remembering is subject to selectiveness, which in turn implies a desire for coherence. Therefore the selected events are those that fit the image of the self that the narrator wishes to

project, or those that can be analysed in a manner that aligns them with this purpose. Such a design would only succeed where the narrator has full control of the narrative, because their spatial relation to it enables them to.

While it is true that the reflective mode – a mode that may also be found in other narrative perspectives – suggests such a relationship between the narrator and the narrative, in the case of Vikram Lall the narrator is rarely outside the narrative, either spatially or temporally: the narration is a quest, not a closure. Although the various forms of the past tense, especially the simple past, apparently locate the narrator outside the story and therefore in a position of knowledge, a closer examination reveals that this position is only temporal; there is a constant yearning for an epistemological certainty. Vikram seeks to retroactively understand the forces that have shaped his life, but an identity built on memory invites questions of credibility.

To forestall such questions the narrator resorts to giving assurances about the veracity of his memories. This explains the repeated reference to memory in Part 1 of the novel, which deals with Vikram's childhood, an indication of eagerness to vouch for the accuracy of the related events by positing the same as an essential part of Vikram's identity. "I call forth for you here my beginning, the world of my childhood, in that fateful year of our friendships" (7). This statement presupposes the ability to pick out the starting point of the present Vikram. It is an assurance that he understands his life and therefore who he is. One needs however to notice that this apparent assurance is couched in communal terms by the use of the plural, 'our', indicating how embedded in others' Vikram's experience is. The recounting of these memories is

consequently a strategy intended to reveal Vikram but the Vikram that emerges from the same is rather tentative, as his relationship to these events is ambivalent. He may want to project an image of one who has come to terms with a past defined by both pain and tense pleasure but the uncertainty in his voice is still discernible. It is therefore only by analysing the tension between the narrating and the experiencing Vikram that one can unravel the different shades of his identity.

The same assumption of the existence of a definite beginning is present in *In a Brown Mantle* in which the narrator asserts, “Let me start at the beginning” (2). The beginning in this case is the narrator’s name but the narrator realises how problematic such a claim is and adjusts the beginning to be the period of his father’s early life in Goa and the circumstances leading to his relocation to East Africa where the narrator was born. In this attempt the narrator finds himself recounting not just his history but that of Goa, showing how, just like in the case of Vikram, personal histories are linked to webs of other histories, and the difficulty, therefore, of marking out a clear starting point for such a history.

Kosiya is in no doubt from the beginning that others see him as an inadequate person and it is, therefore, his mission from very early to fight this image and prove it wrong. His story thus, is an interpretation of his life in the context of events in the society. A number of his actions, which would appear ordinary in other contexts, can be read as metaphors of the various phases of his crisis of identity. The pain that he suffers from the new shoes, both physical and psychological, is a metaphor of the initiation he has to undergo in the process of

his aspiration to new status and that the writer selects this to start the plot points to its importance in the events of this text.

The preoccupation with origins influences narrative structuring in other ways too, one of the most significant of these is the plot. The choice of where to start the story falls within the purview of plot, whose construction coincides with the quest to give particular identities certain trajectories. In this regard, one notices the attempt to render the past in a neat manner that approximates journal entries in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* whose structures are made logical through division into sections with descriptive titles that apparently explain the narrator's experience. The other texts under study, assume no such logical connections among sections.

3.3 Imagery, Narration and Character Accessibility

For identity to be effectively narrated the characters must be accessible, and accessibility implies that the reader must be able to understand the characters and possibly empathise with them. If characters are mainly described or if their presentation is exclusively external, then the focus shifts to the events the characters are involved in, but their motivations remain a matter of conjecture, as their internal worlds are closed up. Of the many reasons that may be offered for a narrator's preoccupation with characters' external world only, two are relevant in this context: anxiety and ignorance. In order not to prejudice their intentions in those instances when the aim is to stereotype a character, a narrator, and by implication a writer, would be anxious not to exposure a character's mind for this would reveal an underlying complexity that would then

subvert the proffered one dimensional image of the character. It may be true also that the narrator does not simply understand the internal world of the character, and so finds it safe to stick to the external. These kinds of scenarios achieve added significance in the hybrid postcolonial societies where certain group experiences are likely to be constructed as exclusive, as is the case in some of the texts under consideration.

The narrative perspective and consciousness, whether implied or stated, in these texts affect the relative marginality or centrality of certain groups in the definitive moment of the nations' histories. The Indo-African, for instance, is mostly parenthetically presented in *Kosiya Kifefe*; there is hardly any attempt to present their character from within; therefore what we see is the outside. The danger is that, with few exceptions, the Indo-African character remains anonymous. Their identity is presented in oppositional terms, in contrast to Africans, thus producing severely atrophied images of Indians. This representation is attributable to the rigidity in narrative perspective, since it is firmly located within one race from which it examines the experience of Indo-Africans in relation to others.

In the few instances that Gakwandi presents close up images of Asians the results are grotesque figures that are hardly human, something that can be said of Meja Mwangi too, as shall be seen later. The Goan owner of Lobo bar in *Kosiya Kifefe*, for example, is described in so self-contradictory terms laced with animal imagery that clearly paint him and the values he is supposed to represent the antithesis of African identity. He comes out as a preying individual whose main skills in business are underlined by dishonesty:

A middle-aged Goan presided over the counter. He was both intimate and remote, sneaky and candid, stern and chatty, all at the same time. He had a variety of facial expressions and tones of voice which he apparently switched on and off at will, depending on the subject of conversation and who he was talking to. With greying moustache, shining bald head and fired eyes behind thick double lenses, he gave the outward appearance of senility until someone asked for credit. Then he would suddenly become alert as a cobra about to spit. . . He pretended to doze but watched everything from the corner of his eye and periodically and stealthily turned a page of his thick book . . . (47)

The character above is clearly a man who is incapable of honestly relating with any of the customers; his interest in those around him is solely in their money. Since Asian characters are few and far apart, one could reasonably argue that those who feature in the novel are supposed to be representative of their race, lopsided as the portrayals are. The images that construct this character are an affirmation of both his difference from the narrator and his strangeness. The narrator in this case occupies the same discursive position as Kifefe, who is the narrating consciousness. The character is set aside to be observed as an example of the peculiarities of the Goan, often totalised under the category of Asian businessman. However an interesting relationship emerges between this character as the observed and his representation as an observer; he knows his patrons and summons the relevant aspect of his personality to deal with them when he deems it necessary; his is a position of power for the knowledge he has

over the patrons puts them under his control, so does his ability to extend and withhold favours. The narrator's description however counters this power by placing the observer under the narrator's observation. It is a means through which the narrator exercises narrative power to dominate but this power is undermined by its inability to move beyond the physical into the psychological realm.

The In-between World of Vikram Lall cleverly accesses characters' minds through tugged characters. This is a technique to be found in *Homing in* and *In a Brown Mantle* too. In *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* it takes the form of formation posts that echo Vikram's in-betweenness, since the different phases of his life that influence his character formation are characterised by close relationships with at least one character through whom he can access the 'other' world. This is discernible in the childhood relationships between Deepa and Njoroge, and between Vikram and Annie. Unlike the former relationship in which the participants survive to adulthood, in the latter, Anne dies in childhood and it is the effect of this death, especially the circumstances of her death, that mould and freeze Vikram's personality and structure his interactions later in life. Memory is therefore a rhetorical strategy used to explain Vikram's inability to heal from what he describes as his frozen essential core (11), resulting from Annie's death.

Although various narrative consciousnesses operate in the text the presumptive narrative voice is that of Vikram Lall. This assumption is on numerous instances undermined by the knowledge available to the narrator. The narrating voice is simultaneously personal and communal, for the narrator gets

into and out of the minds of other characters, especially his family members, most often Deepa. It is necessary to consider this narrative strategy in the context of its interpretive and mitigating intentions; it at once seeks to interpret and explain the Asian experience in East Africa. To do this the narrator places individuals within historical and social contexts that call for both long shots and close-ups in the portrayal of Indo-African characters.

To appreciate the significance of this context it is necessary to see the characters from different angles, outside and inside. It would otherwise be difficult to apprehend the emotional intensities that Deepa, for instance, goes through. Vikram takes on the role of family spokesman, who seeks to narrate not just his experience but also theirs. It is to be noted, however, that in the role of spokesman Vikram seeks not to endorse any family positions but rather to explain them.

Vassanji and Nazareth appropriate a form of narration that ordinarily implies limitations to transcend limitations; that positioned in the narratives as individuals attempting to understand and explain a world that they can only know from a marginal position, the narrators in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* actually provide panoramic views of their societies, a quality associated with third person narration. Contrasted to this, third person narration in *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road* compromises its roving-eye capability when the narrators locate themselves in restricting positions in relation to the characters.

The narrative strategies in *Homing in*, *In a Brown Mantle* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* in which the narrators tell the stories of

communities perceived to be closed from an insider perspective open up these communities by showing how interrelated with the other cultural communities their lives are. In *Homing in* for instance, Ellen, the character whose consciousness dominates the narrative, is white and a settler's wife. Her stance in relation to the events filtered through her mind gives the impression of letting the reader in on a hitherto secluded existence. She attempts to 'see' the world from both the point of view of the settler community and that of its critic, in the process revealing how the destinies of the three races, black, white and Asian, are related; but how the whites try to pass themselves off as different.

3.4 Narrating Embedded Identities

Vassanji's overall narrative strategy undermines essentialised difference as the basis of identity formation, for the characters that would be different are implied in each other. Like Nazareth, he utilises a strategy of pairing or clustering of characters in their formation of a sense of belonging to place, especially as relates to the awareness of the nation. The cluster of Vikram, Njoroge, William, Deepa and Annie influences the growth of Vikram, Deepa and Njoroge, the three characters in this cluster whose minds are revealed to the reader. Their experiences as members of this group continue to exert influence on their awareness of their subjectivity; they are always conscious that their worlds are entwined so that the text is as much about the in-between world of Njoroge as it is about the in-between world of Vikram. Whereas it may be argued that the relation is social, part of childhood play, it is evident that theirs

goes beyond this and that its effects linger. For instance the attraction of Njoroge to Deepa is more than a childhood feeling, and it can be reasonably supposed that Vikram and Annie's relationship would have taken a comparable course if she had not died young, though even in death she still lives in Vikram, not just as memories but as an imprint on what he considers his core. The surviving trio of Vikram, Deepa and Njoroge, later reduced to only Vikram and Deepa, is however still a significant technique through which Vassanji characterises. By this technique of characters mirroring each other, Vikram can credibly narrate Deepa's thoughts because he is her confidant and frequently chaperon, roles that augment his in-between positioning. The potential unreliability of the first person is in this sense minimised while the certainty of Vikram as a stand-alone subjectivity is questioned.

The same technique is seen in *In a Brown Mantle* and even in the third person narrative of *Homing in*. In the former text, D'Souza is paired with Kyeyune so that Kyeyune's mind mainly comes to the reader through D'Souza's mediacy. In D'Souza's mind, Kyeyune is the exceptional African but one who is unable to break out from the boundaries of Africanness to fully embrace the non-African, which in D'Souza's thinking is the only way Kyeyune can be fully human. D'Souza's values of humanity thus are the standards against which Kyeyune, and indeed the other Africans, are evaluated. D'Souza here conflates his value system with an assumed universal human system, and posits the same as stable. The image of the African politician in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* is therefore not just as shown to the reader but as evaluated by a consciousness that constructs itself as the other of the

African. This same consciousness is however fragmented in its self conception, for it aspires to Africanness and at the same time rejects it.

One might however argue that this manner of characterisation, the pairing of individuals from different racial groups, is necessitated by the reality that the writers deal with. This type of racial arrangement fostered by the colonial government and one that continues after independence, keeps the races apart so that members of different racial groups are not supposed to know the other races. The dominant race is supposed to be the source of knowledge for all the other races.

The realisation that experiences of the different races cannot be understood independent of each other informs Majorie Macgoye's pairing of Ellen and Martha in *Homing in*. The two may come from different social classes and experienced their childhoods differently but they have spent a significant part of their adult life together so, like for the case of Vikram and Njoroge, they have imprinted each other's lives in ways that cannot be undone. Their lives, and therefore identities, are implied in each other's experiences. The reminiscence via the stream of consciousness technique that Macgoye uses underscores this intertwining; they are able to get on almost wordlessly because they have been together for long enough to be able to penetrate the core of their subjectivities. No wonder then that their reminiscences frequently take on the same trajectories, and are often triggered by the same objects or happenings in the present. The significance of race in the constitution of the subjectivities of these two women has diminished to a barely perceptible level by the time Ellen dies.

Vikram Lall, by narrating not just his life but also showing how it is inseparable from that of some of his childhood friends from other races, and also how his and his sister's lives are entwined, suggests that his identity, just like that of Africans like Njoroge, are products of interracial interactions. The implication is that to try to define any of the identities of his generation that grows up in colonial Kenya, particularly in those places where he is brought up, in racial or ethnic terms, is reductionist and, therefore, accounts only for a tiny part of these characters' identities. The presence of Njoroge, Annie and Deepa in Vikram's life is insinuated through various narrative devices that are a reminder of how composite his identity is.

Memory, an integral component of this narrative, cannot let Annie leave Vikram's mind so that though she physically leaves the story early and as a child, she remains in it through her influence in Vikram's life. His experience with her is an important reference point in his life, comparable to the significance of the building of the railway to his community's history. For this reason he keeps returning to this era to find and orient himself in the present. He cannot be 'a normal' Indian husband because his childhood friendship with Annie and her death froze what he calls his essential core (11), just like Deepa cannot be the kind of Indian woman expected by her community because her childhood feelings for Njoroge leave permanent marks on her.

In the colonial era where racial relations are codified, skin pigmentation is a major issue in the characters' image of self. Whiteness, which is the colour associated with political and economic power, in turn becomes a tantalizing image for those non- whites who though they may hunger for one of these things

associated with whiteness, know that this is precluded by skin colour. Part of Vikram's attraction to Annie is his knowledge that she is unattainable because of her skin colour yet she represents to him that desirable life associated with her whiteness.

Annie is, however, a complex image in that though she may represent the life of privilege which as a child Vikram feels excluded from, she at the same time humanises that same whiteness of his childhood that is otherwise the antithesis of all that is human. She is the nearest that Vikram comes to seeing the artificiality of the gap between the white race and his own. Her death therefore almost destroys the faith in humanity that his friendship with her had started to kindle in him in the face of racial hatred that severely tested his other inter-racial friendship: that between him and Njoroge. In this death the source of threat to inter-racial harmony is reversed; whereas it is the white policemen and their black juniors who menace his relationship with Njoroge through their raids on the black quarters, this time it is the Mau Mau, blacks, who cause death. The violent nature of the death of his playmates is made worse by the involvement of Kihika, the Bruce's servant that had looked so harmless and whom the children trusted, and the complicity, albeit unwittingly, of his uncle, Mahesh, who steals Vikram's father's gun and gives it to the Mau Mau.

This childhood experience kills passion in Vikram, what he describes as his essential core. The result is that he lacks that deep interest in those things that those who consider themselves essentially Indian expect him to be interested in. The most persistent of these is his inability to fall in love, at least the inability to show interest in the type of women that would meet communal

approval. The indifference to his parents' concern about Deepa's love affair with Njoroge too is attributable to this freezing of the 'essential core' in him. It is however not only in relation to Vikram's identity that the insistent presence of Annie in the text explains, she, and her family in general, highlights the hybrid influences that produce Lall and Sheila's characters, but more so Lall.

Through cross-referencing of painful activities that are attributed to the races that seek to associate each other with the anti-human, Vassanji avoids presenting any of the races as essentially evil or good. The contenting images of daitya that Sheila uses to project the Mau Mau as evil are contrasted and counterbalanced by the brutal actions of the colonial policemen. Mwangi in this context is the image of the ambiguous, indeterminate identity of the Mau and its opponents. His statement that "[t]hey are evil and mad those who kill children" (54) and the incidents in which he puts flowers in Deepa's hair make him an enigma to Vikram, especially when Vikram considers the same against the picture of the Mau Mau that he has as a child and Mwangi's several arrests and torture on the grounds that he belongs to this group. Indeed Vikram admits of his inability to fully understand Mwangi following the statement quoted above when he says, "I have never understood the full implication of those words. Mwangi often confounded me" (54). The description of the torture he goes through in the detention camp which leads to his death, redeems him by absolving him of any link to Annie's death; however, the inability to understand how anybody could kill children the way Annie and William were killed, something made worse by the pictures of that scene that Njoroge retrieves from

the court archives, resists attempts to wholesomely adopt any totalising images for the white policemen and the Mau Mau.

It is important to note here that the meaning of ‘understanding’ in this context is different from its use in *Going Down River Road* in which it is loaded with prejudice. The difficulties the labourers and Yussuf have in trying to understand each other is put down to their races being mysterious to the other. Therefore it is not, unlike the case of Mwangi in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, because of the depth of the characters concerned. The pairing in *Going Down River Road* is between what is considered similar, not different, unlike the case in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle*. Ben and Ocholla, as already mentioned, are characters whose differences are so minimal that it is not surprising that they are paired. They are brought together by circumstances, social status, accommodation, love for drink and women and their shared dislike for the other workers at the site. In them Mwangi attempts to create a unified image of the oppressed or working class which he sets against the oppressor class represented by the likes of Wini’s landlord.

It can, however, be argued that through pairing characters from two different ethnic groups, something only hinted at by their names, Mwangi suggests that poverty cuts across ethnicities. By the same token however he also suggests that class is by no means a unified category, for Ben and Ocholla are alienated from most of those with whom they share the lower class; the emotional distance between them is only occasionally bridged by their shared hatred of the Indian characters like Yussuf. *Going Down River Road* is therefore more a text of separate than imbedded identities, and herein lies the problem: its

kind of representation does not account for the shared experiences among the races. It only focuses on what Said, in a different context, calls discrepant experiences (36) and presents the same as the basis of social identity in a society riddled with interdependent identities.

The pattern of pairing in this text is informed by the impulse to isolate instead of the need to bridge gaps, gaps that these pairings merely confirm instead of interrogating, as seen in, besides, Ben and Ocholla, the relationship of the four characters referred to as the four Baniani who are always together but who do not speak to others. The association that approximates interracial connection in this text is that between Kanji Bhai and The Hyena. However instead of expanding the horizons of each of these two characters, this relationship becomes a trope of racial discord and suggests the impossibility of Asians and Africans understanding each other. Indeed The Hyena, by constantly looking down on Bhai's ideas, is intent on destroying an image that Bhai has built of himself as a first class experienced East African mason. What matters to The Hyena is not Bhai's professional competence but his race. He refuses to listen to Bhai's instructions not because they are wrong but because they are given by an Indian. That Bhai is the one who does most of the work while The Hyena talks reverses the exploiter / exploited image that Ben and Ocholla create about Asian / African relationships. Bhai's is an enduring image of a misunderstood and exploited character who yearns to be understood. He becomes the nearest that Mwangi gets at countering the views of Ben and Ocholla on race, and the closest he gets at humanising an Indian character.

Insular identities are similarly to be encountered in *Kosiya Kifefe*. The narrative in this text is more focused on an individual but it is an individual with an active sense of racial and ethnic identity who therefore fails to recognise the extent this identity is embedded in those identities he sees as his antithesis.

The othering of Asians is so forcefully captured by the presentation of not only individual Asian characters as undifferentiated and anonymous but also the parenthetical portrayal of key moments in the history of Asians in Uganda. The silencing of the Asian and white voices in the struggle of Ugandan independence enhances their stereotyping as merchants who are uninterested in the social and political development of the country. Indeed so vilified are Asians that their expulsion from Uganda, which is mentioned in passing, is both unsurprising and is even justified. Amin just carries out an action that is long expected by many citizens as Asians are on the margins of Ugandan society. The narrator justifies this kind of narration by labeling the Asian inaccessible, therefore one whose mind cannot be known and narrated. This inaccessibility is both directly mentioned and alluded to.

3. 5 First Person Narration and Identity

One of the crucial decisions that a postcolonial writer has to make on style must be in relation to what narrative stance to use, what relationship to establish between the narrator and the narration, for the identity of the narrator is as important as the identity issues that many a postcolonial writer may have to deal with. While agreeing with Said's argument that every experience is a matter

of interpretation and that there is no direct experience (*Culture* 35), it is logical to add that the chosen narrator in texts with a postcolonial setting takes upon themselves the burden of representing the experience of others, speaking for others; whether this narrator be a first person or third person, they cannot avoid the task of speaking for others.

Any task that implies speaking for others, Linda Martin Alcoff observes, is inherently problematic. These problems, she argues, are the result of two widely accepted claims; the first being that the position or location of a speaker affects the meaning and truth of their statements and this explains the second claim, that no speaker can transcend their location – location in this context, she adds, refers to either social location or social identity and these “can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one's speech” (6-7). Whereas this statement could be straightforward, it should be added that, as the titles imply *In a Brown Mantle* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* each has at least three locations of speaking, the declared one as proclaimed by the titles, the rhetorical one constructed through narrative perspectives and the social one that can be discerned from the writers’ biographies. These positions penetrate each other and have an implication on the claims made by the title which is supposed to indicate the main positions the subjects of the narrative occupy.

The first person narrative situation as discussed by Stanzel includes the mediacy of narration within the fictional world of the novel (4). That is to say the mediator or narrator belongs to the same realm as the characters whose world is narrated. The first person point of view is a polyvocal narrative voice even if conventionally it is presented as a single voice. It is positioned in the

narrative in relation to other voices whose absence validates it, for it claims to represent them as well even though this is never stated. The first person narrator fuses other voices into a single one, in the process silencing some.

In the circumstances in which Vassanji and Nazareth employ the first person narrative technique in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle*, respectively, there is a symbolic connotation in the sense that the narrators, by inserting themselves into the worlds of the characters, assert their belonging and conversely reject the idea of observers, which the third person narrative situation implies. Therefore Vikram and D'Souza appropriate the mediacy of the narrative situation both to demonstrate their belonging to the respective nations and to place themselves in the subject position, a position that announces their stake in their national narratives.

This position does not, however, constitute an ejection of competing voices from the national narratives. In *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, the shifts in narrative perspective indicate an acknowledgement of the existence of these narratives. For example in a number of instances the perspective is that of either Africans or whites, though in such cases the narrator's knowledge is often quite constricted. This constriction is evident whenever the experiencing consciousness in the text is Njoroge's, and it suggests the epistemological range of the narrator in relation to the experiences of the different races or cultures in the text.

It is noteworthy that Vikram Lall, distances himself from any perception of himself as a communal voice. This is achieved through various devices. First he makes it clear that he is an inhibited character because his essential core froze

in childhood, following the brutal murder of Annie. His responses to situations are thus mediated by this experience, which disrupts his ability to experience life as ‘a typical East African Asian.’ It is for this reason that he is at odds with those supposed to constitute his community, other Asians (Indo-Africans). He approves the love affair between Deepa and Njoroge, for example, a position he only shares with Mahesh, his uncle who is labelled communist by most Asians because of his criticism of some values considered to be core to Asian communal identity – like racial hierarchies that place the Asian above the African, and the immutability of racial identity that other Asians emphasize. Therefore Vikram emerges as a fringe voice narrating communal experiences, a paradoxical situation that however represents him as an objective narrator in his rendering of non-Asian experiences; since he is not immersed in Asian experiences, he is supposed to retain the ability to be impartial.

If the view of identity as a revelation of the irreducible core, the constitutive essences of the self, is upheld then the ‘I’ narrators used in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* show that the writers strip these narrators to reveal their core. The first person in this case is an ideological position that asserts identity. For the first person to do this however it has to be consistent throughout the narrative. In other words the narrated self must be the same from the beginning to the end. The reality however is that, as the discussion may have already shown, the narrated self is never the same in the narrative but rather changes, in terms of values and other discursive constitutive elements. There is also an implied tension between the narrating I and the narrated self that results in a plurality of selves that are difficult to reconcile. For

instance the narrating Vikram and the narrated Vikram do not always coincide; the narrating Vikram would want to construct an apolitical, dispassionate Vikram but ends up constructing a politically conscious and passionate one that is as much an agency as he is an object, contrary to the suggested identity of Vikram as a powerless recipient of the products of political action, because he is caught in between two worlds. Vikram does not always belong to the two worlds simultaneously, but weaves in and out of them and sometimes even merges them through his decisions, thereby vacating the presumed object position.

The 'I' of both *In a Brown Mantle* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* operates between borderlands. One of these borderlands is that between the communal and the individual as both narrators frequently join their experiences with the Asian experience and just as frequently separate the same. This action produces the other border land inhabited by the narrator, that between the essentialist I and the non-essentialist I. While both texts are structured like personal journeys through the turbulence of nation formation, they concomitantly restrict the levels of personal choice and in the process indicate that the narrators are caught in the crosscurrents of race and politics in which the individual is powerless to determine the course of their lives. Therefore, there are no certainties, no assured meanings of places and identities. The resultant 'I' is a mutable being searching for direction, since, as the narratives reveal, none of them has been in control of their lives. Both texts begin with a tone of regret and a tinge of despair, Vikram Lall and Joseph D'Souza wish they had lived differently, even as they realize that it was not entirely their own doing that their

lives turned out the way they did. They are both fugitives living in exile after betraying their countries in ways that substantiate the images constructed for Asian-East Africans as exploitative foreigners who have no real attachment to the African countries they claim to belong to: Damibia in the case of D'Souza and Kenya for Vikram. Their exile is also a withdrawal from the public self into the private self. Thus the emotion of regret is experienced concurrently with the process of deconstruction of the self and the past in reflective narratives that seek, but fail, to pin down essences in these two characters' lives. The narrators admit to lacking full knowledge of themselves, and in this case share in the misjudgments that others, both Asian and non-Asian, make about their motives and value system.

Both texts, in their mirroring of autobiographies, construct audiences that are supposed to have a different view of the Asian experience in East Africa. The texts respond to the supposedly prevalent ideas in this audience about Asians. Understood this way, the texts read like mitigations against verdicts of guilt. Though the narrators in the two texts do not explicitly profess innocence, their presentation of the stories of their lives, their selection and arrangement of events, is supposed to cast them in a new light. To achieve these aims the writers adopt a number of strategies. Among them is the use of history, for the interpretation of history is responsible for the accusations that characters like Gombe Kukwaya in *In a Brown Mantle* and the various faceless characters in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* level against Indo-Kenyans.

D'Souza constructs an audience that he hopes will be sympathetic to him and accept his confession; it is clear from the beginning of the novel that he

believes he has been a victim of historical circumstances and that is why he locates his personal story within larger histories. The audience he constructs is supposedly one that is innocent because it is uninvolved in the affairs of Damibia, and even Goan affairs, about which they apparently have little or no knowledge at all. This innocence explains the need to give what could be considered basic information about both Goa and Damibia, as is the case with the narration of Goan history. That this audience is deemed ‘outsiders’ to Goan and African affairs is further buttressed by D'Souza's portrayal of his experience, and this includes his ancestors, Goans in Africa and Africans, as different and unique to these groups. This kind of thinking is what is to be understood by a statement like, “In our countries, personalities mattered, whatever they stood for” (1), which suggests a difference in experience between the speaker and his audience.

The audience is sometimes constructed as the West, where D'Souza is at the time of writing his confession. This certainly is the implication of his saying “It is a strange thing, but although communications are poor in Africa, word of the genuinely nationalistic leaders gets around the unsophisticated people” (43). This is a statement shows the narrator as located outside Africa, both physically and in perspective. The statement is an insistence an element of the narrator's confession agenda: Africa as a different place. This difference is meant to mitigate his transgressions; he asks to be judged on a different scale of values because his actions were done in a different culture. Yet this pandering to putatively Western value systems is not consistent, for the West is entangled in the unfortunate fate of Asians in Africa and is part of the object of D'Souza's

criticism. Indeed the West is so lampooned that the narration is as much about the West as it is about Africa. A homogenous West is therefore not the narrator's primary audience.

Another plausible identity of the audience that suggests itself quite early in the story is the narrator's second self, his consciousness. It can be argued that it is to come to terms with this second self that he confesses; that this confession is an act of reconciling the guilty self with the innocent self. Understood this way, the narrative becomes a form of return to innocence. The idea of a second self is supportable by the narrator's reference to a voice that urges him to confess; indeed this voice is the motivation for telling this story (2). If we accept the self as one of the identities of the narrator's audience, then in a sense the narrative becomes a dialogue between the self whose identity is to be found in the resolution of this dialogue. Nevertheless it is by no means a unitary self either: the identities that emerge are those of Goan in East Africa, Indian / Asian in East Africa, African Goan, Goan African and a particular individual, D'Souza.

3.6 Lexical Dilemmas

Forms of address, those words with which characters attempt to apprehend self and the other, are crucial to identity. These words are the common lexis that the characters from groups they designate and separate identify each other with; therefore, they are the first point of contact, linguistically, with the meaning of the self and the other. The nouns black, African, white, European, brown, and Asian are basic forms of address whose

meanings are however not always obvious, and therefore constant, between speakers in different instances. While these are words with clear linguistic denotations, such denotations can only be considered a starting point in the attempt to understand the meanings that characters assign to the words or the meanings the words carry despite the characters' intentions or in addition to the same.

It can be argued that as result of the contestable experiences of the characters and group of characters in these texts, their conceptions of themselves and of each other are tentative and continuously slip from under the terms deployed to understand or express them. The basic problem arises from the need to assign a noun that is general enough to remain a truthful description of these characters in various contexts. The nouns in question are those related to nationality, ethnicity, and race. Particular nouns, pronouns and possessive adjectives can therefore be read as attempts to pin down identities.

The characters, and by extension writers', quest for certitude is disturbed by the discourses of nationalism, patriotism, racism and indigeneity through which they conceptualise themselves and others. This quest is also disturbed by the contradictions that these discourses inscribe some of the lexicon available to the characters. It is for lack of alternatives, for instance, that words like Indian must still be used to refer to people neither born in nor citizens of India. For the same reason the meanings of such nouns is at best provisional, simultaneously cliché and neologic, overlain and inventive.

Reference to persons, especially in relation to their membership of places, ethnicities and races is problematic in all these novels. Nouns and

pronouns thus become the location of the dilemmas, confusion, prejudices and conflicts of self knowledge and knowledge of others. These words denote fixed belonging and exclusions. This exclusivity is however unsustainable in practice, thus resulting in a proliferation of inconsistencies. Similar inconsistencies, perhaps even more pronounced, disturb attempts at self description rendering such pronouns as 'we' and 'us', and the possessive adjective 'our' semantically elastic, or at best always relative.

An analysis of selected passages from these texts will help to develop these arguments about words of reference and identity. We start with *Kosiya Kifefe*, a text in which the three main races in Uganda in the period just before independence and the first two decades after go through various stages of adjustments in relations and the definition of each other. The prominence of race in this text is evident through the recurrence of nouns of race and ethnicity. In the following passage Kifefe talks to his father, an illiterate villager about the future independent Uganda. Kifefe has just arrived back home after having sat the Cambridge School Certificate exam and sees himself as part of that new Uganda that independence is about to usher in while his father is sceptical because all he knows about life has been learned in the confines of his village. His image of the self is infiltrated and dominated by his experience as a colonial subject.

“How will people get money when the white man goes away?” enquired Bahemuka.

“Africans will make their own money,” Kifefe replied confidently. (27)

This conversation sets two groups in opposition to each other but the terms used, since they come from different semantic fields, are mismatched and cannot reasonably enter into the antonymic relationship suggested; African, which Kifefe uses against Bahemuka's 'white man' is a term that denotes belonging to a place while white man denotes race which makes this comparison conceptually asymmetrical. Both words are conflated with race and are totalizing in their description of what are otherwise heterogeneous groups; white man here is not just a word of colour; it has associative and connotative meanings of oppressor and coloniser, the non-self of the African. However that the illiterate Bahemuka uses skin colour while the literate and, at this point, moderately educated Kifefe uses a more expansive word is a reflection of the differences in their worldview and therefore how they perceive themselves and, consequently how they relate this self with their 'other'/'Other' – both are constructed in this context. Kifefe locates himself within a narrower category suggestive of a political and geographical entity while Bahemuka, through invoking political positioning too, diffuses his identity by locating himself within race, a geographically unbound notion. This difference in levels of awareness is indeed strengthened later in the conversation when Kifefe tells Bahemuka that the white people are divided into nationalities like the English, German and French but even with this explanation Bahemuka insists on attending to the racial category when he asks "What if they all conspire against the black man?" (28).

Bahemuka's position is an insistence on denial of difference and an affirmation of homogeneity, an insistence on race as the only valid category of

identity and on limitation of the same to skin colour. This avowal of race as a definite signifier of difference on the one hand and its complication by geography, politics and social class on the other is developed further in the contrast between Kifefe and his older brother, Kajura, who also happens to be illiterate. To Kajura, the phrase 'white man' has an obvious meaning in its denotation of his Other that it needs no elaboration. When Kifefe tells him that he plans to get a job at the bank and explains that there are different jobs there he says, "I think the only job they can give an African is to keep records. I am sure handling of money is reserved for the white people". Kajura does not qualify 'they' because of its supposed obvious reference. This assumption is undermined by Kifefe's thoughts in which through a process that Bhabha calls cultural translation in *The Location of Culture*, albeit in a different context, he translates Kajura's words to reveal a split of the category of 'African' and therefore destabilises Kajura's unitary perceptions of self and other. The translation itself, by showing that these two characters interpret experience on different conceptual planes, exposes a cultural difference that only one of them is aware of. Kifefe, thinking his brother unsophisticated, decides to explain neither the workings of a bank nor "the complicated relationships between white men and an educated African like himself. How could he explain what barriers had been dissolved by his education and acquisition of a foreign tongue?" (29). Kifefe's position however brings little clarity in the meaning of 'African' which he clouds further by retaining it as a description of his identity – that by insinuation is different from the white man's on the basis of colour – yet simultaneously avowing the dissolution of this difference through education.

Affinity in social class therefore fails to dissolve the boundary that Kajura talks of and Kifefe silently denies. The word retains its essentialist but shaky meanings.

The most knotty signifiers are the words 'African', 'white man', 'Indian' and 'Asian', words which may set out to describe what the characters who use them conceptualise as unproblematic realities but which in practice expose and complicate uncertainties. 'African', for instance, is particularly nebulous in *Kosiya Kifefe*, *Homing in*, *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, and *In a Brown Mantle*. In *Kosiya Kifefe* it is both a term of description and of indicating cultural and racial difference. It is in this latter sense that African is most politically involved; for it is a byword for nationalism and belonging meant to ascribe a sense of entitlement on the African, to wrestle the same from the colonialists and those perceived as colonial. It in this context acquires the qualities of an enclosed space into which one can only enter through birth and genealogy. In the contexts where it is a term for race, it connotes visibility and invisibility.

It is sometimes not clear whether 'African' and 'Ugandan' have the same semantic range, especially since the same are complicated by race and culture. For instance African is mostly a synonym for black, which sets up a clash with political categories like citizen; 'African' cannot be understood fully as denoting belonging to Africa, not least because belonging is itself conceived within the parameters of indigeneity. Unlike its supposed co-referential terms of citizen, it is invested with 'natural' characteristics that can neither be bestowed nor acquired. The term African therefore frequently denotes a way of life; that is the

case in the observation that no African spent Christmas in the city, for the city was home only to Indians and whites.

The same play of meanings is found in *In a Brown Mantle*, a significant difference being that whereas in *Kosiya Kifefe* the initial application of these terms presupposes certainty only to be forced to confront intractable contradictions, uncertainty emerges early in *In a Brown Mantle*. In the former text, the protagonist initially has an assured sense of self, which he arrives at partly by locating others outside what he considers his location. In both texts, however, the contradictions in these terms are never resolved and the flux of signifiers is infinite. D'Souza only continues to situate himself within the terms African, Goan and Asian because he has no alternative but he shows many times that they are incapable of adequately describing him and other groups, especially those referred to as Asians/Africans. His realisation of this inadequacy explains the apparent inconsistencies in his use of nouns. The word African includes and excludes him regardless of context; it is a word that carries contradictory emotions that make it capable of pleasure and pain, warmth and loneliness. When invoked as a signifier of nationalism, as it frequently is in the agitation for independence, its semantic range is narrowed so that it becomes a synonym of skin colour, black. There are times, even if brief, that it operates outside epidermal politics so that even D'Souza becomes African.

The semantic range of this word is further complicated by the issue that the shifts in meaning also depend on the user; it is not just those who construct themselves as African who narrow and expand it, even those constructed as outsiders often move its boundaries to include and exclude themselves. Indeed

their ambivalence towards this Africanness communicates with that of the former group with the result that they cross influence each other. For instance the categories described as Indian/Asian/Goan, sometimes perceive themselves as non-African because the indigenous/black Africans refer to them as such. Conversely this latter group exclude the Asian/Indians/Goans because they believe that this group views itself as non-African.

D'Souza's analysis of the immersion of this word in the eclectic politics of nationalism shows how it can mask and deceive so that one can also think of it in terms of dishonest claims. He indeed explains at length how 'African' is a politically loaded term capable of evoking emotions hinged on the atavistic, which is given connotations of what is attractive and desirable. African is institutionalised, just like are the other nouns of race through the colonial spatial policies that privilege the visual aspects of these terms. In this context such a sentence as that which follows sounds simultaneously common place and problematic. "Kifefe walked in the direction of Kakoba African quarters where Gariyo lived" (42); the colonial spatial organisation concretises the word African in this passage. This policy of isolation is concomitantly a definition of each of the three races as a negation of each other as the racially marked quarters are exclusive zones.

It is such concretizations of African as an identity that disturb the quest for other expressions of Africanness; for instance, the question that Sheila and Vikram Lall grapple with throughout in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, whether it is possible for an Indian/Asian to become African, is partly a result of the colonial racialisation of Africanness. In the above quoted statement Kifefe,

in the act of walking towards Kakoba African quarters also moves towards a certain identity, a familiar territory but whose familiarity is not his creation; therefore, this is an imposed identity but one which he has internalised even if he has not accepted it. It is instructive that Kifefe's movement also represents an aspiration; Gariyo, being one of the young educated Africans whose education has given him a new lifestyle with an attendant value system, represents the kind of life that Kifefe has in mind for himself, especially now that he has passed the Cambridge School Certificate examinations. In Gariyo's house, Kifefe visualises his own future, a future that must be defined by how it differs from his past life of poverty in the village. The movement towards Kakoba African quarters is thus a metaphor for the transition of Kifefe into the image of the new African; these quarters, contrary to their colonial designation as the place of the other race, represent to Kifefe a new prestigious status; they are the antithesis of his father's thatched hut.

In the same vein with concretisation of Africanness is the certainty suggested by the use of 'Indian', 'European' and 'African' in the visual descriptions of the city. In this context these words are limited to visual images and therefore to skin colour. Since the characters so described are nameless and faceless, they are reduced to no more than their skin colour, which, understood in relation to other evocations of these words in the text, is metonymic of many ideas. Such is the case in this statement, "Groups of Indians strolled along shop verandas and down the middle of the streets, there being hardly any traffic. The only Africans visible on the streets were the night watchmen with their dark helmets, blue uniforms and heavy, short batons" (45).

The contrast between Indian and African presence in the city in the above passage is a visual image of the different economic status that the words conjure. The apparently innocent description imbues the word Indian with economic success and African with poverty. However, considered alongside other aspects of diction, like the strolling of the Indians and the heavy, short batons of the Africans, then the difference in economic status acquires implications of unfairness and inequality. This implication reinforces an idea prevalent in this text in the period before the expulsion of Asians that posit the city as alien territory for Africans. This visual image of certainty is interrupted and challenged by another encounter in the city similarly described as one between racial categories or units rather than between individuals. While the word African is retained, the group previously called Indians has both been broadened and narrowed into Asians and Goans. The following passage is a description of Lobo bar in Mbarara:

It was also the meeting place for Goans, many of whom worked as accounts clerks and administrative assistants in government departments. They were almost the only ethnic Asians who went to bars. It was also the meeting place for African “professionals” . . . many who rubbed shoulders with Goans in offices. (46)

Goan is here apparently a hyponym of Asian, which would make Indian and Goans co-hyponyms and Asian the superordinate term but this can only be the case if all these were assumed to be objective designations that refer to empirical conceptual categories. As it should be clear already however, these are contingent words that defy any but only minimal referential meaning. This

defiance explains why, for instance, even with the apparent distinction between Goan and Indian, and even with the narrator's later description of Mr Godhino as Goan, Imongot, the messenger at the railways department refers to him as Indian.

The narrator's description, filtered through Kifefe's consciousness, is influenced by Kifefe's level of education and previous encounters with Goans while Imongot expresses the popular parlance, an insinuation buttressed by his totalising opposition between African on one hand and Indian and European on the other when he says, "For me I am happy when an African becomes my boss because he can listen to my problems. But these Europeans and Indians, they can't even let you take off one day to take your sick child to the hospital" (62). This essentialisation of African, Indian and European, besides now disturbing the hyponym / superordinate attempted earlier by substituting Indian for Asian, conceptualises these nouns as signifiers of humanity versus a negation of the same. The overall idea is that no matter how bad an African is, he / she is always better than Indians and Europeans. Imongot therefore posits himself and his value system as the representation of Africanness, and of the normal, and those that violate these values as the negation of the same. As deployed here these nouns are more a description of cultural categories, even though subjective, than they are of race.

The nearest the semantic category referred to as European gets to individuation and therefore to being humanised is when Kifefe perceives what he considers regional and personal attributes of some of the Europeans at the railways office; they are not merely European but English. Indeed the secretary

to the sales supervisor is an English woman from Newcastle-upon-Tyre (58). This splitting in the category of European is reinforced by the attribution of individual traits to both this secretary and Mr. Balderson, the sales manager. However this characterisation is fully involved in their Englishness, which it is supposed to illustrate so that the image created of the two is not that of any two individuals but of an example of two types of Englishmen.

In the two characters Kifefe sees an exemplification of the unpredictability and inaccessibility of the English. Kifefe thinks himself close to the English identity by virtue of his education and personal attributes that impressed his former headmaster, an Englishman, but these two characters upset this self image. Thus this statement that describes Kifefe's perception of Mr. Balderson is similarly a statement on the fickleness of the English identity: "Kifefe had hoped that his exceptional qualities that had impressed his ex-headmaster in the final year of school would impress all other Englishmen in the same way. But this one had no interest in Africans, not even in Kifefe who viewed himself as being in some way close to the English society" (58). The frustration at his inability to access Englishness is here symptomatic of the nebulosity of English as a form of knowledge of the people it describes, which calls to mind Homi Bhabha's distinction between identity as knowledge and as performance (140 ff). In Kifefe's attempts to pin down Englishness, he uses the logic that Englishness is a special category that can only be accessed through adherence to certain standards of behaviour and possession of uncommon capabilities, a logic that his encounter with the secretary and Mr. Balderson

subverts. The English society of Kifefe's knowledge turns out to be an idiosyncratic and unreliable form of knowledge.

The failure at apprehending racialised identity by nuanced terms explains both the variability in the deployment of these nouns of identity and the dominance of the totalising nouns. Such is the case when shortly after it is said that Europeans and Asians were absent from the streets in Kampala at lunch time, having gone to their houses for lunch, which therefore makes the streets visibly African, 'Indian' replaces 'Asian' in the description of the situation in the evening. Even though it is the same entity that the narrator refers to, he says that Africans leave the city and Indian families become more visible (63). In other writing contexts this change in words would be understood to mean that Indian is merely a part of the Asians who are absent at lunch time; however in this context, no such certainty can be claimed, for it is possible that Indian replaces Asian without any variation in the entity implied therefore making the two terms synonyms.

In a Brown Mantle, which sets out to narrate the Goan experience in Uganda, fictionalised as Damibia, and, therefore, ostensibly to show its distinctiveness from the generalised Asian and Indian, is unable to escape from the instability of these same terms. Indeed the very term Goan is problematic because of its inability to delink the identity it denotes from geography in order to usefully describe mobile identities like that of the characters it designates in this text. Goan is a continuous invocation of geography and filiation; it is a word disrupted by the contentious history and fractious political affiliations of the place it claims ties to. As a result of these issues, the word expresses a certain

inadequacy and therefore frequently needs to be modified, as is the case with the phrase ‘Goans in East Africa’ that D'Souza frequently uses and which vies with the unmodified ‘we Goans’ (9) and ‘Goans of Damibia’ (10). That Goan has to be compounded for it to describe identities with roots in Goa but that are experienced outside it exemplifies the tensions between the phrasal elements of compound identities. The common phrases like East African Goans or Damibian Goans are substituted with ones which, by employing the prepositions ‘in’ and ‘of’, suggest the continued ties with Goa. Both ‘Goans in East Africa and ‘Goans of Damibia’ express an insistence on Goanness; their implication is that the referents are Goan living in East Africa and Damibia. By retaining essentialism around Goa, they disavow the possibility of the involvement of these characters’ East African experience in their identities. The identity of the characters do not however lie in the wholeness of these phrases but at their conjunction, for taken as a whole the phrases have an oxymoronic insistence and a privileging of the last word in the compound.

However one notices a constant awareness in the text of the incapability of Goan to confer homogeneity, that Goa is a term of convenience which only acquires connotations of certitude when given an antonymic subtext, as a negation of Africanness. For instance, an essential Goanness, one that is contrasted to an essential Africanness is implied in this description of the New Jazz Nightclub, “To a Goan, it was an African nightclub carrying with it overtones of the unusual, the underworld, possibly even a tinge of the depraved” (18).

Indeed attempts in this text to insert nuances into the word Indian through the apparently specific Goa falters because of this term's participation in the same essentialist discourses it seeks to avoid. Whereas most of the characters designated Goan distinguish themselves from Indian, it remains only a geographical and contingent distinction that is as often subverted as it is claimed. From the perspective of many characters designated African, the distinction hardly registers, because in popular political discourses both Indian and Goan are what Kyeyune calls Brown man and are associated with ideas deemed a threat to Africans. It is true that Kyeyune's own use of the phrase in reference to D'Souza is on the surface light-hearted but it hardly conceals the racial stigma and other congealed ideas associated with brownness; by foregrounding colour, the implication is that from the perspective of Africans it is the most dominant signifier of the identities of these characters and it is in this context, for instance, that the title *In a Brown Mantle* can be understood, as a statement of how trapped in colour tags these characters are. Brown can indeed be read as an effacement of identity and a euphemism of Indian and Goan which in the racialised politics of the nationalist era of agitation for independence and after are so vilified categories that they border on the offensive, as attested to for example by how readily Gombe-Kukwaya invokes Indianness as the embodiment of exploitation. Kyeyune chooses to call D'Souza Mr. Brown because he finds it easier than his real name and by so doing fixes his identity on a single aspect of his physical attributes.

Kyeyune may believe that he has more progressive conceptions of Goan identity but he is unable to evade the temptation of generalisations as a means of

containment of the 'non-African' identities. Therefore his use of terms that designate Asian/Indian is problematic, for it is characterised by tension that is suggestive of both neutrality and complicity in racial discourses. For instance, though he tells a crowd that the Mugoia is different from the Indian for they too have been exploited by colonialists, and that they are therefore closer to Africans supposedly because they have a shared experience, he has earlier told D'Souza that "You Asians don't know how to relax" (22). In this case Goan is infused into Asian, undermining his attempts to separate it from Indian on the basis of experience.

Race as experience is thus rendered contingent, even barring the idea that experience itself is a result of interpretation. This does not prevent 'African' politicians like Gombe-Kukwaya and even Kyeyune himself from defining African as a connotation of unique experiences. For both politicians 'black' is frequently synonymous with 'exploited' and victimhood in general so that to be black is to understand the meaning of being exploited. Black man in this context ceases to be a phrase of colour and becomes an embodiment of experience; this is the meaning one gets when Kyeyune says that D'Souza is "a brown man outside but a black man inside" (44). His elaboration of this statement implies that other Indians (*Muindis*) are only non-black because they lack a victimhood consciousness that would ally them to fellow victims, an acceptable understanding of their history; they "have forgotten the cruelty of the white man and now work with them to hurt us" (44). This construction of blackness as an embodiment of exploitation and resistance against the same while it essentialises

blackness, also attempts to expand its borders beyond its epidermal denotations but the expansion is unsustainable, for the term contracts soon after.

Two other issues are to be noted in Kyeyune's statement. First by using the word *Muindi* he panders to popular language, one that reduces complex identities to a word because the identity so reduced is considered transparent. This word is a rhetorical strategy through which Kyeyune hopes to modify the image of Asian/Indian characters in the popular imagination by articulating the same from the masses' perspective then exposing its fissures; However he fails to effectively deal with this reductionism and instead participates in it by giving D'Souza as an exception of the *Muindi* whom he presents as essentially anti-African. Second is that interpretation of their past is one of the most contentious issues among Goans in Damibia. They are divided about whom among their past colonisers to be loyal to, even though both colonisers were cruel. The result of this division in opinion is the emergence of antagonistic groups, either pro-Indian or pro Portuguese but these divisions are not regarded within this community as a definition of Goanness. This community's deployment of experience as definition of identity privileges the events rather than the interpretation of the events. It is not therefore true as Kyeyune alleges that they have forgotten; interpretation of their past is of limited use to their present circumstances.

Pius Cota exemplifies the instabilities of racialised and codified identities; his identity is an image of the crisis of identity in which immigrants are caught. For instance though, because of his skin colour and ancestry, he is described as Goan, neither he nor the larger Goan community identify fully with

each other. When he joins politics, he is alienated by this community; they are unable to reconcile his leftist political ideals of pan-Africanism that sees all exploited people as his people with the geographically rooted and filially oriented notions of identity that many Goan characters cling to. Cota's ideals are the most visible aspects of his identity. The Goans therefore, by perceiving his preoccupation strange, also conceptualise him as a stranger. Indeed D'Souza expresses the frustrations that attempting to pin Cota's identity to a word engenders when he wonders whether Cota existed as anything else other than as a politician. The importance of this question becomes apparent when one considers the detachment from politics projected by the Goan community, for whom politics is an African concern and therefore who cannot comprehend phrases like 'Goan politician in East Africa, which in their view is an oxymoron. Indeed Cota's aspirations of pan-Africanism are at odds with the Goans' oppositional conceptualisation of their identity, as a negation of African.

The question whether it is possible to be Goan / Indian and African simultaneously is one that remains unresolved; even D'Souza's emigration does not represent a final affirmation of his non-Africanness, for, like Vikram Lall, he chooses not to go to India but rather to an in-between place as his connections with Africa are too complicated to be cut off by mere physical absence; to go to India would not represent a return but a migration, notwithstanding the admonition he receives earlier from an old Goan man, that he should not think that Africa is his home, as Africa would never accept him and that Goa was his home (91).

His farewell to Africa as he leaves (“Goodbye, mother Africa. . . your bastard son loved you” (150)) is not an expression of a final break but a reluctant departure which raises a further question, whether African as an identity can be gotten in and out at will. It is a question that is relevant to Vikram Lall too who, though he observes earlier in the novel that they had been Africans for three generations (16), remains conscious of the uncertainty and consequent ambiguities of being African, an identity which in his case, because it has a starting point, may as well have a termination point. However this uncertainty does not only apply to the term African but it is also the case with being Indian for through Sakina, it is implied that the reverse is possible; one can abandon their African identity and become Indian; at least that is how the statement that “Sakina-dadi was a Masai girl when Juma-dada married her long ago” (32) can be understood. The past tense that describes her Masai identity expresses a sense of certainty about her new identity but this by no means clarifies the issue of transition between identities and the status of layered identities. It is a complicated issue that still puzzles these characters. In the following passage Vikram relays his mother’s confusion, “Sakina-dadi speaks Kikuyu so fluently, mother told Papa later, and then she added thoughtfully: What must it be like to be a Masai and also a Muslim Punjabi. . . Are we really Africans? (96).

What one hears in this passage is the question, what does it mean to belong to supposedly contradictory identities concurrently, and is it possible? Sheila’s statement questions even Vikram’s earlier assertion that they have been Africans for three generations and divests it of any certainty. At the base of all

these confusions is the meaning of the terms themselves, African, Indian and Asian. Moving between extremes of significations, essentialist and pragmatic, the elusive meanings of these words is related to their arbitrary usages and the confusions they cause to those who supposedly experience the status they describe.

If *In a Brown Mantle* attempts unsuccessfully to distinguish Goan from Indian, *The in-Between World of Vikram Lall* complicates such attempts further by seeking to homogenise and split 'Indian'. The 'Indian' that Deepa's parents deploy to admonish her and keep her within its confines when they learn of her love for Njoroge is one that carries meanings of cultural and racial uniqueness that is closed to 'African' and 'European', but the India that Sheila relies on when thinking of Vikram's marriage is a splintered one, as is the one in Lall's mind when he marries Sheila. In these cases India is plural, as many emerge: Indian born, African born, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Muslim and Hindu African Indians.

Set against these pluralities are singular conceptions of African and European, but these, especially African, remain singular only temporarily. For instance, the colonial authorities construct Kikuyu as a peculiar form of African identity that constitutes the greatest threat to European civilisation. With independence the distinctions among the African identity become even more important because power circulates within particular African identities. This is also the period when those designated Indian like Vikram are anxious about the perceptions of Indianness among the Africans. This anxiety can, for example, be seen when Vikram describes Njoroge as a young Kenyan of today but wonders

how Njoroge perceives him and his family and concludes that besides their friendship, Vikram and his family “remained that enigma, the Asians of Africa” (149). Even Vikram’s perception of Njoroge is however not a simple distinction, as Kenyan is now the site of crises of identity, especially among the Indian characters who have to define to themselves what Kenyan means and transit into these meanings, for these terms are now temporalised.

The difficulty that Lal and Sheila have about the term Kenyan relates not just to their individual inability to define and transit into this identity but also because of the contradictory ways Kenyan is understood even in state authorised discourses. While it is possible, for example, to be legally Kenyan regardless of race, this is undermined by the epidermal-informed Africanisation policy that seeks to secure official spaces for ‘African’. This institutionalisation of ‘African’ and, therefore, Kenyan identity inscribes it with meanings that are beyond those on the other side of the epidermal divide. The confusion and inconsistency of Vikram’s parents about “where they stood and who they were, even as they called themselves Kenyans” (150) is to be understood in this context; they are caught between the conjunctions of meanings.

It is because of their entrapment between meanings that these characters have to oscillate between conceptual terms in their attempts to apprehend elusive subjectivities. There is an attempt that can lead to despair, as expressed in the following passage which speaks to the frustration of those like Vikram who seek certainty within concepts rendered uncertain because they are crisscrossed by discourses and contexts:

Here I was a young Asian graduate in an African country, with neither the prestige of whiteness or Europeanness behind me, but carrying instead the stigma from a generalized recent memory of an exclusive race of brown “Shylocks” who had collaborated with the colonisers. What could I hope to achieve in public service? Black chauvinism and reverse racism were the order of the day against Asians. (238-9)

That Vikram locates himself in ‘Asian’, which placed against ‘African’ as it is negates it, is significant for its suggestion of extreme poles. These apparent extremes are however complicated by the interweaving contexts they participate in: geographical, political and epidermal. Whereas Asian and African may indicate distanced geographies, they are concurrently suggestive of race, with the meanings of ‘Asian’ drawing from its implied alliance with Europe, which provides the metaphor of its guilt, Shylock, a term loaded with historical connotations. The Asian of this passage is therefore one that is guilty both because of its innocent meanings and by association. In other words even without its involvement in the sins of Europe ‘Asian’ threatens to contaminate the African country whose status as African is contingent on purity of race, and its being non-European is a lack that makes it insufficient for the prestige needs of Africa. Asian is yet an indication of non-blackness and non-whiteness and this in-between position is one of culpability because it can only negate but cannot become either of the negations it keeps apart.

This strangeness of Asia is however not confined to it, for post-colonial Kenya is presented as a place that finds meaning for itself through its putative

others. This is how one can read Vikram's statement that though Asians "were considered strange in their ways—but even Turkana, Boran, Masai would have been similarly regarded alien" (239). Apart from the argument just advanced in relation to this statement, it is also crucial in the manner it questions 'Africanness'; the communities mentioned here, especially Turkana and Maasai, are regarded as the images of uncontaminated African identity, a meaning Vikram hints at earlier in his description of the Maasai dance in Nakuru. Strangeness, which logically would represent divergence from the common, cannot therefore in this case be interpreted as that which deviates from Africanness; it is instead that which deviates from the aspired for images of Africanness, which are in reality aspirations of various elite groups.

The jocular language and light-hearted narration of *Going Down River Road*, while it seems to unproblematically present issues that in the other texts under analysis are overtly contested, is still characterised by the same inconsistencies in its effort to conceptualise identity. 'Indian' is, for instance, a term most of the labourers at the construction site of Development House use liberally to denote some of their workmates, their foreman, Yussuf, and the owners of the construction company but it has far wider and contradictory meanings than these apparent concrete meanings show. It is a term caught in some of the same vicissitudes of the postcolonial state as in *Kosiya Kifefe*, *In a Brown Mantle* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*.

As in *In a Brown Mantle*, Indian is a word for exploitation whose putative antonym is 'African', the word for the exploited. Ocholla and Ben in particular perceive the Indian owners of the construction company as

representative of Indian exploitation; therefore, Yussuf's name becomes a metonymic reference to the unfair relations between African and Indians. He is said to know almost nothing about construction yet he is not only a foreman but earns much more than the labourers, who consider themselves more hard working than him. In Ocholla's words, Yussuf earns the much he does "for running around breathing curry into everybody's face and being an Indian like his uncles" (35). This is a statement laden with stereotypical images. Curry is the most recurrent image in an array of dietary and ordurous imagery in the text through which many of the African labourers seek to contain Indian identity, but which prove of limited use for the numerous slippages that they allow. The last part of this statement presupposes that being an Indian is a mode of behaviour, but one that is exhibited only by Indians; it is a statement that raises the same kinds of questions asked in relation to 'Indian' and 'African' as categories of identity in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*: is it possible to enter the category designated Indian? Ocholla's statement is an example of the contradictions that threaten to render this an open ended word. On one hand, by deploying curry as a signifier of Yussuf's Indian identity, he implies that being Indian is a function of habits and, for this reason, he allows room for choice but on the other hand by implying that being Indian entails behaving in a certain, inherited manner, he essentialises this identity.

In addition to Yussuf's other shortcomings, he is ever drugged and spends most of the time either hiding from the workers or giving them orders, sometimes contradictory ones. In making Yussuf the face of Indian identity at

the construction site, Meja Mwangi therefore does not create a homogenising image and instead splinters this word.

To start with, Yussuf and his uncles operate on different value scales. He is indeed critical of his uncles, the company owners, who he portrays as avaricious and stingy. They are, in his view, obstacles to his dream of owning the company. Actually the motivations for most of his actions are personal, for example his craving for drugs and desire for easy living. He comes across more as an aberration than a representative figure. He indeed has nothing in common with the other Indian characters at the construction site beyond his skin colour.

Second, both Yussuf and Kanji Bhai invoke the word ‘Indian’, albeit with modifiers, as a term of abuse, indicating a distancing of the self from the nuances so invoked. In these cases, though they express different conceptions of Indian, they both suggest an awareness of a halo of peculiarity around Indianness that makes it an easily deployable insult. That some of these insults get their force from the word Indian, as is the case in the repeated phrase, “bloody Indian”, goes to show how this word is simultaneously coded and empty. Conventionally, ‘bloody’ has no real semantic value and so hasn’t goddam in “goddam Indian” (220). The latter phrase is an insult from Machore that Kanji Bhai finds the most offensive of all the insults he receives at the building site. The misinterpretation of his anger at this insult is indicative of the different codes in operation over the word ‘Indian’. The mirth of the African labourers is produced by the accent they place on what they probably deem as the intensifying of the negative connotations of ‘Indian’ that goddam gives it; indeed it is this sense of the insult that Ben has in mind when Bhai complains to

him. To Ben, Bhai is too naive to be ‘goddam’, an explanation he gives Bhai with the intention of lessening his hurt. It however turns out that Bhai takes offense not in ‘goddam’ but in being called Indian whereas he is a Pakistani (237). That this distinction matters to him and not to the ‘Africans’ who deploy ‘Indian’ as an all purpose insult results from the use of different semantic contexts. Bhai relies on the detonative meaning of Indian, its reference to nationality while the ‘Africans’ rely on the cultural associations they have imbued it with. It is a connotation that does not merely broaden the meaning of this word but rather reinvents it and turns it into a floating metaphor that effaces the word’s nuances and distorts its relationship to its referents. The narrator too is involved in these misconceptions about Bhai’s identity, for his comments, which are supposed to express better knowledge because of his outside location refers to Bhai as Indian even after Bhai’s protestations.

Bhai’s clarifications affect our reading of other statements that refer to him as Indian but the most visible among these is the one attributed to his assistant, The Hyena, to whom he has lent money that he has difficulties trying to get back. The Hyena expects that Bhai “should be Indian enough to forget such small debts” (188). If Indian is understood in the conceptual sense that Bhai uses it then The Hyena’s statement expresses an impossibility, as he would be expecting a Pakistani to be Indian enough. For this expectation to make sense it needs to be placed within the epidermal discourses that shadow this word in this and in the other texts under analysis. In this particular instance Indian is a combination of skin colour and a set of ideas, prominent of which is the implication that to be Indian is to be economically better off than an ‘African’.

Similarly in light of Bhai's objections to Machore's insults, one needs to interpret his own insulting description of Yussuf, as the son of Gujarati shit (88), cautiously, for its implications are more restrained than the generalised use of Gujarati elsewhere in the text where it is synonymous with Indian. Almost every Indian who speaks in a language that is not Kiswahili or English is described as speaking in Gujarati; this includes the four' Baniani and Bhai himself. Bhai's insult is echoed by Machore's reference to Yussuf as a "son of Indian shit" (98) but its use of Indian and not Gujarati is significant for its triteness. The invocation of the imagery of human waste that shit implies echoes the association of Bhai to the toilet that was referred to earlier.

While Indian operates in different contexts that destabilise it because it is both loaded with and divested of meaning, the word white is mainly deployed as a connotation of economic privilege and it is uncontested. It is a totalising term that allows for no differences within the category it describes so that unlike in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, *In a Brown Mantle* and *Kosiya Kifefe*, in which it is sometimes a variant of European and sometimes its subordinate term, in this text European, by its absence, is conflated with white.

The same instability of meaning in these words and the other nouns of meaning characterises *Homing in*. Though the terms may be more nuanced because they are consciously split, the tension among their contradictory meanings resists the writer's attempts, through Ellen, to pin them down to the detonation level. White and European are used interchangeably with settler to denote difference with African and Indian. While the latter term may sound certain, as it describes an occupation, it is not innocent for it is an amalgamation

of ideologies, discourses, histories and policies. For this reason, settlers cannot unproblematically replace white or European. Ellen for instance uses this term in reference to some of her neighbours who, like her husband and his uncle, are farmers and landowners but she rarely conceptualises them as settlers. In her use of this word it suggests certain attitudes to life and to other races, attitudes that are different from her own. It is a concept she deploys, therefore, to describe and analyse the variations in this attitude. The relationship between settler and white is the skin colour but this is the furthest it goes, as not all settlers are white even though physically they may be, indeed Jack at times distances himself from the settlers' conception of whiteness when he disassociates himself from some race-influenced settler positions in matters of the farmhands' welfare.

White in this text is mainly a political concept for it provides a convenient tool for racial social control. It authorises policies that control access to social power and prestige and for this reason it is essentialised and posited as the opposite, interestingly, not of black or brown but of African and Indian. The compounding of this word with various nouns of place, like the white school, racialises these places, so do the compound nouns of occupations like white chaplain and black padre. Used to modify nouns this way, white, black and Indian are proffered as essential ways of experiencing reality. This is how one can, for instance, understand the teacher's explanation to Ellen that the reason African children on the farms could not go to school was that "There was no land nearby to set up African facilities" (98). Read conversely this statement means that the land available was only suitable for white/European facilities.

The question that consequently needs to be confronted again here, because the text keeps implying it, is what African and white mean. What for instance, does Nigel mean when he says that soon after independence jobs such as that he held would be Africanised and that if any white men were retained they had to be either graduates or accountants? (154). Can white not be simultaneously African or is the meaning of these two terms such that they are mutually exclusive? If we are to accept that these words refer to ideas and not to concrete entities then the additional issue that arises is if the relationship between the signified and these words is arbitrary then why is the relationship amongst the ideas fixed? Africanisation as a practise of making one or a place African implies on the surface an act of imbuing something with ideas and values regarded as African but the practice of Africanisation in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, *In a Brown Mantle* and in this text shows that the African that informs this policy is a rigid concept because it is racialised.

This approach to Africanisation continuously clashes with the alternative practise of the same by characters like Vikram and his family, D'Souza and Ellen who either consider themselves Africanised or seek to be Africanised. In choosing to remain in Kenya while her children relocate to Europe, Ellen Africanises her identity, a process she begins right after she arrives in Kenya and confirms after her first visit back to England. This visit makes her realise that she can no longer identify with England, as emotionally she identifies with Kenya. This realisation and the decisions that flow from it do not however obliterate her other experiences and attributes but merely overlay them.

Ellen's experience also questions the boundaries that some settlers erect between themselves and the 'others' through their use of loaded pronouns which, by isolating them from the rest, simultaneously collapse the differences among categories like white, European and settler. The binary of 'us' versus 'them' that these characters use identify white and European as the hyponym of us and it is assumed that the signified are clear from the context. In the instances where such language is used the speakers take it for granted that there is filiation between them and their audience which is supposed to make the meaning of 'them' clear. When some settlers comment on Ellen's acceptance to teach at the Asian school, their speech expresses an awareness of difference and also fear that the same may be erased; they tell her it is good for her to go and teach "these *dukawallahs*" because, since she has a university degree, Ellen would otherwise be bored at home. Then they warn her "but just don't get them on too far, educating them to take our jobs and our land. They are getting a stranglehold over us already . . ." (36).

The 'us' and 'them' of this statement are not just separate but both are also faceless and homogenous. The semantic force in the sentence lies in its separation of the speaker from the *dukawallahs*, a term that itself though a stereotypical reference to Indians in East Africa in the colonial era, does not provide enough clarity to identify the intended noun since it describes an occupation and not an ontological essence that 'us' gestures to.

It should also be noted that *dukawallah* is a reductive description of Ellen's pupils because not all of them have a shop keeping background nor are they all interested in business. The speakers, by voicing fears over their jobs

which the *dukawallahs* would take, contradict themselves as by describing the would be pupils as *dukawallahs* they indicate knowledge of them. This knowledge is however subverted by the fear that the *dukawallah* would outgrow this tag and therefore pose a danger to the speakers' knowledge.

Indeed even the phrase 'Asian school' masks rather than illuminates the identities of the pupils and communit(y)ies described. This word is a singular conceptualisation of heterogonous people, a complexity that Ellen reveals when she describes her staff mates and pupils but in her attempt at showing that Asian/Indian are complex terms, Ellen equally engages in generalisations. In a passage characterised by a patronising tone that she unsuccessfully tries to temper with empathy, Ellen categorises her pupils into different shades of 'Asianness'; hers can be regarded as a classical example of what Homi Bhabha describes as the scopic drive. In discussing the importance of the visual and auditory imaginary in the histories of societies within the colonial discourse, he says that looking /hearing / reading are crucial in colonial power's construction of its subjects. For this reason, seeing and being seen are a site of contestation in colonial power and to be effective in its production of colonial subjects it combines surveillance with the scopic drive; the latter makes seeing a pleasure (76-7). Such pleasure is discernible in Ellen's description in this passage. Her attempts to locate her pupils outside the colonial discourse fails because one of her crucial aims is to inscribe difference in the objects described, difference between her and the objects of her vision:

They came in all shapes and sizes of body, mind and background.

It was like a new world peeping through a scalloped shell-edge

waiting to be opened. They all managed to get along in English of a kind . . . Earnest square-jawed Sikhs (Kaur they were called, to distinguish them from the boys of the same personal names), business-like, intent on understanding and being understood, excessively nourished and disciplined, some of the older ones, she later found out, terrified that an engagement might have been entered into without their knowledge. Hindus, a lifelong expense of their families – no one handed out sweetmeats at *their* arrival – whose skins soon became pallid with fasting, cosmetics and late nights. Prettiness and finery were of great importance to them (every excuse pleaded to avoid wearing uniform even for a half a day) but they took second place to a good name. You could not send them on an errand where they would remain for an instant alone with a male teacher or student. . . . The Parisees and a few of the Ismaili girls had English-speaking mothers and high-class English manners to match. The Muslims were shy and not too cohesive because of their various denominations. (72-3)

This passage is meant as a summary of the types of Asian girls in the school and simultaneously as an expression of Ellen's knowledge of the complexity of the 'Asian character'. Its form of knowledge however depends on the power of the stereotype for effect, stereotypes that deploy skin, physical appearance, culture and religion as signifiers of identity and therefore difference. To buttress these stereotypes such signifiers are presented as obvious knowledge by making the observer a neutral 'you', a position that gives the

description the force of objectivity. However this positioning of the narrative consciousness is problematised by markers of English-centeredness; English language and manners are the standards by which the pupils are evaluated.

Bhabha's analysis of the stereotype once again provides an important tool for understanding the assumptions of the narrator; this can be rightly considered an example of the kind of subjects he has in mind when he argues that "The subjects of the discourse [colonial] are constructed within an apparatus of power which *contains*, in both senses of the word, an 'other' knowledge—a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of an otherness I have called the stereotype" (77-8). The passage from *Homing in* participates in a definition of categories of Asian communities and by doing so fixes them so that concepts so produced have, supposedly, the authority of denotation especially since Ellen's perspective is the dominant one in the narrative and one of the two main ones through which the text's values and ideas are communicated.

Ellen desires political correctness. To this end she attempts to avoid the generalised notions of the word 'Indian' and instead seeks specific meanings, which sometimes happens when she is both the narrating and the conceptualising consciousness. However, as seen in the description of her students, she is confronted with pitfalls of counter generalisations as negations of the apparently popular notions. Besides the pitfalls, she is unable to maintain the consistency she aims at.

Of the texts written by writers with non-Asian roots, *Homing in* is the only one of those analysed in which Asian/Indian characters are presented in

non commercial contexts at some length. All the same, being Indian is represented as different from being African or European. They are a special category whose world the narrator frequently codifies. Her patronising narration of this world is suggestive of the knowledge she assumes over 'Indian ways'.

Martha, the narrative's other major consciousness, is entangled in the same difficulties Ellen faces when representing the other race. She uses the words white and European to mainly inscribe difference in her identity; they are words of colour, race and culture which confer uniform traits to those that fall in this category. Her murky conception of these words results in her relating with characters like Nigel, Ellen's son, not as an individual but as a European. To her, Nigel's behaviour is an example of European behaviour, suggesting that behaviour that differs from his would be non-European. As for the case of Ellen, it is necessary to quote a passage at length which illustrates her idea of European. The context of the passage is the hospital where Nigel meets her by his mother's sickbed when he is summoned from Australia following her illness. He kisses her cheek and asks her questions about his mother:

Martha was appalled. It was not even as though she had been his ayah. She had met him first as a young man of twenty. Just like a European, she thought, making you ashamed, asking the impossible of you. The things other people would reasonably demand – that you get clean the ancient ridged paint work framing the window panes or remove the stain of years from a saucepan – they do not worry about. Once they know you well enough to make their own assessment they do not blame you

because the hens are not laying well or a mineral stain grows under a dripping tap. But if you avert your eyes from an unlucky sight or a soft-fried egg, eh, then you are in for it, and have never been taught what taboos of theirs you are breaking. (188)

Martha's conceptualisation of European is as singular as is Ellen's of the different Asian communities. European comes across as a set of unique values and attitudes. Besides it is a homogenous category so that Nigel is a typical European. Since he differs a great deal from some of the Europeans in the text, and since these differences are in the sites that contain the essences of European identity, like empathy and mercy, then the logical conclusion would be that they are an aberration but Martha's is only a certain knowledge of the meaning of European so that we have to rely on how the same is practised.

The difficulties in agreed or consistent meanings of the key words with which the different races or groups understand and address each other is mainly as a result of the cultural translations that have to take place in the deployment of these words, for though the texts are written in English most of the characters represented experience this reality in their mother tongues. White, black, Indian, Asian and European are, therefore, translated experiences.

The overall implication of these variant meanings is that the characters do not always address those aspects of the others and themselves that they may have in mind when they deploy these words. Although these terms may be inevitable as forms of address, it is important to reconsider the limits of their usefulness as descriptions of identity.

3.7 The Third Person as the Indigenous Gaze

Arthur Gakwandi and Meja Mwangi appropriate the third person narrative perspective as the indigenous gaze through which the formerly colonised return the imperial gaze, a concept in postcolonial studies discussed by Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (*Postcolonial* 207). The gaze of the formerly colonised is however complicated by the imperial one; as the hybridized observer cannot be free from the relation with the Imperial Other of the imperial gaze.

The third person point of view is expansive, allowing the narrator to see and tell about wide space and various characters, without any of them being aware of the narration and therefore not being involved, apart from those whose narrative consciousness is incorporated in the narration. This point of view is therefore removed from most of the characters but assumes knowledge of them, the amount of knowledge varying depending on the type of third person. The third person narrator as employed by Meja Mwangi and Arthur Gakwandi in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* respectively, is a strategy of expressing epistemological authority over the other in a manner that mirrors the imperial gaze. The difference is that the gaze in this case is now indigenous, the gaze by those who consider themselves to belong to the nation at those they perceive as outsiders.

Whereas the imperial gaze assumes knowledge of the colonised, the indigenous gaze in *Going Down River Road*, can only posit tentative knowledge as seen in the deployment of language (discussed in the previous section) and other narrative strategies. The narrative consciousness in this text, just as in

Kosiyā Kifefe, is mainly that of its black characters even though this may sometimes shift to the unidentified narrators, the epistemological distance between the narrator and the protagonist, especially in *Going Down River Road*, is so close as to be indistinguishable. The result therefore is that the world of Indian characters like Yussuf, Kanji Bhai, and the four Indian characters always referred to only as the four Banianis is excluded from the text except as represented or imagined by Ben and Ocholla. Ben has an emotional aloofness towards the other characters that suggests a superior understanding of the world but this knowledge is more patronising in the case of his presumed knowledge of Indian and white characters, who he invariably associates with some negative quality.

Ben's epistemological assumptions are highlighted by the quest for understanding at the construction site where everybody seeks to know and to be known. In Ben's view, Yussuf has "insatiable demands to be understood" (99). He is at the centre of the labourer's daily activities at the site but yet he is unreachable both physically and epistemologically. Yussuf emerges as an ontological enigma, from his and the labourers' perspectives. They seek to find him, to understand him and he also seeks to be found and understood, but this is never realized. Therefore, the repeated question about Yussuf's whereabouts is an ontological one as much as it is a literal one. It is noteworthy that even finding Yussuf physically, for those who seek, does not improve their situation as he hardly meets the need for which they seek him, therefore rendering the quest for him an endless one.

The quest to understand and be understood is elevated to the level of a motif in both *Going Down River Road* and in *Kosiya Kifefe*; the Indian characters are invariably the mysterious ones, even when it is they who need to understand the ‘African’. The description of the Goan owner of Lobo’s Bar in *Kosiya Kifefe*, is a telling illustration of this motif: “A middle-aged Goan presided over the counter. He was both intimate and remote, sneaky and candid, stern and chatty, all at the same time” (47). This portrayal of the Goan as unknowable because of the contradictory traits is one of the starkest instances of an idea which appears in various guises in the two texts: the thinking that the little knowledge the Africans have of the East African Asians is because of the ‘mysterious nature’ of the Indian. In these two texts the positioning of the observer is outside the observed and there is an assumption of a complete mastery of the object of observation. The reader has no other way of counter-checking this observation.

It may be tempting to attribute the labourer’s lack of understanding in *Going Down River Road* to their apparent simplicity, which Ben and Ocholla are supposedly able to transcend, as the following passage suggests: “No one gives a second thought to Ben. Him and Ocholla are pariahs. No goods from no place. No one understands them. Not Yussuf, not Bhai, nobody at all understands them. Not that the two are any more complicated than the rest of the band. The labourers do not understand many, many things” (104-5). However, Ben and Ocholla’s relationship with the nation, represented through the city, is equally incomplete. Unlike the kind of gaze associated with imperialism which claims to know the land and, as result, its inhabitants, Ben and Ocholla’s gaze is premised

on a small, private and troublesome view of the city through which they move like sleepwalkers transiting between fixed points. The images of dirt and waste that describe their experience of the city reveals their alienation from it yet, unlike, the coloniser, who has the mother country against which to weigh their views of the colony, Ben and Ocholla only have a vague idea of a better society to go by. Some of the qualities of this desired society can only be guessed at from what they are dissatisfied with in their society. For this reason their gaze, which is the chief media the Indian characters are represented through, is a distorted one.

Development House itself and the roles that Ben and Ocholla play there can indeed be read as tropes of the indigenous gaze. The building site provides the scene of the gaze; its rise as the construction goes on makes it more suited for this role as the characters become physically more compartmentalised. The four Baniani are always, when not working, to be found in a room alone playing cards; Ben finds convenient hiding places in the many rooms and makes the works of searching for him more difficult; and Kanji Bhai is isolated from the rest as he works in The Hyena's company. Isolated in the various parts of the building thus, the Indian characters become ideal objects for Ben's and Ocholla's observation; the latter is strategically placed in the cabin of the crane.

Just like in Meja Mwangi's narrative, the epistemological authority on which Gakwandi's narrative choices lean is a nationalistic one, and therefore it privileges the indigenous gaze. The dominant narrative consciousness in the text, though more sophisticated than that of *Going Down River Road*, is still constrained in that it is tied to Kifefe's knowledge of the world. This is a story

about Kifefe and he becomes emblematic of the aspirations of the middle class, whose world view he represents both through his own value system and that of the other members of this class that he interacts with. His, since it excludes a lot, is a rather limited world that rests on popular but not necessarily correct notions, as the passage below, whose observations are also true of Ben in *Going Down River Road*, shows:

Kifefe was not in the habit of tracing the origins of his assumptions about life. They came to him imperceptibly so that by the time he became aware of them they had acquired the status of self-evident truths. It did not occur to him to question them because they were not put forward by anybody at any particular time. They gained legitimacy from the behaviour of the people around him so that they seemed to be part of a common stock of human experience that any intelligent mind would take for granted. (128)

What this authorial intrusion says about Kifefe is meant to mitigate the warped self-centred logic through which he places himself at the centre of the various discourses of identity in the novel. The irony that structures the relationship between the narrative voice and Kifefe's value systems that is hinted at by such authorial intrusions makes this a denser narrative than that of *Going Down River Road* but sometimes the countering of Kifefe's dominant value system is so subtle as to adequately provide a reliable means of apprehending the narratives of Indian and white characters that he silences. Gakwandi, for instance, unlike Mwangi, broadens the spheres of Asians beyond

the commercial spaces into the domestic and social ones, and also through reference to specific groups like Goans shows awareness of how totalising 'Asian' is a category of identity. All the same Gakwandi does not give these characters a voice to articulate a different image. In the few instances when the panoramic gaze at Indians shifts to a close up and individual Indian characters are presented, their representation serves only to confirm stereotypical images, images that Kifefe articulates. One therefore gets the impression that it is the African middle class consciousness that is on display rather than a representation of the Indian experience in Uganda. This is certainly the case when the two Indian brothers call on Kifefe to sell him a car (131). The narrator's intention here seems to be to showcase typical Indians, as opposed to just businessmen. This intention, for example, explains the deployment of the term 'Indian' as the basic category of the two; it is the first recognisable feature when they enter.

The abbreviated names, S.K. Patel and P.P. Patel, are metaphors of the abbreviated manner in which Ugandans of Indian extraction are represented. Besides the abbreviation, by relying on some of the commonest names amongst East African Indians, these names suggest a lack of penetration (beyond stereotypes) by the indigenous gaze. The gaze instead utilises the ideas that these names come loaded with, like avarice. The characteristics of the Patel brothers that stand out in this encounter – cunning, opportunistic businessmen who would do anything to make money – highlights this one dimensional portrait of the East African Indian.

This incident, ironically, is significant for its revelation that the derided Indian understands the emergent African middle class better than Africans like Kifefe imagine and that the 'Indian' is therefore required to facilitate the entry of this class of Africans into the aspired for middle class category. The identity that Kifefe seeks relies on more than just ethnicity and skin colour; its material manifestations, possession of which is indeed one of the main reasons the Indian characters are loathed, are more important than the non-material ones. Kifefe therefore disregards whatever negative ideas he may have about Indians in his dealing with the Patel brothers, for they become to him a means of cementing his claim to a certain identity. The emergent African elite's reliance on the Indian for social mobility is also true of the African patrons at Lobo Bar in Mbarara who, because they want to cling to a lifestyle that confirms their belonging to the middle class status that they can ill-afford, resort to the 'Goan' for credit.

The relation between profession, race and identity is posited as an obvious one in some of these texts, and this depends on the nature of narration, and presumably its aims. Professions are taken as an integral part of certain racial identities and are either promoted or devalued, depending on the political significance of the colour in the text, and on whether it is post or pre-independence era. So occupations become a site for the negation of power and belonging. Whereas it would be expected that first person narration, because of its subjective nature, would be limited in its portrayal of these contested sites, it can actually be demonstrated that this style of narration, as employed in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle*, actually provides a wider

view of the contestation than does *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe*. In *Going Down River Road* the focus is on the tribulations of the labour class in the city and their woes are blamed on the business class whose face in the text is Yussuf, the Indian foreman at the construction site. The narrative concentrates on the daily struggles of the labourers and portrays Yussuf and the Indian business class that he represents as exploiters that are indifferent to these struggles. While the hardship these characters face is clearly brought out, its causes are improperly analysed, if at all, neither are the tribulations of the Indian businessman, beyond the self-inflicted problems that Yussuf has at the site due to his addictions.

Since the narration in *Going Down River Road* is one-sided, it presents exploitation as an essential part of the Asian businessman who, for instance, will only allow the African a position higher than that of labourer when forced by the policy of Africanisation. Due to the absence of an alternative view of these events, besides Yussuf's, who, because of his constant intoxication, is hardly a reliable voice, the resulting silence makes it difficult to take the articulated position as an objective one.

The concern of the narrator, and by extension the writer, being to project the image of the Indian as exploitative, Indians are presented as ahistorical: they have no background and are tied to a static identity. Thus imagined, they become a suitable target for the policy of Africanisation. Based on skin colour as it is, this policy precludes any possibility of the Kenyan Indian ever belonging to the nation in the same manner as black characters. This barrier partially accounts for their resort to bribery to win acceptance. The fear behind

these actions is muted, in contrast to *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* which, because they go into the minds of the Indian and African characters, manage to reveal motives. One effect of venturing into the minds of characters from different races, for instance, is that *In a Brown Mantle* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* show how some of the Indian characters are as much victims as the ordinary African characters are.

Though trading is the commonest occupation of East African Indians, it is by no means the only one, just as not all Indian traders are unscrupulous, as the narrators in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* present them. In making amends for the dominant one-dimensional portrayal of Indian characters through the exiled Gupta Singh, the narrator in *Kosiya Kifefe* inscribes a counter narrative of the Asian experience in East Africa and undermines the meta-narrative that ties Indian identity in East Africa to a narrow sphere of human endeavour. By cleverly crossing the motives of Gupta and Kifefe in the incident when Gupta visits Kifefe in his hotel room (232-3), the writer does a number of things. Though this is not the only incident in the novel in which an Indian character is presented close up, it is the only one that truly humanises them. The interest of Gupta and his wife is in the welfare of Uganda and Kifefe, but Kifefe's only concern is the precise moment when Gupta will pay him the money he owes. The insistence is so much that even when Gupta is on the phone arranging an interview that would later have significant political consequences for Kifefe, the latter's thoughts stubbornly remain on the money owed. Gupta, in this conversation, has a stronger attachment to Uganda than Kifefe does and this disabuses the view implied in *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road* that

the Asian's attachment to the African countries where they were born does not go beyond business interests.

Another implication of the conversation between Gupta and Kifefe is that it shows that the basic concern of somebody who finds themselves in exile like Kifefe has is a means of survival, which also explains his later involvement in business. That this does not establish an essential connection between his identity and his means of survival shows that one's occupation is a response to circumstances, and this revelation undermines the rigid and negative association of Indian characters with business. Generally, this dialogue shows the complexity underlying the relationship between the two races in East Africa but which characters like Kifefe have not appreciated because of received notions about Asians, and the limited interactions that Asians have with Africans. It is clear in this encounter that Gupta and his wife seek to respond to Kifefe as a victim of political oppression. Hence for them, it is a social visit but Kifefe insists on seeing it is a business encounter.

Lack of analysis of Africanisation in *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road* fails to interrogate the contradictory meanings of belonging and citizenship, the privileging of colour over the other legal means of belonging and the discontinuities that this masks. Such a discontinuity, for instance, characterises the relationship between class and race. In this context Africanisation is relevant to only those who belong to certain classes or who possess some qualities, among them being ethnic belonging. It also masks the discontinuity between personal and racial interest that see people hide personal

inadequacies behind the mask of race; they deploy Africanisation to pander to interests that are inimical to African interests.

Several narrative choices enrich the presentation of profession as the site for the negotiation of power and identity in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, relative to that in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* just discussed. Besides the choice of narrative mode, the narrator that Vassanji uses is able to present not just common perceptions but is also able to weigh the same against each other and evaluate them so that dogmatic positions are questioned by the narrative itself. Vikram Lall, like Kifefe, is a character whose consciousness grows in the course of the novel, and whose destiny like that of Kifefe, is affected by the vicissitudes of the emerging nation. However, the difference is that Vikram is able to both immerse himself in and stand outside events to constantly give close up and long shot views of the same. His ability for integrated vision and narration is a product of an innovative utilisation of what in the context of the power differentials inherent in politicised racial identities is a timid position of articulation. Vikram presents both personal and national experiences, regardless of the colour of the perpetrators or the affected.

The argument here is not that the first person narration is inherently a better means of narrating identity than the third person narrator in the kind of multiracial situations these texts deal with. Rather the argument is that how whichever kind of narrator chosen is used determines the value of their narration as a method of understanding experience. Both the first person and the third person have the potential for elasticity and those who wish to present a one dimensional view of experience like Meja Mwangi can, for instance, appropriate

a narrative method associated with expansiveness to give a narrow view of experience. The reverse is true of narrations like *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* in which the author utilises an otherwise highly subjective narrative point of view to give an extensive perspective of the society and to try and account for the varied experiences in it, for, if we agree with Edward Said's contention in *Culture and Imperialism* that all experience is secular and historical, we also have to agree with him that the same is open to analysis by others removed from the experience by time, race, politics, geography or gender (35).

This thinking in turn creates the expectation in readers that creative writers who deal with the postcolonial situation in such societies as the East African ones have to make an attempt to understand the various interacting experiences in order to come close to a wholesome representation. Said's quarrel with "essentialism and exclusiveness, or with barriers and sides" rings true in this situation, for as he contends, and as may be clear from the observations on *Going Down River Road*, "polarizations", for instance between Indian and African, and rich and poor, "absolve and forgive ignorance and demagoguery more than they enable knowledge" (Said 35). Understanding of the experience of the African poor means that one has to understand the totality of the context of the same, and this is especially necessary for the opposing experience which is blamed for the condition of Africans. The indigenous gaze may be an alternative position of enunciation but it only becomes useful when it avoids mere reversals and instead strives for knowledge.

3.8 Resisting the Gaze: Introspection as Omniscience

Homing in presents an alternative to the kind of omniscient narration in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* discussed in the last section. The introspection of the novel and its multiple narrative perspectives are strategies that ensure a dialogic relationship among the identities that emerge in the process of narration and this dialogue lends these identities dynamism.

Like *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road*, *Homing in* uses omniscient narration that is no less patronising in its claims to know the characters and their situations, but unlike the two texts, Macgoye in *Homing in* relies on introspection to reveal the characters, so that the reader does not merely observe them go through events but also has access to their inner lives, their motivations and value systems. *Homing in* is a text whose narrative structure is shaped by the patterns of the characters' memory and their interpretation of the same. The present is in constant interaction with the past and the two inform each other.

The narrative motivation is the immediate physical environment, which acts as a trigger for memory, and this establishes a link between the physical environment and the characters' histories. Histories emerge as a constant companion of both Ellen and Martha; it is not just a residue of their experiences or a record of their past lives but a part of their present lives. It is the force that gives their present experiences logic. By the narrative voice focusing on Ellen and Martha's thoughts, it establishes a close relationship with these characters' consciousness and is consequently able to go beyond the physical to the socio-emotional. Thus both characters' worldviews are represented empathetically.

One effect of this presentation is that it conflates these two characters' experiences with universal human experiences; their value systems are associated with universal norms and therefore they become a centre from which values emanate. The strategy makes their experiences representative of race and class ones. This effect is especially so when the narrator uses the generic 'you' in the portrayal of either of the characters' lives. The 'you' in these cases replaces not just the name of the character in question; it generalises, includes even the narrator. This way, through endorsing the value systems each of these characters uses to apprehend events, Macgoye imbues these characters with relatively universal viewpoints though their worldviews are subjective and personal.

By deploying 'you', the narrator diminishes her own responsibility in potentially controversial actions and shifts responsibility to the collective, communal 'you'. This way Ellen fuses herself with the collective / communal outside which she often narrates, in a manner that constructs her as an observer who resists the value system in which the majority of the Europeans in Kenya operate. The attempts to achieve a distance between the self and the communal produces anxiety in the narrative that reveals such attempts as futile, for Ellen speaks within a communally sanctioned identity even when she resists it. The resistance only serves to show her awareness of these positions. The pronoun 'you' for instance, although supposed to indicate that her actions are the expected, the inevitable outcomes of the situations she is in, reveals that she anticipates opposition. The dispersal of responsibility that 'you' connotes is the means by which she hopes to counter the opposition.

What Ellen strives at showing, a community of shared values, vies with a shared-skin-colour community. It is her way of distributing and therefore lessening the burden of guilt that comes from her background that Timothy Reiss refers to in a different context thus: “To have been born and raised in a European" metropolitan" culture is to wear a mantle of guilt” (649). Indeed this mantle of guilt is discernible in Ellen’s constant attempts to distinguish her values from what she portrays as the mainstream settler values, leading to a continuous tug between particular and communal identity. Ellen wants to emerge in the narrative as different, not part of any generalised groups like settler, foreigner, European or even colonialist. .

The contrast between the physical confinement of both Ellen and Martha and the expansiveness of their memories and the geographical reach of the experiences shows the fluid nature of the relationship between geographies, memories and identities. Indeed the narrator describes this relationship in the following observation: “This Ellen saw quite clearly, even now that her movements had become circumscribed and her memory capricious. She had memories of a life which overflowed the narrow channel left for it and made her happy to tilt the kaleidoscope and see the patterns glint and sparkle and reshape themselves” (3).

Her memory and Martha’s sieve experiences and mark some among them as significant to what they are. An important point in Ellen’s life, one that may be called a turning point, is her marriage and subsequent move to Africa. Theirs (Ellen and Martha’s) is a subjective rendering of national histories by showing the web of relations between them and personal histories. The idea one

gets from the outcome of these relationships is that the concerned characters are more than the sum total of their histories; they are capable of transcending their histories. Ellen, for instance, is not solely constituted by the experiences she has undergone; how she has interpreted them is what has been important. The patterns in the narrative are crucial in appreciating the dynamics of her experience; there is a reversal in her knowledge and relationship to England and Africa. Before she goes to Africa, she knows it only through colonial myths but by the time she dies it is England that is the strange place. She has become so much a stranger to England after thirty years of living away from it that Martha has to re-introduce her there after her death. The picture her sisters have of her is a calcified one from the immediate post-war years; they therefore want to know the Ellen who died. Ellen herself in thinking about the transformation that marriage brings suggests that it permanently changes one, as signified by the name change and that this change is irreversible regardless of whether the marriage succeeds or not. In this sense therefore the identity contained in Miss Mountford ceases in significant ways when she becomes Mrs Ellen Smith.

Lily, Ellen's former student, becomes her foil. She knows Ellen before and after marriage and their lives move in opposite directions, Ellen, born in a middle class family, sees her fortunes deteriorate, while Lily who is born in a low class family rises from this relative obscurity to fame. Indeed Ellen is Lily's model during the latter's school years. From what Lily tells Martha in England, the Ellen she saw in Kenya had ceased being the English lady she once was:

“An English Lady, that's what she always seemed to me
when I was a schoolgirl. And then to see her like that thirty years

afterwards, so absorbed, so . . . belonging. Can you tell me when she changed?”

“Changed, madam, Lily, I mean? Well, no, we are all getting older of course. But my madam – Mrs Smith, Mama Nigel – no I couldn’t say that any of us has changed.” (205)

Lily’s statement betrays a narrow understanding of identity; she is unable to comprehend identity in its overdetermined and mutable form, and that new experiences just add onto previous identities. But perhaps more significant is that to her Africa is the antithesis of England and when Ellen immerses herself in it she becomes unrecognisable. On the surface Martha’s reply may be understood as the limited observation of one who only knew one phase of Ellen, the farmer’s wife and mother. Considered deeply however, hers is a more profound understanding of life; she appreciates that one can be many things at once and that no identity is static, just as physical appearances are subject to the effects of biology. This juxtaposition of views on identity highlights the difference between the dualist conception of belonging and the multi-vocal one. The author’s presentation of Ellen’s inner world makes it possible to notice the irony of Lily’s limited knowledge of her.

That Martha’s journey to England in the last chapter of the novel mirrors Ellen’s journey to Africa earlier in the text shows the bi-directional movements of cultural influences and identities. The idea is that once contact between cultures has been initiated the relationship between them will be multifarious.

Macgoye’s overall narrative strategy of introspection opens the principal characters’ to scrutiny and reveals complex worlds. Used alongside the pairing

of Martha and Ellen to mirror and reinforce each other's experiences, this strategy enables a representation of the images of each other that these characters from different racial groups have. That they relate at both a 'mental' and physical level contrasts sharply with the inability of characters across race lines in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiyu Kifefe*, both of which utilise a different type of the third person narrative style to penetrate each other. However one may argue that Ellen and Martha's relationship reinforces the stereotype of master-servant relationship; that Ellen has no choice but to relate to Martha because her own social circle having crumbled, Martha can only be an unequal substitute. However given the period of this novel's setting the representation of the relationship between these two women is plausible as inverting the power relations between them would present too an idealistic narrative. What the narrative achieves through the strategies of paired introspection is to gesture symbolically at the shattering of barriers of interracial communication in Kenya after independence.

3.9 Conclusion

The preceding sections have discussed the different strategies that the writers of the texts under analysis have used to narrate identity by examining narrative perspectives and use of language. The thinking is that identity in the postcolonial and colonial context is overlain and representation of the same must respond to this complex nature appropriately if issues are to be properly

contextualised. The chapter has considered how different strategies of narration adapt themselves to the contexts of the postcolonial novel to articulate identity.

The chapter finds that the relationship between the narrative perspective that each writer uses and its effectiveness in narrating identity lies not in qualities inherent in the perspective but in how strategically the writer deploys the same. In this connection the chapter argues that though the first person may be conventionally associated with the subjective narration in which the narrator's psychological aspect is dominant, this perspective can be reimagined to narrate embedded experiences in the postcolonial text. Deployed this way, the perspective mirrors the discontinuities and non-discrete identities of postcolonial societies. The writers who manage to apprehend these identities, like Vassanji and Nazareth, make genuine attempts to understand the perspectives of the principal characters from other racial categories so as to bring about dialogue between this and the narrator's perspective. Used this way, the first person becomes a credible way of inter-racial communication which, because it poses as a position of marginality and limited knowledge, strategically avoids epistemological arrogance or violence but subtly manages to gaze at the 'other' characters.

The third person omniscient narration is the preferred perspective by those among these writers whose races are at the centre of power in these texts, as opposed to marginal positions. The explanation for this is that such writers are confident in their knowledge of the various groups in their societies. Conceptualised this way, the third person perspective is a position of putative strength but in practice it falls victim of its epistemological arrogance by

presenting asymmetrical images of the society through othering characters from the marginalised races. This imbalance, it is argued, is achieved by appropriating the panoramic view of the third person as an indigenous gaze that makes visible only those who the indigenous approve of and silencing or constructing as unknowable what is considered not to belong.

The third person can, however, used differently, also enable a dialogic interaction of perspectives, as Macgoye does. Though she may not achieve complete balance in perspectives, hers is a credible effort to interrogate the views of the different races on the social and political realities of the colonial and postcolonial eras. Therefore whereas her kind of third person is polyvocal, those of Mwangi and Gakwandi are mono-vocal.

The other conclusion that this chapter makes is that language is a source of difficulty in the characters' knowledge of themselves and of others for the attempts to apprehend their identities through specific words flounders on the instability, and even ambivalence, of the tags that language offers. By conflating race with geography and history these words engender confusion and contradictions. Since phrases like 'Asian', 'African' or 'Goan Ugandan' describe contemporary identities as effects of distant geographies and histories, they fail to account for or even describe the psychological aspects of these characters' identities. For the words invoke mainly the physical, observable characteristics, they assume that common origin and skin colour are adequate in understanding characters for whom meanings may have shifted.

The next chapter analyses how these texts, in engaging the issue of identity, participate in various discourses on the same.

4.0 Chapter Four: Interacting Discourses and Identity

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how the narrative strategies employed by the texts under study relate to identity. This chapter takes the discussion further by considering how the representation of identity is enacted within communicating discourses. It relies on the arguments of Michel Foucault and Edward Said about inter-textual relationships to demonstrate how by their subject matter the studied texts participate in dialogues on identity among races in a period of East Africa's history, and how, for this reason, they can be read alongside not just each other but also along non-literary texts.

It is, therefore, necessary to first examine some of the conditions from which these texts arise. The issue of the Indian/Asian in East Africa has been a subject of many, and varied, debates and discussions that, taken collectively, constitute what we can call the Indian discourse in East Africa. The breadth of the subject matter within the Indian/Asian discourse speaks to the complexity and insistence of the issue of Asian identity in the constitution of contemporary East African politics, economics, history and social life. It is an insistence on inscribing and reinscribing both dominant and marginal narratives on these aspects of East African life. For this reason, new works on the Asian question, both fiction and non-fiction, are often perceived as a milestone, as an uncovering of a previously silenced aspect of the Indian/Asian experience. This discourse is thus characterised and motivated by an anxiety of oblivion, the fear that some of its stories may never be told. The impression one gets is that the Indian/Asian story is in a perpetual recovery and restoration mode.

The recurrent moments that mark the Asian story are significant because they are its motifs and points of contestation. One such moment, the construction of the Uganda Railway, is a metonym of the contributions of the Asian East Africans to the history and economy of the region. Indeed Asian identity in East Africa is incomplete without the railway. Creative writers have sought to reinterpret the railway and through it narrate the communal stories that celebrate the human spirit embodied in perseverance, sacrifice and enterprise of the coolies (the indentured immigrant railway workers from India), the biological and spiritual ancestors of Asian Kenyans. Through the personalities and emotions in these narratives, writers, Vassanji for instance in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, not only depict the social lives that went on in the background of this enterprise but also humanise it and therefore seek to reclaim the project from its Eurocentric depictions. These kinds of depictions privilege the European efforts in designing and financing the project, and Patterson's hunting of the man-eaters of Tsavo. Writers like Vassanji instead aim to posit the project as a symbolic moment of bonding with the land and therefore a legitimisation of Indian/Asian belonging by evoking the construction as a metaphoric rooting.

Asian writers' representations of the railway, therefore, dialogue with those of colonial writers like John Henry Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of the Tsavo* whose self-praise language, characteristic of colonial pioneers, tells of confrontation and conquest of the jungle as it seeks to document the subject's adventures and heroic deeds. The text portrays Patterson and other colonial officials as benefactors of the natives and the coolies who are scarcely

humanised beyond their names, and emotions. All the same, it is evident that Vassanji borrows from this book in his depiction of the encounters with the man-eaters; he adapts some incidents from it which he elaborates into the stories that Anand Lal tells his grandchildren about their experiences in the Tsavo; Ungan Singh, one of his characters, (16 and 18), is a character that first appears in *The Man Eaters of Tsavo*. Vassanji's text however foregrounds the Asian experience and silences Patterson's adventures; indeed the European side of the railway experience hardly features.

Besides the railway, however, the overall interest with the Indian/Asian discourse is with the role that individuals, either the first or second generation of migrants, played in the making of modern East Africa. For this reason, various forms of biographical writings characterise the discourse. Through their concern with the everyday, these stories incorporate the social into the political and economic in order to revitalise and reposition the Asian/Indian East African story alongside other stories. It is in this respect that the biographies of well known figures like Alibhai Mullah Jevanjee and Manilal Ambalal Desai by Zarina Patel, and less known ones like Pranlal Sheth by Rattansi (*Awaaz*, 11-33) emerge.

The language and tone of these biographies is that of recovery and restoration. It is this agenda of recovery that is emphasised in commentaries like the one on Zarina Patel's *Alibhai Mullah Jevanjee* on the "African Book Collective" website which describes the subject of the text as "Arguably under-recognised by history", an implication that this text is a response to such history; something indeed stated in a subsequent statement which says that "Zarina Patel

unearths the history of one of the country's political, entrepreneurial and moral colossus" (African Books Collective).

The Indian/Asian discourse is indeed scattered in various texts and media. One of the most persistent forums for the Indian/Asian discourse is *Awaaz* magazine. *Awaaz* embodies the search for a suitable forum to articulate the Indian/Asian discourse. The magazine, which describes itself as the authoritative journal of South Asian history, attempts to consolidate the various voices in a multi-genre paper.

Since by writing an author enters into a conversation, a text responds to and also provokes response on the positions it takes. It is in this respect that Said's concept of contrapuntal reading, understood alongside that of affiliation, is illuminating; he argues for reading that recognizes the particularity and sovereignty of a work of art, that no reading, by being too general, should obscure a work's individuality; neither should reading fail to take into account the relationships between the text and others; "it should allow that what was, or appeared to be, certain for a given work or author may have become a subject of a disputation". For this reason, "in reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded. Each cultural work is a vision of a moment, and we must juxtapose that vision with the various revisions it provoked" (*Culture* 79).

Agreed as we are with Said's contention, then it is necessary to discuss the most useful manner in which such juxtaposing can be carried out so that it yields the various discourses at play, including the exclusions that result from or occur in spite of the discourses. For all the texts under study, the colonial

moment, either as the present in the narrative or as it relates to the present in the narrative, is the common denominator.

Using Said's idea of affiliation, we analyse how each of the five texts is a voice in a network of dialogic relationships in the representation of postcolonial experience. This is not to say that only a single determinate voice emanates from each text. The texts are polyvocal or at least have the potential for the same, and each raises questions that its voice(s) grapple with in a process of intra-textual dialogue so that, for instance, the characters dialogue with themselves and with others in the text in a bid to understand and locate themselves. In this process they raise questions that join others to constitute the text's voice. In addition to the formation of such voices, it may be said that in the dialogue between texts, some provide alternative answers to questions raised in other texts. It is in this regard, for example, that the perplexities expressed by characters like Kifefe, who speak from a certain racial position, and wonder about the other races that they only perceive from the outside, can be analysed. These arguments need to be understood in the context of those made in Chapter Three to the effect that use of language in the process of articulating identities is a dialogic practice in which different characters, occasions and utterances negotiate over word meanings and therefore over identities. Similarly relevant is the discussion of points of views as constitutive of the dialogic practices within and between texts.

4.2 Discourses of Visibility and Seeing

The issue of race is critical in colonial ideology and the discourses that disseminate the same. Its material and discursive aspects feed on each other. Skin colour, like Homi Bhabha argues, is often deployed as a signifier of racism (78) and racism is one of the planks of colonial discourse. Given its material nature, skin colour essentialises racial difference and provides colonialism with an easily deployable tool of social organisation, as it produces stereotypes that are easily recognisable and deployable. Bhabha, borrowing from both Freud and Fanon, in his discussion of the stereotype and the related concept of the fetish, argues thus: “Skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as ‘common knowledge’ in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies” (78). Thus, people with the same skin colour are assumed to possess the same attributes. Race or skin colour can in the context of this argument be read as a metaphor of more nuanced forms of visibility and invisibility, including discursive ones. It is the first physical contact point between the subject and those who view him or her.

There is thus a direct relationship between material and discursive practices of domination in which race is a factor. How race was deployed in the colonial state however was partly a response to the local conditions. In East Africa, for instance, the three main races that were played against each other in the perpetuation of colonial ideology were black, Asian and white. The manner

of the interactions among and between these races and the physical environment informs the subject matter of the texts under study, whether it is in the colonial or post-colonial period. However the same experiences, as seen earlier, have been represented in other forms, both fictional and non-fiction. In the case of East Africa, the non-fictional representations precede the fictional narratives of the colonial experience; indeed, as argued in relation to Ugan Singh in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, some of the writers of these texts used written historical accounts and other written texts as their 'raw' material.

It is in the foregoing discussion that the argument that the texts under study take part in an ongoing dialogue finds its validity. If we take the race of a writer, whether a creative or non-creative one, as an indication of the discursive position they speak from, then we can push the argument further and say that each writer represents a kind of racial voice, but even if this were true it is not always that the writer is aware of this racial speaking position, neither is it possible to completely write outside it, for it constitutes one of the sources of ideology with which individuals experience reality. While some writers may try to write outside popular racial ideologies, such an effort is itself a dialogue with a certain ideology. Based on this reasoning some critics have argued that the black and Indian writers in East Africa who write on the same experiences earlier written on by white writers attempt to balance representations of these experiences. This 'balancing' or, more accurately, broadening of perspective, can however also occur when even white writers write about groups or experiences that have not been written about before or when they write about these groups in new ways.

It is in these last two senses that one may, for example, understand John Sibi-Okumu's statement when in reviewing Gijsbert Oonk's *Settled Stranger's: Asian Business Elites in East Africa (1800-2000)*, calls it "a timely intervention" in the historical picture of East Africa as Asians had been silenced in the histories of both India, where they came from, and East Africa, where they went and immensely contributed to its economy. The use of the word intervention correctly implies that *Settled Strangers* participates in an ongoing discourse; it is just another voice but one that broadens the directions of dialogue. Sibi-Okumu's argument is that the Indian presence in East Africa was greater than that of whites, eight times the number of whites, yet the whites have been more visible than Indians in the discussions on East Africa. The explanation he offers for this is that Indians "being amongst the conquered and not the conquerors . . . were seemingly condemned to be forever 'insiders' and 'outsiders' at the same time', visible in terms of economic clout and cultural difference yet invisible in terms of social and political acceptance by the 'indigenous' Africans majority" (*Awaaz*). This observation, which incidentally illustrates Bhabha's arguments on the stereotype referred to above, is indeed not new; it is a motif in the discourse on the place of the Asian in the East African space.

The contradictions on the question of visibility is one of the issues D'Souza raises in *In a Brown Mantle* in his representation of the dilemma that the Asian presence poses; their simultaneous visibility and invisibility; their being real and unreal at the same time (90 and 128). He notes that the Asians were visible in the cities even though Damibia is an African country and that, therefore, the policy of Africanisation was a response to this; its purpose was to

make the cities visibly African. The policy however failed to address the issue of the material presence of Ugandans of Asian origin, what was to be done about them:

Whereas the Asians were non-existent politically, physically they were all too real. They were the customs and immigration officials, the desk-clerks and managers, the shopkeepers, and the landlords, etc., etc. And Damibia was supposed to be an African country! There were African businessmen and landlords, but they were invisible. Our task then was to turn the towns of Damibia into visible African areas only speckled with Asians and Europeans. So that many Asian businessmen were dispossessed by making it mandatory that only citizens ran businesses, while the undesirables were not granted citizenship (128).

In Nazareth's view therefore, it is not whites who make Indians invisible, since they are the face of commerce. It is instead the ideology of nationalism, which influences policy-making after independence, that does. Part of the success of the practise of this ideology depends on creating formidable visible enemies of independence and proceeding to demolish them. Thus Gombe Kukwaya's repeated taut to D'Souza to go back to India is to be understood in this vein, as it comes out clearly in his political rallies in which he appeals to the crowds' sense of patriotism (74).

Indeed so central is visibility to colonial and postcolonial control that the contestations it engenders in discourse are translated into struggle over place, especially over the meaning of home. In *Kosiyā Kifefe*, for instance communal

belonging to place is conflated with physical visibility. Thus the city, before the military government take-over, is constructed as a place for Indians and whites and it is unthinkable for an African to belong to it. For Africans it is a place of work. This view of the city, which however changes in the course of the novel, is based on an incomplete understanding of the relationship between power and place; the city being the commercial capital of Uganda, just like it is for Kenya and Tanzania, is associated with economic power, which is also an accessory of political power. The expulsion of Asians who are associated with the initially devalued urban spaces is based on the discovery of the strategic significance of urban visibility. Indeed this is the only way to account for the irony of expelling from the country a group, which because it is associated with the urban centres, places that are the antithesis of home, has already located itself on the periphery, and should therefore pose no threat. Their expulsion is posited as the condition for black visibility but since this is only for the few blacks with the necessary skills, political connection or bravery, the desired for visibility is not for the blacks but for a section of the black elite.

The postcolonial discourse that relates to race, whether it is about relations or contributions to issues in the independent East African countries is so couched in the language of visibility and invisibility as to suggest that at the base of racial tensions in East Africa is the struggle over visibility. Indeed in one sense this is true, even if we accept that it risks reducing an otherwise complex issue into a simple binary. However when visibility is understood in terms of knowledge, as the desire to know and to be known, then its significance becomes apparent. Thus texts participate in the discourse of visibility in many

ways. Besides what has been said about *Settled Strangers*, there is the visibility over which texts vie in their representation of historical milestones, like the construction of the Uganda Railway. This project, going by the varied books that have been written about it for over a century, is a sticking point in the effort to present discourses of development, and the allied colonial notions of civilisation, in East Africa. The railway has been the site of fantasy and fact, the site for myths and villains of the colonial era but it is in its myth-creating role that it has stood out and is what has made it a space of contestation. Since the first texts on the railways were written by whites (for example J. H. Patterson's *The Man-eaters of Tsavo*), it is not always easy to avoid considering later texts by non-whites as an expansion of perspective on the railway; this includes those later texts by white writers that give the project a colonial perspective.

Underlying the contests over visibility are competing ideologies of being and belonging; on one hand there is a Eurocentric colonialist ideology that locates knowing in Western modes of civilization and sees places with no white presence as both unknown and uninhabited – thus Patterson can say of the Uganda railway as having “modernised the aspect of the place and brought civilization in its train” (*Man-eaters*, Preface). On the other is the liberatory ideology that conflates being with visibility and therefore seeks to assert their belonging by displacing colonial ideology. This ideology is however further complicated by other ideologies, prominent among these being that of nationalism, and this in turn is fractured by contestations of its constituents, as indigeneity is posited by the blacks as the only valid platform on which nationalism can be articulated. This latter claim is responsible for the in-

between position of East Africans with roots in Asia that Sibi-Okumu hints at in the article referred to earlier (*Awaaz*); the conflicting ideologies and discourses with which the different races seek to apprehend socio-political reality in East Africa place Asian-Africans at positions in which they are always at risk of dislocation by the other discourse but neither are the blacks and whites secure, for in their construction of discourses of belonging they continuously split their own subjectivities.

4.3 Inserting the Self in Discourse

As suggested earlier, one way in which the writing of Asians and whites in East Africa can be understood is in the context of minorities seeking to be heard among the many voices of the majority. This is in terms of both the dominant ideas and the number of texts written by the minority, which are understandably fewer than those of the majority, 'Africans'. This being the case, it is likely that the group that writes more and that gets to be read more widely, will determine the dominant images of social representation, which, no matter the degree of objectivity aspired for, cannot fully speak for all the groups. For instance, no matter how objective the black writer is, their representation will always be shadowed by at least two anxieties: being perceived as an outsider to the experience of the non-blacks, and, second, uncertainty over political correctness, the desire to understand the 'marginalised'.

These anxieties may manifest themselves in the text as either over or under representation. Besides this, the very act of a black writing about Asian or white experience in East Africa may be interpreted as speech on behalf of the

silenced. Edward Said warns against compartmentalising experience, that though “there is an irreducible subjective core to human experience, this experience is also historical and secular” and therefore, “is accessible to analysis and interpretation” (*Culture* 35). However though we recognise the validity of this warning, it is also true that there are likely to be both points of convergence and divergence in how not just individual writers but also how the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ present these experiences. The reason for this difference is that both groups interact in the gaps created by earlier representations, by prejudices and popular images about each other.

Edward Said’s statement that “Each cultural work is a vision of a moment (*Culture* 79)” is an important starting point of interrogating the visions these texts give of the moments they interpret. In doing this, however, we are aware that each text can present more than one vision, whether the author intends it so or not. Besides interrogating the vision, what Said adds, that the vision of a moment that a cultural work is must be juxtaposed with the later revisions it provoked, is crucial to appreciating the inter-independence of discourses in novels, which in our case are the postcolonial novels under study. Though these works were written in a period covering about three decades, they deal with comparable, even overlapping eras. Among the key historical moments that the texts deal with, either by implication or directly, are the struggles for independence and the gaining of the same, particularly in Kenya and Uganda; related to this is the struggle over the meaning of independence by various communities. There is also the world war, especially the Second World War. The military rule and the expulsion of Asians from Uganda are historical

events in *Kosiya Kifefe*, and these are issues that *In a Brown Mantle* anticipates. The relationship between Asians and Africans in the urban space, and the struggle over the same are common concerns in *Going Down River Road*, *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, *In a Brown Mantle* and *Kosiya Kifefe*.

The implication of the above arguments is that texts have to engage in dialogue with self in the attempts to speak for others from positions not associated with them. The speaking position that we will analyse is that of the European settler / minority as represented in *Homing in*.

Homing in is set on a farm and the main consciousness through whom the narrative is filtered is Ellen, Jack's wife. Jack and Uncle are the farmers; Ellen just having gone to Kenya to live with her husband, not because she is interested in farming, is an involved observer who never quite gets converted into a farmer, though she takes care of the farm when Jack goes away to fight in the Second World War. The images of Kenya and farming that she goes to Kenya with are those she gets from Jack, and it is against these that she measures her own impressions and experiences on the farm once she gets to Kenya. Her ambivalent attitude to the farm is an appropriate position from which to analyse the farmer character, with whom she is capable of both empathising and ridiculing. We could, on the basis of her empathy understand the frustrations that the white farmer goes through, especially in the war and post war periods. Since the farmers, like Jack and most of those who frequent the club, bank their esteem and sense of identity on their success as farmers, they, both metaphorically and in practise, crumble with the decline in their farming fortunes. However this is a side of them that they will guard jealously,

for their authority over the 'lower' races in the colonial hierarchy of race depends on their sustaining the image of success.

The farmer that relates to the workers and the Indians in shops is not the material farmer but a discursive one, the constructed farmer of colonial masculinity. An example is the Mr Bruce that visits Lall's shop in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. Vikram and his family can only guess at the difficulties that Bruce goes through and imagine his family history in England. What they encounter when either Mr Bruce or his wife goes to shop at their shop is both the person and the racial power and prestige bestowed on him or her by the colonial ideology from which they draw their authority. This makes it difficult for the Lalls to question Bruce openly over the image they think he cannot sustain, buying expensive groceries on credit for example. The gaps in their knowledge of him are almost insurmountable; and this is not helped by the fairyland picture that Lall has of England.

The human side of the farmer is therefore a picture that Ellen supplies when she historicizes the settlers and goes beyond the physical to the mental. Aside from the England background that she gives of the farmers, there are also the conversations at the club that bring out their anxieties, the fear of the dissolution of their identities as a result of Africans and Indians desiring the things by which the farmers define themselves. Their sense of identity is indeed rather tenuous, which is confirmed by the later lives of characters like Jack, who by the time of his death is no longer a farmer. Indeed the anxieties about the veneer of family that he has defined himself by since his arrival in Kenya materialises when he has to sell the farm to some of his former workers. By this

he proves the hollowness of his earlier protestations about the rights he had to his land, which he had inherited from his uncle and whose taxes and mortgage he had paid ‘like a man’ (68), and his general attitude about his position as the unchallengeable head of the farm by virtue of his race and gender. He had understood his relationship with the labourers as something racially ordained and therefore fixed.

Since whites are the role models in the colonies for those who long after the world and life they represent, there is a desire to imitate them, especially by some among the Indians, majority of who are the middle class in the colonial economic structure. As the observers of this life, like Sheila and Lall, marvel at the holiday that the Bruce’ children have in England, the pains behind these trips are unknown to them, not because the same are unknowable but because the colonial system intends that the races do not know each other. While why the Bruce’s children go to England unaccompanied remains a conjecture in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, based on their known financial difficulties, the challenges of similar journeys and the contradictory motivations behind them in *Homing in* is an indictment of the half pictures that structure colonial racial relationships.

The God-like image of the colonialists influenced how the colonised, who they encouraged to see them as the ideal, viewed themselves. Ellen’s own journey to England with the children some time after the war, for instance, can be used to analyse the fantasy that trips to England in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* produce among the Indian middle class like the Lalls. Ellen’s trip, made in the midst of financial difficulties, far from being a holiday in the

conventional sense of the word, is a necessity, an effort to connect the children with 'home', the place of their grandparents, and for Ellen it is an unsuccessful attempt to reconnect with England. The England that she and the children go to, and the one that Mrs Galsworthy has already returned to in order to ensure that the children get education at 'home' is to Ellen hardly a recognisable place, for the war has irreversibly changed it. She is consequently alienated. Her experience in a way dialogues with Lall and Sheila's interpretation of the settlers' lives. Ellen's experience reveals the vacuity of Lall's heaven-like picture of England.

The significance of the texts' zeroing in on comparable portrayals of segments of the settlers' lives in Kenya is the different interpretations that characters in the various texts, like is the case for the above events in *Homing in* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, give to the events. The interpretations reveal the discourses in which the narratives in these texts participate. A consideration of the choice of narrator in the two texts can reveal these discourses; the Vikram who experiences colonial life is a child, even though the narrating one is an adult; so the perspective though not free from influence of the mature Vikram, is mostly that of a child. One effect of this is to give an incomplete understanding of issues, especially the abstract side of colonialism; however this presentation of colonialism is important in its attempt to, discursively, diminish the mediation of ideology in the presentation of colonialism that an adult perspective would imply. This ironic stance succeeds in showing the pretensions of colonialism but by the same token creates gaps that call for inference for a fuller appreciation of the situation. More important

than the age of the narrator however is his personality; his in-betweenness situates him outside any of the main racial discourses in operation in the Kenya he lives in.

The in-betweenness is not just a matter of his race but, crucially, of his personality. Vikram's personality is characterised by ambivalent attitudes to those issues by which others, like his family, define themselves. He neither rejects nor embraces the notion of racial purity that is so important to his parents, especially to his mother. This attitude is best exemplified by his indifference to Deepa's affair with Njoroge, and the relative casualness with which he approaches the issue of his own marriage. Vikram therefore, as a narrator, is supposed to open up the world of the Indian and the African to analysis. He is located in both without belonging to either. Through him Vassanji avoids a simple answering back of one group (either Asian or African) to the other but instead produces a complex dialogic interaction between different communal stances, in the process exploiting the trope of the stereotype which he manages to transgress and interrogate.

Ellen is similarly a complex figure whose role goes beyond the revelation of colonial ideology; she participates in the colonialist discourse, which characterises the settlers' interaction with each other and the 'others', but strives to narrate from outside it, and therefore to question it. She is however not consistently successful in this endeavour, as seen through various 'textual slips'. Ellen sets out to distinguish herself from the ordinary settler from the moment she arrives in Kenya by adopting an ironic stance when presenting the settlers' views, especially in relation to the Africans, particularly at the club. Her

patronising attitude that is intended to expose the fissures in the settlers' conception of self and of their difference from Africans sometimes however fails and reveals her as complicit in the notions of racial hierarchy that inform the colonial discourse that she seeks to narrate against. This complicity is especially apparent in her representation of her Asian pupils, and even their parents. In most of these instances the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy can be seen in operation.

4.4 Dialogical and Monological Characters

The principal characters in the texts under study can be distinguished on the basis of how their perspectives look beyond singular representations and incorporate other experiences in their own. This incorporation should not be confused with the mere glance at the experience of the 'outsider' without an attempt to interpret or understand that experience, rather these are characters who consciously give a rounded image of those who represent a different experience from theirs. The main characters in these texts, apart from Ben in *Going Down River Road*, are all university educated and presumably therefore capable of theoretical analyses of the colonial and postcolonial circumstances in which they live. Their educational experiences should, it is supposed, equip them with discourses beyond personal and communal ones for interpreting reality. In this sense these characters can be read as sites of the play of discourses, since, besides their educational backgrounds, they all seek to analyse their places within societies in transition. Though it may be argued that the

differences in narrative perspectives – some being third person and others first person – makes such comparisons unfair, such an objection can be answered by noting that distinctions between narrative voice and the narrative consciousness can give access to the minds involved in different narrative moments.

The mixtures of perspectives that the protagonists from the different texts bring to the discourses that they participate in through their roles in the narratives make it possible to consider the colonial and postcolonial identities not just from different communal positions but also from different class and intellectual ones. *Kosiya Kifefe* and *The in-between World of Vikram Lall* have protagonists in formation in the sense that they transit from childhood to adulthood in the course of their stories. The trajectories of their formations however differ in significant respects that affect their understanding of themselves and their world. On the one hand, Kifefe's pre-school world is a constricted one in which the focus is on the self's relationship with the world, and therefore one in which the focus is on the tension between the inner Kifefe to which only he has access and the material Kifefe to which the rest have a partial access and is what they relate and react to. His is therefore a continuous struggle to present a consolidated self to the villagers and family that constitute the world of his childhood. Though this world expands on his joining school, this expansion does not however alter the form of the struggle.

On the other hand, Vikram Lall's childhood world is relatively sophisticated in its ethnic and racial composition. Besides its multi-racial environment, that makes him aware at a young age of his position as a member of an in-between race, the political turmoil around him makes race a constant

signifier of difference in his childhood; consequently, the ontological questions that confront him go beyond idiosyncratic concerns. His childhood interest is not so much with his place in the family as it is with his place in the neighbourhood, which is a microcosm of the nation. Questions about the self, the relationship of the physical and the psychological self are not the starting point of his concern with identity. Since family history is part of his everyday experience in the form of narratives and material form, he becomes conscious of his positioning within criss-crossing and marginalised histories as a child. Therefore, unlike Kifefe, his relationship with other children, mainly Njoroge, William and Annie happens not under the shadow of the kind of self inadequacies that assail Kifefe but with the knowledge of his indeterminate location as an Asian in Kenya.

The discourses under which these characters grow up interact in various ways; they are affiliative, confrontational and complementary. For both, growing up is partially a series of confrontations with discourses of identity, moments of encounters between their communal and colonial discourses. Kifefe, for example, has to deal with notions of manhood, selfhood and respectability authorised by his family and the other villagers' value systems which he only manages to do, marginalised by all these as he is, by relying on western education, itself complicit in the colonial discourses of civilisation. In other words, unable to fulfil the communal expectations of selfhood, Kifefe is cast aside as a non-human only to be claimed by colonial education.

The identity that education confers on him produces his immediate family and most of the villagers as his others. As he becomes 'respectable', the

respectability of those who do not have his level of education diminishes so that the previous positions of respectability are reversed. This displacement does not however produce an erasure of the Ankole discourses of respectability but rather ensures that he can surpass them. Indeed it is the interactions of these discourses that give either discourse meaning for him; Western education is important for, among other reasons, its ability to place him both beyond and within the parameters (in the sense of no longer being on its margins) of respectability of his people.

It is the same Western education that places him in positions where not having to worry about the mundane concerns of respectability among the villagers, he can question the ability of the colonial state to determine his destiny. However since his questioning is done in the colonialist terms of engagement, he is unable to escape the polarised colonial view of race which, as argued by Homi Bhabha albeit in a different context, inscribes race with racism and identifies skin as the signifiers of racist ideas (78).

Kifefe believes that the only way for him to get fulfilment is through displacing and replacing whites and Indians from their privileged positions. This project is a reversal, not a challenge to the colonial discourse that, in his discussion of the stereotype, Bhabha says codifies the skin (78). Kifefe, thus, merely transfers the ideas of the stereotype of his culture and the colonial discourse that he grows up in to Indian and whites in his attempt to create space for himself in the national and local spaces of prestige. His conception of the Indian hardly goes beyond skin colour, which calls to mind a range of ideas

associated with the figure of the Indian in Uganda, and which he repeatedly deploys to justify his claims.

In the apparently Ankole perception of belonging that Kifefe invokes, the Indian is a homeless foreigner whose place is the shop and town, yet in practice he finds that he has to answer to Indian bosses and rely on Indian businessmen in order to achieve the status he desires. His reliance on Ankole discourses to negotiate through the vicissitudes of colonial and postcolonial public life sees him deploy them to explain most of his failings in racial terms. In this perspective the Indian civil servant boss invariably becomes an antagonist who sees the new African civil servant as a threat to their rank in the colonial racial hierarchy. The stereotype of the Indian as represented in *Kosiya Kifefe*, by reducing them to some basic ideas, leaves no room for friendship between Africans and Indians, except on business terms. This echoes Jameela Siddiqi's argument in her analysis of Idi Amin's expulsion of Asian Ugandans in 1972; she says that the Asians only thought of Uganda as home when they were expelled. This refusal to consider Uganda home was the result of a failure in meaningful interactions between Asian-Ugandans and black Ugandans and this was simultaneously the reason for the lack of interaction. In Siddiqi's words, "Black African servants were often the only (rather limited) link that Asians had to African culture" (6-7).

A reading of *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* however problematises the operation of these discourses. In the text race is not the only marker of difference; an even more important one is social class. What differentiates the Indo-Africans from black Africans is mainly the different

economic positions they occupy in the colony, so that in the colonial state the African is invariably a supplier of labour, a status that is not a natural product of their race but rather of colonial policies of control. This is illustrated by the narrative of Njoroge's life; what he turns out to be after independence transgresses the colonialist idea of the stereotype, indeed his relationship with Vikram both mimics and renounces the stereotype as enacted in the colonial racial hierarchy. By playing stereotypical roles in their childhood games, particularly those that involve William, the two (Njoroge and Vikram) mock the idea of racial essences and highlight the dilemma that the same engenders.

The In-between World of Vikram Lall is a deliberate attempt to operate at the conjunctions of discourses, mainly nationalist, cultural, colonialist and historical. None of them is adequate in enabling him understand himself and his relationship with other people. For instance, though the historical discourse, may help him respond to the exclusionary tendencies of the nationalist one that by construing him as foreign marginalises him, it has limitations as a means of dealing with the present, for it has the potential of locking the Indian in a certain moment of history when misapplied. It is indeed such misapplications that authorise the conservative adherences to discourses of cultural purity – the historical discourse can be understood as the explanation of the present, including the characters' identities, as exclusively a consequence of the past; it is linear in its conception of the present, and it is what Bhabha implies in the notion of the horizontal society which he argues against as an inadequate discourse of accounting for the otherwise heterogeneous constitution of the modern state. He says that “the space of the modern nation-people is never

simply horizontal.” For this reason, he urges “a kind of ‘doubloons’ in writing; a temporality of representation that moves between cultural formations and social processes without a centred logic”. The centred logic here would be a historic moment that is assumed to structure the present because it is an origin. Instead cultural movements, Bhabha adds, “disperse the homogenous, visual time of the horizontal society” (141). Indeed the historicist discourse that conceives individuals as transparent products of tradition and culture fails to recognise the inter-play between social forces, and the nature of culture itself as an impure and evolving entity.

That Vikram recognises the impossibility of separating himself from the influences of his childhood is one way through which he operates in the conjunctions of discourses, for these influences, especially his friendships, represent a meeting of discourses. For instance, the Mau oath that Njoroge makes him take, regardless of its shortcomings, is a means through which he is brought into alliance with the data of his mother’s Indian tales and he is invited to consider it sympathetically, not as the monster it is represented in colonial discourse as. He in a way has to enter into dialogue with the polarised images of the Mau presented through the similarly polarised discourses of colonialism and anti-colonialism and get for himself an acceptable image. Particular images mirror moments of this conversation, like the photos of the murder scene of the Bruce’s family on the one hand and the black man blinded by British soldiers that is discovered on the road at night on the other.

He equally has to enter into dialogue with the discourses with which he defines himself and those with which others define him by situating himself on

their borders, thus linguistic signifiers of belonging, the pronouns referred to in Chapter Three, are marked by instability. Consider this statement by Vikram, “We have been Africans for three generations” (16). This is a statement that is heavily implicated in ordinary discourses in its assumption that there is a discrete point that marks entry into such a category as African. Vikram’s correct reading of the specific postcolonial situation he is in, where the polarized identities are not simply white versus black, makes it possible for him to negotiate the interweaving identities and the discourses behind them without being really passionate about any of them.

Vikram’s in-betweenness gives him the ability to swivel among the worlds that constitute him and to laugh at the pretensions of each in their claims of superiority imbues his voice with irony. He represents discrepancies without seeming to and it is only when we are able to recognise these discrepancies that sometimes manifest themselves as contradictions that we can fully access his character. That is for instance how we can understand his statement that “We have been Africans for three generations, not counting my own children” (16) alongside the apparently contradictory ones like the one that describes his first encounter with Njoroge: “That was about six months earlier, when I came across an African boy sitting in our backyard on a stone shooting pebbles” (45). This statement seems to disavow the claim to being African made in the first statement and therefore to challenge its truthfulness, for in referring to Njoroge as an African boy he foregrounds the latter’s race and suggests that being African is what distinguishes Vikram from Njoroge and that African is merely a

matter of skin colour. However Vikram's description of Njoroge as African needs to be read as a dialogue, in the Bakhtian sense, within Vikram's language.

Bakhtin, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, has demonstrated that a novel may be composed of a network of languages which dialogue with each other. Every character has a style and language of their own that constitutes a type of novelistic image with which the author dialogues in what Bakhtin calls the zone of *dialogical contact*. Besides this the images also engage in internal dialogue with the self and with other images. Through the dialogue between author and a character's language the author is able to, among other things, ironise a character's language, something that can also be achieved through the internal dialogue of a character's languages (44-7). This is the case with Vikram Lall in this and other instances. The dialogue between his languages takes two basic forms, one is that between the narrating Vikram and the experiencing Vikram (and this self is split by his varying experiencing ages) and the narrating Vikram; the other is between Vikram's own style and the language and style of others. The first category is discussed at some length in Chapter Three. For our purpose here it is notable that this dialogic nature of his language is an image of his in-betweenness, which is equally a position of dialoguing with discourses of tradition.

A similar ironic strain is seen in D'Souza's language; in his case it is more pronounced. It is through this that he questions the world constructed by popular discourses like freedom fighter, African and Goan. Like is the case for Vikram the terms 'African' and 'Goan'/'Asian' crisscross in D'Souza's description of himself in ways that may suggest a contradiction. However

understood in light of the dialogic relationship above, his meaning becomes clear; he confronts the contradictions and dilemmas of these essentialist terms from his position of marginality to show how unstable they are and to present his marginal position that rejects the African and Goan continuity narratives as an alternative one.

The relationship among the discourses that Vikram grows up in, and even those of his adult life, is riven by conflicts, not just between but also within them. This, for example, is the case for the discourses of Africanness; in the colonial moment, Africanness is an ambivalent site, denied yet resisted in the colonialist discourse that insists on seeing Africans as ‘natives’ and tribes, and deployed by some Africans as the basis of nationalistic aspirations. In *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* the colonialists, in a bid to efface ‘African’ which, with its meaning of belonging to Africa, would challenge their entitlement claims, prefer tribal tags like ‘Kikuyu’, and skin colour. In the postcolonial period Africanness is a totalizing category that envisages no in-between, for it is the term for laying claim to citizenship and privileged historical experiences, chief among them being ‘sacrifice’ for ‘motherland’. It is in this context, where the narratives of Indian ancestor figures are subsumed by the meta-narratives of Africanness, that Vikram cannot stake his claims to the nation within discourse that reject him; he can only do it within the spaces that the practice of these discourses reveal to him.

Vikram is a character who, because he is conscious of the discourses that impact on his identity, speaks not just for himself but also for the other identities like Njoroge’s and Annies, the non-Asians. His reference to his world as an in-

between is one of the illustrations of his speaking across race lines, the others being the various incidents when he analyses his position in language that echoes postcolonial thinking on identity as both hybrid and a process. Even for Asian identity, he speaks for the various categories of characters within this group: the female bound by tradition in a moment when cultures and traditions are in transition; the later migrants from India like his mother who find it more difficult to locate themselves in the new country because, unlike the second and third generation Asian Kenyans, memories of home interfere with her relations to the new country; the former freedom fighters that are alienated from independent Kenya because they can hardly reconcile it with the ideals they fought for; and the Asian Kenyan businessmen's moral dilemmas in the moral morass that is independent Kenya.

Vikram manages to both criticize and sympathise because his awareness of the discourse at play enables him to dispassionately analyse the situation. This is unlike Kifefe who, though equally educated, is too self-centred to recognise or even confront the discourses that construct his subjectivity; this makes him incapable of satisfactorily speaking for others, much less speak to others as Vikram and Ellen do. Like Ben in *Going Down River Road*, he speaks about others, and from a monocentric position, that of a self serving notion of Africanness. While Ben states this through his and his companions' hostility towards those they consider foreigners and whom they perceive as their enemies, Kifefe sometimes hides under nationalist ideologies. It is because of these two characters' inability to enter into genuine discursive dialogue with others that we argue that they are monologic. The dialogic characters like

Vikram, Ellen and D'Souza present both their worldview and that of their antagonists with empathy even when they do not agree with such worldviews. Such characters countenance the possibility of their own value systems being wrong. From these scenarios, the conclusion one can draw is that the position of marginality affords one magnanimity that works as a safeguard against monocentric conceptualization of reality in the process of rationalizing one's marginality, even though both the marginalized and those at the centre can speak for and about others.

Related to the above is that this discussion shows how *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* reads some of the discourses of belonging of *Kosiya Kifefe*, by, among other ways revealing its narrowness. That Kifefe fails to recognize the intermingling of the discourses through which he constitutes himself and is constituted makes his understanding of the colonial and postcolonial space incomplete. *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, with its awareness of theoretical postulations on marginality, provides the kind of contrapuntal reading of race and belonging in East Africa referred to earlier and by implication, illuminates the experiences of marginality in such texts as *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road* whose main characters, caught in conflictual postcolonial moments, resort to popular essentialist discourses to represent it.

4.5 Orinary Narratives and Belonging

A common aspect in structuring narratives of belonging in some of these texts is to situate them within some historical discourse of continuity. This is the

case for *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, *Homing in* and *In a Brown Mantle*; however the accents and silences of these narratives show the characters, and in some cases, the writers' awareness of contradictory narratives, which they therefore write against. It is true that in these three texts, which are written from the perspective of minority communities in East Africa, the stories of the protagonists start from outside East Africa, through some relatives or ancestor, but the treatment of this aspect between *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *In a Brown Mantle* on one hand, and *Homing in* on the other is notable for differences in how far back they go in narrating possession of the places they call home in East Africa, specifically land.

Whereas Vikram Lall and his family lay claim on land in Kenya besides the property that they buy after independence, his family and other Asian-Kenyans' sense of belonging is conceived in the context of discursive claims to the land. For this reason, histories of land possession are integral in validating this relationship, and Vikram not only frequently resuscitates narratives of arrival and movement of his people in Kenya, but he also sets these narratives against those of some Africans in Kenya, like Mwangi, and to a limited degree those of the colonialists. Thus, by avoiding marking the Asian arrival in Kenya as the moment of the beginning of Kenyan history (it is just one of the moments of significance in the country's layers of histories of arrivals), he recognises that the arrival of Asians in Kenya enters meanings already instituted by other arrivals, and it is with these meanings that the Asian narratives must relate. Contrary to this strategy, the period preceding Uncle Smith's arrival on the land in Njoro, in *Homing in*, is silenced and whatever comes out about it is subsumed

under the narrative of Uncle's arrival. Whether this is because the narrator does not know what the land was like before this period or whether it is that it is not relevant to the personal stories she is interested in, indicates that in the narrator's view, the moment of meaning in the land is marked by its occupation by the settlers so that its interest as a habitat, a setting of individual stories starts with the settlers' arrival. In this regard Ellen's narrative of Kenya as home is complicit in the colonial narrative of terra nullius, or empty space. Indeed even her own coming is an attempt to complete the arrival began by Uncle, for after the death of his wife there has been no woman on the farm; hers is an inauguration of home on the farm. Understood this way, her arrival can be seen as a homing in of the farm, a means through which the farm is made home, at least for her – though admittedly it is a process that is never quite completed in the course of the novel.

If this narrative is read alongside Vikram Lall's, one can see in the emergent dialogue different discourses of interpreting the past, which go beyond the conventional polarity of colonialist and ant-colonialist ones. Though these two discourses too are present, for in as much as Ellen attempts to stand aside from and critique colonialist assumptions, she is unable to free herself from some of its less obvious ones, especially those with which the everyday experiences are given meaning. It is notable for example that the reserves from where some of the workers on the farm hail remain a mystery to Ellen throughout, for it is a place yet to be mapped. She, unlike Vikram, is incapable of presenting these workers' past and their lives outside the farm.

The narratives in these two texts may seem to be concerned with similar arrivals in East Africa but the knowledge that informs their presentations is quite different. *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* represents Kenya and the present as the place of enunciation, from where Vikram negotiates his identity, and India as myth and history that, however, constantly vies with present experience in ordering his knowledge. The text is, nevertheless, still able to mark moments in Indian history that problematise the lives of the post-railway Indian migrants to Kenya, like Sheila. Such events include Independence and subsequent partition of India.

On its part, *Homing in*, while expressing awareness of India, besides England, in the lives of the colonial and post-independence residents of Kenya, by concentrating only on the India of the colonial officials' lives, silences those events emphasised in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. One such event is the partition of India, an event that Vikram Lall returns to several times as an explanation for the senses of displacement his mother goes through; the partition is indeed important in understanding Sheila's perception of her and her family's identities.

Since for Ellen India is introduced to her second hand, through the experience of Beatrice, her sister, her interest in it seems not to go beyond those markers of difference with England that are supposed to prepare her for life in Kenya, away from 'home'. Though, as she admits to herself at least, these markers are a matter of interpretation and the discourse in which the interpretation is undertaken, an orientalist one (in the sense that Said discusses the term in *Orientalism*) in this case that sees India as some aberration. She, for

instance, does not go far enough to show the links between the effect of The Second World War on her and other English people in the colony and the effect of the Indian partition on Indo-Kenyans. The result is a contraction of the experiences that impact on the identities of the Asian characters she interacts with in the text, a contrast to the internationalisation of her own experiences.

Since colonialism was often explained as a civilising mission, indeed the statement earlier quoted from *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* implies the same, it is entangled with the concept of development. The activities of the colonialists and their affiliates are thus presented as development and it is taken for granted that they are good for the people and the places where they take place. This has however not been without resistance. The Indian rail workers' interpretation of the apparent mysterious nature of the man-eaters as the spirits of recently dead African chiefs that Patterson refers to in his text is evidence of the tensions that characterise the activities deemed development in the colonies. The coolies are convinced that "the angry spirits of two departed native chiefs had taken this form [of the lion] in order to protest against a railway being made through their country, and by stopping its progress to avenge the insult thus shown to them" (20).

Such sentiments anticipate the discourses of development that pit its advocates in both the colonial and postcolonial eras against those who criticise or discuss it. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin demonstrate, this issue has spawned discourses whose growth has mirrored the political changes in colonies and former colonies. One argument that runs through the discussions of this discourse in their text is that though the various writers on this subject take

different positions, they concur on the view that in relation to the colonised countries development emphasised economic growth and was western initiated. This, some of them aver, overlooked human growth and was motivated by the belief of the colonisers in the superiority of their culture and economy. One strain of this argument is that the activities called development were a way by which the West sought to homogenise the world by reproducing their own ideas of the world elsewhere. In this respect development is viewed as a discourse that is historically constructed and therefore as an affiliate to colonialism (27-42).

It is the context of this discourse that we analyse 'development' activities like the railway. In considering the representation of experiences connected with the railway, it is necessary to compare them in terms of the authorising discourses of the narrative, and, therefore, in what way these discourses interact with others. These forms of interaction and the different insight that is discernible from each are what we conceive as dialogue, as a cross-lighting of experience.

This argument, the cross-lighting of experience, is analogous to the point Muchugu Kiiru makes in his review of Neera Kent-Kapila's *Race, Rail and Society* when he observes that it is curious that most non-fiction writing on this railway over the last a hundred years has "mainly been from the perspective of the British colonialists". According to him, therefore, Kent-Kapila's text is an effort to correct "this sometimes one-sided narrative" (*The Standard*). This recognition that the text is part of the dialogue on the railway is also true of fictional texts. The difference is that whereas these texts are not really about the railway the way a book on it, like Kent-Kapila's would be, the fact that a novel

concerns itself with the period of the building of the rail or a period in which it is a dominant presence is enough for the reader to expect its presence in the text. Indeed the texts by British colonisers that Kiiru refers to are part of the development discourse as they, whether directly or by insinuation, rationalise the colonial practises of development by representing the same as the coloniser's acts of sacrifice to tame the wild unknown world. It is therefore alongside texts like *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* and Charles Millers *The Lunatic Express* that these fictional representations of the railway construction can beneficially be appreciated as reinterpretations of the experiences of the non colonial-affiliated workers on the project in order to understand the cross-racial perceptions in the texts fully.

Such questions as in what forms does the railway enter the narratives of race and identity in the texts under study, and how can this be related to the position of the writer are crucial in analysing the forms of dialogue that emerge in the representations of the railway. To appreciate these dialogues, it has been necessary to first consider the larger issue of the colonial discourse of development. The discourses that inform the representation of the construction of the railway in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* are varied. Though the dominant and the apparent one is the historicist discourse, this is infiltrated by the development one. The latter, often associated with the colonial view of the colonised places, views development, often conflated with civilization, as the primary mission of colonisation; therefore colonial activities that alter or bring about change of whatever kind are all supposed to be development.

The representation of the Kenya- Uganda railway sometimes finds itself pandering to a variant of this discourse in which the building of Kenya, indeed its ‘founding’, is equated to the construction of the railway. Consequently those who constructed it are represented as founders of Kenya. This is the sense that one gets from the stories that Vikram’s grandfather tells them about his and other Indian workers’ experiences with the man-eaters of Tsavo during the construction of the railway. The stories are a mixture of fantasy and truth in which fantasy has the upper hand. The abilities and nature of the lions is exaggerated; they are not just cunning creatures but they also have supernatural abilities that seem to defy all human thought. That they can pick a person from amidst his fellow workers during an evening gathering without the rest noticing until much later, for instance, fuses fantasy with reality. The purpose of such exaggerations is to underscore the terror that the Indian workers underwent during the construction, and simultaneously, ensure these characters’ status in the national myths and legends. Indeed these coolies are this way represented as the forefathers of the freedom struggle; theirs is a struggle against the vagaries of nature in the process of constituting their identity as Africans; their having been part of her ragged history, authorises this identity. Compared to Patterson’s narration of the same experiences, in Vassanji’s presentation the coolie emerges as the hero and therefore displaces Patterson and his white associates in the latter’s text.

The contradictory images and attitudes in the following passage from *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* are useful for analysing these discourses of development, and the various attitudes it suggests or evokes. It also shows

how, because of the different discourses used by the British and the coolies, and their descendants, the railway is a contradictory image, and therefore a ployvocal signifier:

The railway running from Mombasa to Kampala, proud “Permanent Way” of the British and “Gateway to the African Jewel,” was our claim to the land. Mile upon mile. . . it had been laid by my grandfather and his fellow Punjabi labourers. . . the cast of characters in his tales endless and of biblical variety – recruited from an assortment of towns in northwest India and brought to an alien, beautiful, and wild country at the dawn of the twentieth century. Our people had sweated on it, had died on it: they had been carried away in their weary sleep or even wide awake by man-eating lions of magical ferocity and cunning, crushed under avalanches of blasted rock, speared and macheted as proxies of the whites by angry Kamba, Kikuyu, and Nandi warriors, infected with malaria, sleeping sickness, elephantiasis, cholera; bitten by jiggers, scorpions, snakes, and chameleons; and wounded in fights with each other. They had taken the line strenuously and persistently six hundred miles from the Swahili coast, up through desert, bush, and grassland into the lush fertile highlands of the Kikuyu, then through forest down the Rift Valley and back up to a height of eight thousand feet, before bringing it to descend gently and finally to the great lake

Victoria-Nyanza that was the heart of what became beloved Africa 16-17).

The opening sentence of this passage, by appropriating the colonialist view of the railway to explain its significance to the Indians, is an indication of the various discursive meeting points of the British and India in Kenya in their efforts to explain their relationship to the country. The parodying of the British view of the railway indicated by the quotes around the phrases ‘permanent way’ and ‘gateway’ and the immediate contrast of these with the Indian perspective, at least from Vikram’s point of view, of the same as evidence of Indian belonging to Kenya, dramatises the two discourses: on one hand is the British one that invokes the colonist notion of civilisation that sees the construction of the railway as an opening up of Kenya, thus bringing it into the fold of the empire. On the other is the discourse of sacrifice, an idea that is also contained in the colonial discourse though in a different sense; the Indo-Kenyan narrative of belonging is hinged on the contribution that their ancestors made in the building of modern Kenya. Central to this building, its physical manifestation, is the railway. In Vikram’s apparent parody of the British imperialistic view of the rail when relating his own people’s story, he reveals how the two discourses are inseparable; it is the importance that the British attach to the railway that validates the Indo-Kenyans’ story and gives it value.

By asserting the centrality of the rail to their identity as Kenyans, Vikram acknowledges its significance to British claims about East Africa but goes further to challenge the colonialists’ silencing of the Indian contribution to the railway. The syntactic structure, though it may give the Indo-Kenyans’ claim

prominence, by showing the inter-dependence of the two claims, implies that they have to co-exist. The narrative of sacrifice is indeed often deployed to justify British rule of the country and criticise the Africans' struggle for independence.

Underlying the discourse of sacrifice is the notion of the journey into the unknown, hostile continent, not unlike the colonialist journey into the heart of darkness. Images like 'alien', and 'wild country', though tempered with "beautiful" encapsulate the anxieties of leaving home and the related idea of displacement. The new place is pictured as hostile, yet admirable. This ambivalence reminds one of Homi Bhabha's discussion of the colonialists' ambivalence towards the colonised, albeit in a different sense. In the case of the perspective of Indo-Kenyan builder of the railway as represented by Vassanji, the suggestion is that Kenya's beauty predates the activities of both the Indo-Kenyans and the colonialists, and that, therefore, the potential of Kenya as a home is already there. This view of the Indo-Kenyans' relation to the land is therefore not a simple replay of the colonial discourses of conquering the wild, un-lived-in continent; it instead sets up a dialogue with the colonialist claims.

The answers to the dialogue are open to speculation, as the image of Kenya that Vikram gives in this passage falls short of negating the colonialists' image of a pre-historic, hostile continent that is the antithesis of home. For instance, besides Vikram's use of 'alien' and 'wild' to describe the Kenya that his grandfather goes to, there is also the litany of dangers that they faced, environmental, occupational and, most noticeably, health risks that come from disease which in being pointed out as specific challenges to the Indians, and

supposedly not to the locals, implies an essentialist difference between Kenya and India. Like Marlow's journey in Joseph Conrad's "*Heart of Darkness*", the building of the railway moves towards the heart of Africa, the difference being that this is not the heart of darkness but that of "what became beloved Africa". This contrast is significant in the sense that by subverting a well known image of Africa in the kind of colonialist discourse that Conrad's text participates, Vassanji's text suggests a different reading of the apparently negative and 'unhomely' images of the Africa that the Indian labourers work in.

This argument does not however diminish the sacrifice motifs that inform the Indo-Kenyans' invocation of the railway image. Apart from the picture that Anand's stories create, of Kenya as a place that is conquered through the undying will of the Indian labourers, Mahesh's statement that "For every mile of railway track laid, four Indians died (19)," suggests that the story of the railway is incomplete without the stories of the Indian lives it took; that the Indian labourers can look back at this period as a point from which the present situation of the Indo-Kenyans needs to be understood. The idea is that the apparently desirable present day Kenya is a product of the efforts of the Indian labourers; they partake in the development of Kenya by taming its wild nature so that the beauty earlier framed by 'wild' and 'alien' now dominates. The suggestion is that the identities of the present day Asians in Kenya needs to be perceived in the context of the images of the pioneer, railway builders.

As it may have emerged so far, Vassanji's representation of the railway is not just informed by abstract historical discourses but also by the kind of historical practises associated with biographies and autobiographies; this kind of

historical practice, besides humanising history, blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction. The intention is to show how inseparable the lives of his ancestors are from the making of Kenya and therefore to make a case for their, and his, Kenyan identity. The question that Vikram seems to be asking is, what more could these people have given to this land to deserve recognition by it? By presenting the different generations whose identity is related to the railways, Vikram, and by extension, Vassanji, shows how for each of these generations, an essential aspect of their lives has had to be sacrificed in the process of making Kenya. Indeed the construction of the railway, affects their relationship with India. This is the statement Sheila's father makes when Lall approaches him for Sheila's hand in marriage. He sees Anand, his father, as having lowered his already low status by becoming a labourer in Kenya. The implication is that to such Indians, the descendants of the coolies have an enduring tag: descendants of labourers. Being estranged from the land which must however provide him with the means of sustaining the tradition of family that is crucial for maintaining the Indian identity of his ancestors is the price that Lall must pay.

For Vikram, the railway has a bigger significance in the process of trying to reconstitute the self. It is a physical manifestation of his history. Being removed from its construction by a generation, he experiences its construction as oral testimony and through the person of his grandfather and Juma Molabux, the grandfather's friend. He first encounters these stories as a child and the impressions they make on him endure; he therefore keeps returning to them in many ways as they are for him the moment of reassurance. The various

references to the railway are informed by the need to reconcile the self with a nostalgic past, vicariously lived, and an incomprehensible material present.

Incidents such as the humiliation of Anand and Molabux by the white man at the railway station when these two old men climb down to the rails serve to show the discourse that characterises the railway narrative, and which is part of the nostalgia that Vikram too, vicariously associates with the railway, the personal and the impersonal. Due to the close links between the personal experiences of the coolies and the railway, the narrative suggests that for them it is impossible to think of the railways in purely commercial terms; the personal and the public are indistinguishable. This personal attachment to the railway raptures the dominant image of the Asian as exploitative business people with no emotional attachment to their adopted African countries. It is this clash in perspectives, tempered with the colonialist notions of racial superiority that can explain the white man's anger at the two old Indians.

In this latter sense, Vassanji's presentation of the railways differs in significant ways with Macgoye's in *Homing in*. Since the two texts tell the story of the colony, how its story relates to stories of individuals, particularly arrivals in and departures from the colony, both physical and metaphorical, how these texts represent the significant icons of the colony like the railways is important in understanding the dominant discourse in the texts and how they relate to each other. Though both texts are set in the post-railway construction colonial Kenya in which the railways is the most reliable means of transport between Mombasa and Nairobi, indeed with the rest of the country, its representation in *Homing in* is muted and detached from its history. The most visible story is that of the

empire, in which the railway is taken as an automatic accessory that does not need elaboration. However, in the instances when the railway is inevitably present in the narrative the focus is on its being a means of arrival in the colony. Thus, the railway is one of the most visible areas on the maps of the colony “Maps homed in on the railway” (19). For the prospective British settlers yet to travel to Kenya the railway, due to its familiarity, is the first reassuring sign of the colony’s link to home. Reassurance is crucial because of the anxieties that grip characters like Ellen about going into the unfamiliar wild, a world that their previous experiences cannot even make them imagine.

Ellen’s view of the train is restricted to that of a passenger; she hardly relates it to the history or mission of which her arrival in Kenya is part of, imperialism. The train is a highly European space in this text in which the non-Europeans are completely silenced and appear only as “khaki clad figures” (24). Ellen’s perspective on the train on her first visit to Kenya contrasts with that of her roommates in the second class compartment. For the roommates the train is the space to exhibit their class consciousness, and affirm their Englishness. They abstract the train from its surroundings and history and instead appropriate it as a space for enacting difference. Thus while Ellen wants to look out of the train windows, both metaphorically and literally encounter Africa, the roommates shut off this world, an action that is metaphorically represented by their act of firmly drawing the blinds, “unchanted with the African night” (23). They later admonish Ellen, who they consider an intruder into their colonial world, that “there is a certain standard to keep up” (24). This standard is not just a racial one, as the second class they ride in itself suggests racial difference given the

racist colonial practises of this period, but is also a class one; it is an attempt to cling to some supposed standard despite being in the 'wild'. The train in this context inverts the imperial gaze and is turned into a space of colonial insularity in which Europeans observe and perceive each other.

The representation of the railway within a colonialist discourse with its affiliated narratives of arrival sharply contrasts the historicist approach that Vassanji gives the same. Indeed it is plausible to say that whereas the train and the railway enter the narrative in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* through a dominantly Indian perspective, its presence in *Homing in* is through a British colonialist perspective. While this latter perspective remains insular however, the Indian one as represented by Vassanji recognises the competing perspectives, mainly because the primary motivation for Vikram's interest in the railway is to deploy it to tell the human, racial, stories behind it and by this revise certain stories.

The sense of identity that the train in *Homing in* relates is a supposedly established one, that of Europeans in a familiar environment moving through unfamiliar territory. Contrary to this sense, for Vikram, the train, past and present, is part of the process of the Indian becoming African; it is an important means of experiencing a sense of belonging in the present so that, for instance, the train journey to Mombasa is not just important because of its destinations but also because it makes him understand Kenya; as he puts it, "in some essential way it defines me" (105).

It can be seen from the above analysis that *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* is consciously involved in the dialogue of texts on the Kenya-

Uganda railway and mainstreams the images of Indian characters who emerge from it. The text may even be considered to be a fictional response to the colonial perspective of the representation of the railway that Kiiru refers to, which denies Indian participants individuality. Vassanji's text shows awareness of such texts like Charles Millers' *The Lunatic Express*, whose representation of the railway, for example the experience with the man-eaters and the technical achievement that the construction of the railway was, is from a European perspective that often does not adequately give voice to the Indian experience.

Ellen's background is a strategy for the presumed avoidance of the colonialist ideology that permeates social and material reality in the Kenya that she goes to. Her journey to Kenya is supposed to be purely for the reasons of being with her husband; therefore she is supposed to have no other interests in the country. Thus, she is not expected to know, at least at the time of her arrival, the politics in which her social position and the apparently ordinary things she does are involved in. However, given what is known about the period she lives in and the settler group of which she is part, the political discourses that inform her representation emerge.

Understood within the context of colonial politics, Ellen's train journey from Mombasa to Nakuru falls within the wider imperial project from which Ellen often attempts to stand aside and criticise. Bruce Berman, in his discussion of colonial Kenya, demonstrates that the railway and the settlers were closely connected, and that indeed the timing of the colonisation of Kenya is connected with the construction of the railway. According to him, the British having realised that Kenya needed considerable injection of public funds to make it a

profitable possession, like the money required for rail infrastructure that would be crucial to opening up the country to imperial commerce, decided that such funds could only be reasonably allocated to a territory under the colonial office rather than one under an imperial company like Kenya was. Thus prior to the construction of the railway Kenya was officially declared a colony (51). Since the interest of the British in the colonies was largely commercial, the rail had to pay the loan of £5.5 million advanced for its construction. It is in this respect that the settlers came in; they had an imperial role to contribute to production in the colony (56) and provide freight for the railway, and in turn when the settlers faced difficulties, “The rail system was employed to facilitate settler access to markets” (164).

The above situation may appear logical but Berman shows that, actually, the rail was a tool for racist economic control, for it was used to exploit Africans in order to subsidize the inefficient settler production systems; the settlers paid little for export freight but Africans paid the price for this to ensure the railway did not make losses. This was achieved by discriminatory practises where crops mainly grown by Africans, like cotton, were charged more for rail transportation than those grown by Europeans. Besides this unfairness, imports that were primarily meant for Africans, like cheap cotton textiles, were charged a high transport price than the European exports (164-5). This scenario indicates a far more invasive deployment of ideology than Ellen appreciates.

It is conceivable that by Macgoye having her kind of protagonist, she seeks to represent the experience of individual Europeans, Asians and Africans in Kenya during the colonial period without having to analyse the larger

ideological issues in which their lives participate. This sort of approach gives *Homing in* the appearance of being what one can call a humanist novel, whose concern with politics is only incidental. Its main characters are subsequently also, on the surface, projected as apolitical. However, if we take Edward Said's advice on reading to read this text, then we see, by placing it alongside other texts, how in its dialogue with these other texts, some of the barely visible imperial ideologies in it emerge.

While we may not argue with certainty that Vassanji's representation of the railway narrative is a response to *Homing in*, we can certainly argue that among his aims is to tell an Indian version of the railway story and in the process revise images of Indians associates with it. His story becomes one of the other narratives on the railway, joins an ongoing dialogue. *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and *Homing in* can, for instance, be read alongside Berman's non fictional text that goes further to reveal an African railway story; Africans' participation in the financing of the railway, which the other two texts exclude.

Ellen in her preoccupation with the domestic and her supposed cursory interest in the public, the colonial Kenya that she first encounters on the train, reveals a very limited level of awareness of how her identity is shaped by the seemingly ordinary activities like her train journey. It is a continuation of a history that she barely acknowledges, for she fails to link certain aspects of colonial history with her own story of arrival via train in Nakuru, the scene of Vikram's most encounters with the train.

4.6 The Second World War and Variable Discourses

The Second World War is a recurrent event in *Homing in* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*. It is a moment that constitutes the present of the various characters in significant ways. For Ellen, like argued in Chapter Two, the Second World War is a definitive moment that alienates her from England and confirms her affiliation to Kenya, as the England that emerges after the war is an England that she can no longer relate to. Since she does not share in the experiences of those the war finds in England, she can only imagine, though incompletely these experiences. Generally, however, Ellen is not condemnatory of the war; she perceives it sympathetically, what we may consider the writer's appreciation of the importance of the war to England for the values it affirms. It is this sympathy that results in eagerness to represent the war positively. Macgoye's representation of the war equals Vassanji representation of the railway in the sense that the two events affect the main characters' consciousness of their relationship with Kenya and Britain, for Ellen, and India, in the case of Vikram.

Therefore, just like for the railway, it is important to consider the discourses through which these writers represent the war and racial identities. Macgoye, through Ellen, represents the effect of the war on both the Africans and the Europeans in a narrative that is characterised by an Allied perspective in which the boundaries between the coloniser and the colonised in the Allied forces is temporarily overwritten by that between good and evil, the Allied forces versus their other. The emphasis of the war narrative is on the threat the

war poses on the ordered British lifestyle with its traditions and values. In the defence of this, no effort is too great and those who fight on the side of the Allies, like Jack Smith and Mwangi, though separated by the colonialist ideology of colour-based differences are in, in the discourse of this war, brothers.

This blurring of bounded identities poses a challenge to social relations in the colony after the war, as evidenced in the awkward moments in the interaction between Jack and Mwangi, and in the conversations among the settlers at the club. The settlers have to confront the fissures in the differences on which colonial policy and social relations are constructed, though Macgoye allows them to get away with easy explanations couched in the language of tokenism. The admission of blacks within the signifiers of civilization and therefore humanity, like the clubs and other associations in the colony, is grudging; skin colour is still a determinant of social acceptance. It is however clear that the war forces both the coloniser and the colonised to reconsider their subjectivity and the larger question of identity. It initiates a questioning of identities that up to now have been held as a given.

In the Allied camaraderie spirit that pervades the representation of the war, Macgoye suggests that both the coloniser and the colonised shared in the ideals of the war; therefore the Africans, like the Europeans signed up for it voluntarily. In Ellen's view, talk of forced conscription was rumour, as the war is a positive experience for the Africans to learn a trade and send money home, "it was an adventure for the strong, young men and an opportunity to send pay home, learn a trade" (55). Race as a category of identity is significantly silenced

in this description. Mwangi's joining the war (77) is supposed to illustrate that Africans willingly signed up and that, given his relatively successful post-war life, the war was good for Africans. This positive effect on Africans is surprising in the context of the devastating effects the war has on Europeans. To start with, Jack and Ellen's relationship deteriorates after the war. Then there is Ellen's family in England whose sense of stability is completely shattered after the war.

Macgoye's presentation of the war experiences, especially as the same constitutes the identities of those affected, contrasts sharply with Vassanji's representation of the same through Mwangi's son who is estranged by the war and never recovers. The war, being the site where the coloniser's hitherto stable images of self and conceptions of identity are invaded and challenged is significant for the type of picture it gives of the empire. Ellen's memory of it affirms the colonial perspective; it is supposed to be a necessity, something to which all have to 'naturally' contribute. Its destabilising effects on African families are overlooked. The casual manner of the presentation of these effects is suggestive of the writer's own perspective of the war; her understanding of its effects on England is much more personal and she is therefore able to delve into the physical, cultural and psychological aspects of its impact.

Vassanji's narration of the war is dialogic in the sense that perspectives from various places communicate with each other. Besides the presentation of the victims of the Second World War, those Africans whose personal lives it affects, there are the witness accounts from places where the war was fought, like in India. This way, the different accounts of the same event reinforce each other; the perspectives of the war from the colonised, the children of the Empire,

presents it as dehumanising to the Africans who, besides forceful conscription, are regarded as not more than weapons whose usefulness ends when they can no longer aid in the war effort. What Mrs Chatterjee tells Vikram that her father saw during this war in East Bengal is crucial in this regard: “Her father would talk about how he had once seen black human carcasses floating in the Ganges outside Calcutta, during the Second World War. They were presumed to belong to the sick and dying African soldiers tossed out from troop trains in the middle of the night by their British officers” (101).

This memory of war is corroborated by Joseph’s, Njoroge’s son, saying that his grandfather served in Burma and that he disappeared a few years after he returned from the war (101). The disappearance can reasonably be attributed to traumatising experiences in war. Thus Vassanji’s images of the war, read alongside Macgoye’s show that the two writers chose to represent only aspects of the war that fit in with the ideology that underlies their presentation. On one hand, Vassanji’s representation is from the standpoint of the outsider, the other of Europe who questions the racist ideas that inform colonisation. On the other hand Macgoye’s standpoint is that of the insider who shares in the ideals of the war which she presents as a sacrifice that had to be borne, and one which, despite the immediate suffering it occasioned, resulted in long time gains for those who fought on the right side.

Significant about the Second World War in the context of identities in *Homing in* is the kind of rapture it instigates in the contained image of the African that the settler has. The post-war Mwangi is a ‘new’ kind of African, not contemplated by the ‘them’ versus ‘us’ simplification of the members’ club

conversations. Equally important is the new Ellen, the alienated white character who can no longer consider herself British, and whose ideas of belonging acquire a more liberal shade.

4.7 The Stereotype as Dialogue

One of the main conflicts in the urban areas in these texts emanates from inter-racial communication, mainly the lack of it. Race is a barrier that is constructed as a marker of difference in experience and culture. A consideration of this issue in *Kosiyā Kifefe* and *In a Brown Mantle*, the two novels set in Uganda, for example reveals that the stereotype is the main space through which Asian and blacks interact in towns. This preloaded yet problematic space is a barrier to real psychological and social relations among Asians and blacks. Kifefe's initial and most dominant image of the Asian is not really his own but one adopted from popular ideas among blacks. For this reason, he makes little effort to understand Asians except when they transgress the image he has of them. True to Bhabha's argument that as "a form of splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes" (77), the constant environment in which Asian characters occur in the text is the urban area and its affiliates, like business premises, therefore suggesting that this setting is the necessary condition for the apprehension of Asians – an attempt at presenting the Asian as invariably materialistic and avaricious, though this image continually splits.

Gakwandi's portrayal of Asian characters in urban or business settings produces demarcations that confine the Asian to only those places where money

is to be made, the exception being Gupta, but only in relative terms, for his association with Kifefe starts through business connections. The town is therefore also presented in highly stereotypical terms, as a place of business that can never be home. This explains the change in the attitude of blacks to Kampala and Mbarara after the expulsion of Asians; while these towns, and other urban centres, had been associated with Asians, they now attract blacks eager to take advantage of the ‘secret’ that Asians had withheld from them up to then. The narrator puts it thus: “Four years after Idi Amin had expelled the Asian traders, indigenous Ugandans had suddenly discovered that there was easy money to be made from buying and selling things. This knowledge had previously been a secret of the Asians” (163). The expulsion of the Indians is here posited as a prerequisite for the economic prosperity of indigenous Ugandans. Similarly trading, which is initially associated with exploitation and rootlessness, is now an aspired for occupation by black Ugandans. This shows the instability of the stereotype as a space of social relation. If the economic success of the blacks is contingent on the expulsion of Asians, then racial hierarchy is posited as the norm for postcolonial Uganda, just as it is in the colonial period, only that the hierarchy is now reversed.

Going Down River Road, whose setting is exclusively urban, utilises the stereotype through confining Indian characters to the town centre, and as a result abstracting them completely from domestic settings. This is in contrast to the portrayal of the principal black characters, Ben and Ocholla, who are presented in varied settings: work place, entertainment places, on the streets and at home. The effect of this is that these black characters come across as full human beings

and the Indians as mere business people with no social or domestic components. This confining of Indians in the central business district transforms this area into the contact zone between blacks and Indians but one in which the Indians are in the centre and the blacks on the periphery.

In more nuanced forms, Indian characters in *Homing in* too are principally urban dwellers; Macgoye however humanises these characters by presenting them in diverse contexts that almost approach Vassanji's, falling short only because the representation is mainly external, from an outsider's stance, and therefore gives these characters no chance to show their inner world. Her principal Indian character, Mrs Banerjee, is a teacher, a profession that suggests more intimate social contact than the impersonal figure of the business person. Besides this, Mrs Banerjee is presented not just at her work place but also at home, her own and at Ellen's too. Her contact with Ellen is thus both as a workmate and a friend. The figure of the Indian business person in this text is less pronounced and appears mainly in the form of the parents of Ellen's pupils, a relationship which, because it gives these characters a family life, avoids the kind of foregrounding of occupation found in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* that presents the same as the dominant aspect of the Indian-East African identity. The characterisation strategies in *Homing in* represent the town as an organic space capable of producing meaningful interracial relationships, rather than the polarising place that it is in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe*.

It is therefore right to argue that the texts under study appropriate and interrogate colonial discourse in varied ways and it is this interrogation that

forms space for the dialogue. While *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifeje* merely invert colonial discourse by upsetting colonial hierarchies and replacing it with one in which the black elite is in the centre, *Homing in* appraises this discourse from an insider perspective but its appraisal is hampered by the inability of the narrator to free herself completely from some assumptions of the discourse. Ellen sees her role as a teacher as a mission to redeem the Indians, especially the girls whose future, in her view, is doomed without Western education.

The In-between World of Vikram Lall and *In a Brown Mantle* interrogate both the colonial discourse and the anti-colonial discourse that it provokes. The contribution of these texts to this dialogue is to expose the weaknesses inherent in both discourses, not least because the categories, whether racial/ethnic or political, on which they are founded are problematic. Both writers, for instance, debunk the notion of a cohesive Asian/Indian community/identity through their treatment of the histories of the Asian characters and how they relate to the same. The majority of Nazareth's Asian characters, for instance are civil servants; his politician narrator is a former civil servant, even though like Mwangi and Gakwandi, he locates them in towns. In addition to this, Nazareth never gives the impression that he intends to deal with the Asian of Uganda, for he recognises how superficial and misleading such an effort would be; his focus is on the Goans of Uganda, who though different from the so called Indian, are themselves a heterogeneous group. Their supposed common identity is tenuous, based on geography and history that are problematic because their meanings are both diverse and polarising. For this reason proliferation of identities among the

Goans is a continuous process. The town setting of these identities is a product of politics rather than anything to do with their ethnicity or personalities, and this is also true of Asian characters in *Kosiya Kifefe* but this idea is obscured by the dominance of the stereotype; land ownership is not just an economic issue but a political one as well tied to the notions of the indigenous and belonging.

Vassanji and Nazareth's treatment of the colonial and the anti-colonial discourses in these texts show the inadequacy of the same as a means of apprehending the diverse identities in colonial and postcolonial East Africa, for the anti-colonial discourse imitates the colonialist one in its totalising tendencies that fail to adequately analyse individuals and their circumstances.

Once again Bhabha's argument on the stereotype is useful here in showing the limitations of the stereotype in dealing with social reality. In his view, "The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations" (75).

This is true for how both Gakwandi and Mwangi represent the social reality in their texts, *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Going Down River Road*, respectively. While their representations may have a basis in reality, by depicting the same as the reality, they conflate the particular with the general and apprehend an aspect of this reality as the representative moment for the Indian and African. Thus the Indian characters in *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* are presented as Indians, not as individuals. These static characters are marked by a silencing or

in some cases a distortion of their psychological components so that what is put before the reader are predictable characters whose actions are not specific to the individual but are supposedly evidence of their racial/cultural characteristics. This is the case with Yussuf and the owner of the restaurant in *Going Down River Road* where Ben goes one night when he is drunk and is refused service; it is also the case with S.K. Patel and P.P. Patel in *Kosiya Kifefe*. To understand these characters it is necessary to analyse the discourses that create them. The narrators in both texts, and by extension, Meja Mwangi and Arthur Gakwandi, participate in a version of racist stereotypical discourse in its postcolonial moment, not the colonial one that Bhabha discusses in *The Location of Culture* (83). The distinction between these two discourses hinges on real or perceived changes in power relations. Bhabha's racist stereotypical discourse (in its colonial moment) is a tool that the colonial authorities deploy to rationalise their discriminatory practises as normal and necessary, and to demonstrate that they know the African; it generates and also relies on discriminatory ideologies that other the colonised (83).

The postcolonial moment in responding to these ideologies, as seen in these two texts, risks simply adapting the assumptions of the racist stereotypical discourse to the situation of the 'race' in power, in this case blacks. Therefore Asians are constructed as not just different but inferior because their concerns, trade in particular, are represented as antithetical to African interests. Understood in this context, *Going Down River Road* and *Kosiya Kifefe* are appropriations of the colonial racist stereotypical discourse in which the black is now the hero and the Indian is the villain. Thus the values that define heroism

are mediated by Ben (*Going Down River Road*) and Kifefe (*Kosiyā Kifefe*) despite the two having limited admirable qualities. They draw justification for their status not from their personalities but on the racial ideas that they represent; they are both characters whose progress in the postcolonial economic structure has to contend with the obstacles supposedly posed by Asians. Ben is thus supposed to be understood as a victim of neo-colonialism and international capitalism whose face is the Indian businessman.

Although this stereotypical representation of the Asian character undermines itself in many instances, one of its immediate effects is to preclude genuine interaction between the races in these texts. The relationship between Yussuf and Ben, for instance, is at best symbiotic; Ben is supposedly the only person that Yussuf, the Indian foreman, understands on the construction site. The truth however is that neither understands the other, mainly because of the limiting discourse that informs Mwangi's characterisation of Yussuf. This is a limitation that Vassanji is able to avoid by conceiving his principal characters outside the strictures of the stereotype so that Vikram Lall defies simple classifications on the basis of race or ethnicity. His is an identity that forms on the margins of racial/ethnic identities, and this is another sense in which his in-between world is to be understood. A simple explanation can illustrate the marginality of his identity; while Yussuf and the Patel brothers are fronted as insights into the Indian character, Vikram struggles to understand himself and to be understood not just by blacks but also by his own family and other Indian characters. His role is, unlike that of Yussuf and the Patel brothers, not to 'expose' the Indian character but rather to challenge the depiction of the same as

a readily available and analysable trope. To effectively pose this challenge, Vikram consciously responds to and splits the stereotypes that try to pin down Indo-Kenyans. Whereas he observes Indian rituals at the various stages of his life and grows up like any Indian-Kenyan man, his identity is not to be found in these apparently definitive events, for he divests them of stereotyped meanings. Two of his choices demonstrate this. The first one is his decision to study commerce at university, a course that he describes as dull though it was, “a field of study that stigmatized an Asian because it described his traditional occupation in the region and his caricatured role of exploiter, but that did not deter me” (182). By studying commerce regardless of the racial ideas it connotes, he refuses to be defined by these traditional meanings and he instead gives what are deemed commonplace actions personal meanings.

The other occurrence is Vikram’s marriage to Sobha, a fellow Indo-Kenyan though one who holds a British passport. His choice of marriage partner, in the view of Paul Nderi, the minister of transport and Vikram’s boss, is predictable. Although he is not privy to the details of the marriage and does not know Sobha, Nderi summons his ‘knowledge’ of the Indian when he tells Vikram following the marriage “So this is it, my friend, marriage to a virgin Indian girl, a pack of children, and the straight family life. Rice and daal and Chappati forever” (267). This statement is however interrogated and exposed for its shallowness by the size not only of Vikram and Sobha’s family but also by that of Lall and Sheila’s. Neither family has a pack of children, nor is their diet limited to rice and daal and Chappati. These assumptions are an indication of how prejudices fetter thinking about the other race and hence prevent real

interaction. For this reason Nderi's confessed failed hope of getting Vikram out of the "Asian quagmire" (267) is doomed from its inception as he has not meaningfully related with any Indo-Kenyan to be able to see them as individuals, and not just as a race. Nderi fails to recognise the irony of his 'hope' for Vikram because he is unable to extricate himself from the mesh of racist stereotypical discourse.

4.8 Reading Postcolonial Identity as Dialogue

Edward Said, in elaborating his idea of contrapuntal reading (*Culture*, 78), says that since no text is bound by its formal historical beginning and ending; it is important to relate literary texts to the eras that precede them and those that come after. While bearing in mind the idea that each text has its uniqueness, one must also realise that it is part of a discourse, for example that of imperialism in the case of the Western Canon. For instance, he adds, visions change so that even those issues that may have appeared plain to an author at a given time may become a subject of contestations (79).

Though Said's arguments were made in relation to the Western Canon, they are equally relevant to the postcolonial text whether by a Western or African, especially since, as a way of extending Said's argument, we can say that the postcolonial text re-reads imperialism's foundational texts.

Similarly the texts under study re-read, revise and reinscribe each other in terms of images (of colour for instances), ideology, and character. For example Lall, Vikram's father can be read as a rewriting of Yussuf's uncles in *Going Down River Road*. The uncles are the owners of the construction

company building Development House where Yussuf is a supervisor. Meja Mwangi presents them stereotypically in the populist notion of the Indian as the unpatriotic exploiter but does not provide them with a chance to give their perspective. This task is instead entrusted to the drug crazed Yussuf. The result is that the novel perpetuates the view that rich Indians are invariably exploiters and beneficiaries of corruption. Lall, who like Yussuf's uncles is in business, real estate in his case, has struggled to get to his position and he has been a victim of colonialism too. What has kept him going is a stubborn will to succeed and the sense of duty to his family, both immediate and the extended, who value achievement in business, for among other reasons that it carries forward the mission of their ancestors who left India in search of economic success in Africa. Lall therefore places a face on the defaced Indian entrepreneurs in *Going Down River Road*. Indeed Vassanji's presentation of a large array of a variety of Indian- Kenyan business people shows the complexity of the Indian-Kenyan entrepreneur character type. His intention is obviously not to simply refute earlier representations of these characters but rather to revise some of the representations by deepening them. The idea one gets from Vassanji is that it is true that some of the Indian- Kenyan business people are complicit in corruption and exploitation but these are a minority, and that this type of business people are to be found across race lines.

The range of Indian- Kenyan characters in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* fills in the many gaps that Mwangi, Macgoye, and Gakwandi leave. It is worth noting, for instance that both Vassanji and Nazareth, through the representation of Gama Pinto, challenge the national narratives that silence the

role of East Africans of Indian origin in the fight for independence and social justice in the region. Pinto's character, especially in *In a Brown Mantle* where he is fictionalised as Pius Cota, confronts the image of the fiery African patriotic freedom fighter and reveals discontinuities in the same. Not all the Africans who claimed to be freedom fighters were committed to the cause; some like Gombekukwaya lack any ideology and are instead driven by personal interests that are actually inimical to the popular ideals of the struggle. Pius Cota's unwavering commitment is ironically a threat to this brand of African politicians, an irony that captures the contradictions in the exclusivist race based narratives of nationalism.

Vassanji's literary interpretation of the experiences of Indians of East Africa reinterprets Gakwandi, Mwangi and Macgoye's. The racial secrets that Kosiya Kifefe supposes Indians hide in their houses in Mbarara (45) are, for instance, revealed through Vassanji's opening up of the Lall house first in Nakuru then in Nairobi. The house, which is often conflated with family, is indeed crucial to the social life of the Indians of East Africa. It is the site of affirmation of community and continuity whose significance goes beyond that of a dwelling place. However Vassanji's presentation of the Indian house proffers it as a potential site for intercultural communication, which undermines Kifefe's observation that it is a racially exclusive place. The secrets that are inaccessible to Kifefe and others in Mbarara are open to Njoroge, for whom the Lalls' house is a sanctuary in significant ways, including shielding him from the police. That he hides in the most intimate of places, under Deepa's bed, during

this raid challenges the notion of Indian impenetrability that dehumanises them. What we get instead is a picture of ordinary human beings.

One may argue that even in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* the Lall house is unusual among the Indian -Kenyan community in how freely an African moves in and out of it. While this may be true, it is also true that the relative openness of this house to interracial communication, though not fully so to interracial intimacy, is important in its suggestion that the notion of Indian peculiarity is a construction by both the Indian East Africans themselves and by black Africans.

Given that *In a Brown Mantle* was written much earlier than Gakwandi's *Kosiya Kifefe* and Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*, its interlocutory relationship with the two is revisionary. Nazareth's presentation of the Goan and even other non-Goan Indian's experience is supposed to inscribe their narratives in the national narratives of belonging and therefore open them up for analysis. His text, like Vassanji's, is modelled on the confessional autobiography because it is supposed to reveal a truth, however Mwangi and Gakwandi's texts, by deploying the very images of the Indian which Nazareth's text rejects, are a manifestation of the allure of racial stereotypes and popular images. Literary representation, particularly that of texts authorised by dominant discourses, can easily perpetuate racial stereotypes. The next section takes this argument further by focusing on the portrayal of the individual as the location of identity.

4.9 The Individual as Space of Dialogue

As the discussion of tradition has shown so far, the desire for identity is often enacted as a communal quest, whether the same is resistance or as affirmation. This is the case in *The In-between World of Vikram Lall*, *In a Brown Mantle*, *Kosiya Kifefe* and *Homing in*, all whose settings straddle the colonial and postcolonial eras. These are eras in which identity is informed by group or communal aspirations. The emphasis is on inclusion and exclusion from group membership and the relation of the groups to the national spaces (thus the production and revision of racial images that the previous section analysed). The aim is not just to understand the self or the community or to define the same, but to assert putatively pre-existing identities; however, the assertion of the same is contingent on undermining competing identities. This conception of identity allows for no fractions in its deployment of totalising notions of communal identity; discursively, therefore, there is no room for the in-between position or the possibility of multiple affiliations but in practice these identities are articulated in in-between spaces.

The community posits itself as an adequate space of telling the story of the nation or particular localities within the nation, a project whose success depends on the silencing of competing narratives and masking those aspects of the community that are at variance with the proffered image. The individual is supposedly inseparable from the group. The question which concerns us here therefore is to what extent can the individual be contained within group identities, especially when the same groups are mutable? The community, often

enacted as race, tribe or a combination of race and economic class, is in all the texts a political strategy whose modes of mobilisation must necessarily change in response to the prevailing political situation. This raises the other question: what happens when the 'communal' and the individual political aspirations diverge?

By considering these questions in relation to the principle characters in these texts this section shows how the individual can be read as space in the sense that, like tradition, they are capable of communicating various narratives, discourses and ideologies and that in participating in these narratives, discourses and ideologies they transform them or at least provide alternative sites of understanding the same. It is not only the community that the characters supposedly belong to which read them as confirmation of certain identities, the 'other' community also constructs and reads them as confirmation of certain perceptions both about their own and the other community.

The tension that arises in this situation is between the individual, community, time and place. The assumption is that communities respond to political events uniformly, that there are communally authorised ways of responding to political situations. Thus, "the homogenous, visual time of the horizontal society" (141) Homi Bhabha refers to has its spatial correlate in the racialised individual whose character development is conceived as transparent, traceable and determined. Whereas this may be a strategy of communities for guarding against the incorporation of its members into antagonistic identities, it fails to account for interactions between identities and the diversity in personalities. One, and perhaps the most significant, reason for this

circumscription is fear, the fear of contamination, even though this contamination, like the purity it is pitted against, is a construct and therefore not amenable to objective analysis.

The individual emerges as the greatest threat to communal identity, for while those who identify with community seek the centre, by displacement or isolation, individual characters like Vikram Lall seek creative spaces to articulate their personalities; those who advocate for the undivided individual look for absolutes. This difference in perception explains the conflict between D'Souza and other Goan-Ugandans of *In a Brown Mantle*. He shows that he is able to operate effectively on the margins of both African and Goan identity; what may be considered the self-constructed centres of both identities reject him, as one Goan-Ugandan reminds him through innuendo and direct comment that his father must be turning in his grave because of what he sees as D'Souza's betrayal of the Goan ideals that, according to him, his father held dear (91). Thus the individual character disrupts horizontal spaces and emerges as unpredictable and a product of practise rather than communal knowledge of itself.

D'Souza may declare his Goanness through such statements as "I am Goan and proud of it"(67) but this is an affirmation that is unsupported by practice as it claims a definiteness in his conception of the self that is constantly undermined by other addresses of the self, for example the complete identification with the People's Convention Party, the community through which D'Souza participates in the politics of agitation for independence and after— a politics that is foggy because its ideological underpinnings are racial

identity, which is at best an expediency. Indeed his description of his party as amorphous because of its lack of a defining ideology is a statement about Uganda, and even East Africa of this era in which a political party that claimed a firm ideological foundation would have been incongruent with the racialised and ethnicised politics. Yet that D'Souza finds it necessary to affirm his Goanness, which he tells Pius in self defence when Pius accuses him of perceiving society from the inadequate perspective of petty bourgeois Goan society, and that his left wing ideology is English country club type (67), is an indication of his own doubts about the certainty of his Goanness, especially viewed in the context of the seemingly total identification with the Peoples Convention Party through the recurring 'we'. His perception of self, therefore, must be seen as a weak affirmation that rather than confirm his knowledge casts doubts on it, for being Goan does not preclude holding ideas associated with the English middle class of the colonies, and belonging to a petty bourgeois Goan family.

His 'background' participation in the politics of the country and in the affairs of the party is an apt image of the space in which he operates in this society. Much visibility for his race in the colonial era in which the English colonialists remained in the background has transformed Asian Ugandans into a problematic image against which the consequently shackled individual must resist in articulating a contrary identity; his invisibility does not however detract from the extent of his influence over the country's affairs; it instead provides him with an opportunity for 'free movement' succinctly expressed in the following statement by Kyeyune to D'Souza when he explains to the latter his exclusion from the cabinet, "You will be a free agent without being hamstrung

by being a minister” (82). This free agency is one of the statements whose capacity for double meaning best describes the flexibility available in the margins where D'Souza operates.

The popular idea of Goanness among the Goans constructs the Goan as essentially apolitical; to be political is to ally oneself to Africans and, by extension, to alienate yourself from Goan identity. When Joaquim Costa tells D'Souza that “A man who moves about only with Africans and not Goans must be an African” he realises that since D'Souza became a politician he has cut himself off from the Goans (83). These statements imply much about the relationship between politics, race and identity in the postcolonial Uganda of the text. First there is the suggestion that politics is an essence that separates African from Goan identity and therefore the idea of Goan-politician would be oxymoronic. This stance is an admission by those who take it of the problematic nature of East African Goanness, as to be political is to confront questions of belonging and power that split not just this but other categories of identity too. Then there is the suggestion that Goan and African are exclusive categories with no contact zones whatsoever, an idea particularly buttressed by D'Costa's use of the word ‘must’. This word admits of no interstitial spaces; however, that D'Souza, by choosing to be a politician, occupies an interstitial space undermines D'Costa's claim and indicates how communal identity fails to account for individual traits. D'Costa's reference to D'Souza as Deo Mukasa, is supposed to, in ridiculing the latter, point out the futility of his aspirations. It is a metaphor of the in-between identity which also indicates D' Costa's view that

the same is impractical, a view that may be taken to represent the popular Goan thinking on the subject.

A further argument to be made in relation to the relationship between being Goan and a politician is that the alienation of this group from politics exemplifies and questions the indigeneity narratives that African politicians like Gombe-Kukwaya practise. Politics is constructed as the site through which the African reclaims lost territory and reconnects with the past. It is for this reason that Gombe-Kukwaya resorts to indigeneity rhetoric in his political rallies, something even Kyeyune, the supposedly progressive politician in the lot does, the difference being only that he makes allowances for the involvement of the Goan in politics so long as the same is incorporated into Africanness: so Joseph D'Souza has to be introduced to the crowds as Yosefu D'Souza and he has to be distinguished from the bad brown people. Perhaps most significant is Kyeyune's description of D'Souza as being a brown man outside and all black inside" (41). This characterisation is indicative of the politicisation of colour as a marker of race, a politicisation that the majority of Goan-Ugandans avoid confronting when they keep away from politics, and one that D'Souza must live with when he joins politics.

The Goan is preceded by a negatively politicised image of themselves in politics which, as those who participate in the exploited-versus-exploiter discourse perceive the Goan as a political liability. D'Souza must be seen as an atypical Asian because, apparently, he is non-exploitative and identifies with the African cause and, Kyeyune's argument goes on, the Goan, unlike the Indian, has suffered extended colonialism.

The detachment motif in the Asian in East Africa is a strategy that features in the characterisation of both D'Souza and Vikram Lall, though the same is seen in Ellen. The death of the essential core in Vikram is comparable to D'Souza's characterisation of himself in the following passage when he compares himself to Kyeyune who he describes as endowed with sensuality, a trait that eases communication with his people: "In this, I envied him because – except for rare moments – I was the very opposite. I was detached, far away, watching myself talking and acting and making myself speak as though through ventriloquism. It was precisely this detachment that gave me a sense of perspective, which apparently was such an asset to Kyeyune" (56). This sense of perspective is shared with Vikram Lall, and even Ellen; it is a sense of perspective that comes from a combination of alienation and involvement, for these characters participate in those definitive moments and events but with a feeling of neither entitlement nor lack of it. They are part of these moments without laying claim to the same; they recognise their significance without letting themselves be defined by the moments. D'Souza's and Vikram's is an example of choosing the margin as a place to articulate different subjectivities. The margins that these characters, especially D'Souza and Vikram, occupy are creative spaces in that they enable them to approach situations such as the agitation for independence and the post-independence challenges from non-conventional perspectives. These are perspectives that, though they are aware of the prejudices, the popular antagonism and oppositions, choose to operate outside them. Thus D'Souza is aware of the contending African voices in the run-up to Uganda's independence, and the antagonistic stance of both the

Africans and the Asian-Ugandans (especially Goans) towards each other in their interpretation of the meaning of independence to each community's subjectivity but he is distanced enough from both perspectives to afford himself space for objectivity and criticism, including self-criticism. For a sensitive Asian-African character, as both D'Souza and Vikram are, detachment is a strategy for apprehending the polarising conditions of colonialism and postcolonialism. For this reason, their detachment is one that does not entail loss of interest; it is a kind of detachment defined by avoidance of the centre of anything.

D'Souza demonstrates that, contrary to popular opinion, the difference between Kyeyune and him, his lack of sensuality, is not a racial difference but a personal one. Thus the contrasting interpretations and involvements of these characters in Ugandan political, social and economic affairs must be treated not as a manifestation of racial difference but as one of personal differences; it is a function of their individual visions of society. For D'Souza this vision is only possible because of his choice to operate outside the confines of communally authorised spaces.

Even in a text littered with stereotypical characters like *Going Down River Road*, the individual still manages to resist totalising images and, as a consequence, retains a degree of individuality. This is certainly the case with Yussuf, the foreman, who is interchangeably referred to as the Indian and as Yussuf. Like most Indian characters in the text, he is given only one name, underscoring the insignificance attached to his personal qualities; the appellation 'Indian' is supposed to compensate for whatever gaps may exist in his characterisation.

When discussing the difference in pay between Yussuf, the foreman, and the labourers Ocholla's comment on Yussuf is an instance of the many where the individual is constructed as a narrative of his race or community, and conversely as a disavowal of the other communities' narratives. Ocholla says that Yussuf's pay is due to "running around breathing curry into everybody's face and being an Indian like his uncles" (35). Ocholla, like most of the labourers', perception of Yussuf and all characters with Asian roots in the text is chained to stereotypes which makes them unable or unwilling to differentiate the individual Indian characters from the negative images they have assigned their community. Being an Indian-African is often, as it is in this instance, deployed as a signifier of the perpetuation of social injustice, especially exploitation and greed. In Ocholla's idea of Indian with which he views Yussuf, it is not possible for characters of this race to deserve better pay than a black person. Characterised within this discourse, Yussuf is represented as the concretisation of a communal identity that is mainly negative since it constitutes the main threat to the economic advancement of the average urban African in post-Independent Nairobi. Such characterisation is however unsustainable even if only those Indian characters on the construction site are considered. The differences between Yussuf, Kanji Bhai, the four Baniani, and Yussuf's uncles, produce slippages in the monster-like image of the Indian, as the following passage, which describes the four Banianis' perception of Yussuf and Kanji Bhai shows. Theirs may be considered an attempt at an insider perspective, even if only partial, and it is therefore a counter to Ocholla and Ben's perspectives: "The four Banianis sit together and away from everybody else and play cards.

They rarely mix with anybody else. They bring their own lunch, eat together, then play cards in Gujarati. They hate Yussuf for being a stupid foreman and distrust Bhai. And they don't understand the Africans" (45).

The revelation of these four characters' attitude towards Yussuf and Bhai exposes cracks in the undifferentiated image of the Indian. That the narrator is able to access their mind to know their feelings is one of the few instances when they are humanised, given a psychological dimension. The following passage is juxtaposed with the above paragraph, both because it comes immediately after it and it presents a picture of the African labourers that is meant as a contrast to that of the Banianis' and this juxtaposition mirrors the oppositional structure between the Asian and African character that permeates the text: "The Africans gather in knots, smoke bhang or whatever they happen to have and discuss mud diggers politics" (46).

These passages create a picture of agglomeration and separation; words that denote coming together recur in both but with different connotations; the Banianis sit together and away from everybody else while the Africans gather in knots. The Banianis are portrayed as a totally alienated lot, a group that is in conflict with their social environment, an impression buttressed by the word 'knots' that implies that the Africans' gatherings are impregnable, and which in a way explains the alienation of the Baniani. However that the separations do not lead into neat binaries but instead proliferate into more separations complicates the commonality that may be assumed within each racial group. The Baniani are not just separate from the Africans but also from Yussuf and Bhai who, in the eyes of most of the African labourers, are just Indians like the

Baniani. For the Africans, in addition to the alienation from the Asians, the knots are an image of internal disintegration as well and indicate the firmness of the divisions among this category. The physical separations that proliferate here are a trope for the psychological and social spaces that individuals within these groups desire, as these separations indicate differences in world views.

Meja Mwangi's attempts to use stereotypes to characterise Indo-Kenyan characters run into difficulties because these characters refuse to fit into any neat schemes. The language given to the characters is supposed to marginalise them by setting them off against the cosmopolitan dialects of the Africans and white characters; the recurrence of Indian ways of life, for instance through diet (curry) is part of a pattern in which the African characters exhibit what they believe is their knowledge of the Indo-Kenyan characters. Besides Yussuf and Kanji Bhai, the rest of the Indian characters are nameless and are no more than the appellation 'Indian'. This certainly is the case with the owner of the Maharaj restaurant whose presence in the text seems to be for the purpose of reinforcing the negative image of the Indian characters that Mwangi struggles to achieve through the characters at or connected to the construction site, mainly Yussuf, the Baniani, Bhai and Yussuf's uncles. The first indication of the narrator's intention in regard to the Maharaj appears in the second sentence that describes Ben's entry into the restaurant; it is an entry into the Indian world, one in which Ben expects to find no surprises because he carries a knowledge of this world with him into the place: "The restaurant reeks of garlic and there are some more of them here than in some restaurant in Bombay" (138).

Garlic together with the title of the restaurant, which at some point in this incident also becomes the name of its proprietor, are meant to be a containment of Indianness but they fail because the Indianness that they project is so simplistic that it reduces an otherwise complex society into few transparent images of diet and religion. Garlic in this context is a negative image of Indianness, so is the metonymic inscription of India into the restaurant through the invocation of Bombay. The containment that these images assume also constructs the restaurant and the owner as the other. It is an example of instances in the text when individual characters are reduced to certain generic images that affirm marginal subject positions. This is also seen in *Kosiya Kifefe* and *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* but the difference is that in these two texts the images occur within colonial discourses that portray blacks mainly as the dominated; the balance of power is therefore reversed in this text. The Indian characters however, even when in one respect they are seen as the dominating power, never fully leave marginal spaces; they are always the other.

By assuming knowledge of the proprietor on the basis of his race, Ben places himself in a dominant position of power over him that enables him to interpret everything about the proprietor, which accounts for the patronising attitude he adopts towards him. This attitude is however countered by the proprietor's through a process of translation that results in a doubleness of perception; Ben translates the events in the restaurant including the action of the proprietor in the terms of his assumed knowledge of the Asian, a knowledge that is frozen in some past experiences including some at the construction site. His own actions and responses are conceived in the terms of his interpretation which

are at cross purposes with that of the proprietor. The latter reads in the same actions different meanings, informed by his own experiences of racial and religious minority, and he responds to these meanings, not Ben's. For Ben, the 'Maharaj' is just another exploitative Indian Hindu capitalist but the 'Maharaj' perceives himself as a Muslim businessman and sees Ben as a non-believer, a drunkard out to cause trouble in his restaurant.

Indeed the simplistic nature of the knowledge of the Indian as represented in the text, a representation that this incident participates in, is underlined by the Maharaj. This is a word that, by alluding to a Hindu institution, betrays Ben's ignorance, and that of the worldview he represents, about the diversity of Indian identity, for the man whose restaurant is given this name, a name that Ben considers an apt description of the owner, is Muslim.

The portrayal of the Asian character in this text therefore results in tension between the notion of community, identity and the individual character. Yussuf, the principal Indian character in the text and the one who apparently represents typical Indianness, slides perceptively from such an image. His character is best defined by its idiosyncrasy, an aspect enhanced by his drug-induced hallucinations of a better world. Whether high on drugs or not, Yussuf is a character dissatisfied with his condition, but in Ocholla and the other labourers' eyes, because they are underpaid, Indianness is a position of privilege and enjoyment, one defined by skin colour and which is diametrically opposed to blackness. What one can surmise from the representations of both Ben and Yussuf in relation to the communities they belong to is that neither is a

representative of the community, and neither are their communities' objective entities.

The relationship between the individual and the community in these texts is complex though the community is ostensibly perceived as the space in which the individual must function. This is a well mapped space because it is saturated with discourses and ideologies of race and ethnicity by, about and for these communities. The discourses that produce ideas of the community and its subjects are related to and are indeed a derivative of the colonialist discourse that Bhabha theorizes on; it is both an expansion and reversal of the coloniser's production of knowledge of the colonised because this knowledge is now appropriated by the formerly colonised as acts of both resistance and reclamation of identity. To reassert themselves, the formerly colonised must produce knowledge of the former colonisers and those perceived to be their allies that construct the same as the other of the Africans. Such knowledge leaves in place the compartmentalisations of society inaugurated by colonial policies. These compartments are the spaces against which individual characters have to struggle in their efforts to regain their agency from the community, in whichever way the same is conceived.

Bhabha has argued that "colonial discourse produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality" (71). The successor of this narrative in the discourses of the formerly colonised is the community narrative, as it is within this narrative that everything about

individual characters must be explained. The purveyors of this discourse, like Sheila, Ben and Gombe-Kukwaya, see their communities as engaged in a never ending tussle with other communities. Ben thus finds a ready answer for his and other African's economic problems in the Indian who in his eyes is always an exploitative and strange community. Sheila fears the possibility of the distinction between racial groups being blurred and therefore takes it as her mission to ensure that her children and grandchildren remain Indian. In her thinking racial and cultural identity are absolute and closed spaces that have no allowance for mixture; the interstice is an aberration, an abnormal space, thus her plea to Njoroge not to interfere with her dream of having normal grandchildren.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter set out to analyse how the selected texts interrogate each other on the notions of racial identity and character perception. Overall this chapter, by analysing the five texts under study contrapuntally in order to show how their affiliations impact on their meanings, argues that the representation of identity in these texts is caught in the discourses within which the characters and events they represent have been conceived elsewhere both in fiction and non-fiction.

The manner of participation by each text in the various discourses is what distinguishes the text from the others and influences its ability to deal with the transitional identities of the colonial and postcolonial state. There are those

texts like *Going Down River Road* which, by unproblematically relying on popular discourses of race, particularly the one dimensional image of the Indians in Kenya, are unable to analyse the dynamics of racial relationships in Independent Kenya. These relationships are impacted on by more than one discourse which, however, this text is unaware of. This can partly be attributed to Meja Mwangi's choice of protagonists that are too inward looking and whose intellectual limitations means that they have a singular perception of complex social relations; in this respect the doubleness of writing of Bhabha referred to earlier is hardly present in the text.

Arthur Gakwandi encounters the same difficulties in *Kosiya Kifefe* where though the protagonist reveals a wider awareness of the social forces at play in the colonial and postcolonial state, he is limited by his monocentric conception of racial identity; his inability to stand outside the African -Ankole-black-Ugandan discourse and recognise the other discourses of identity beyond indigeneity and nationalism. Though not innocent of some of these failings, the other three writers provide more nuanced accounts of identity because their works express awareness of the entangled discourses in operation in the societies with which they deal. By incorporating rival discourses in his text, Vassanji for example, creates dialogue among the discourses that avoids privileging just one of them. This way he is able to analyse the discourses and, consequently, the perspectives that impact on the society of his text. Like Macgoye and Nazareth, he historicises the experiences of his characters and therefore invites a broad analysis.

The next chapter presents a summary of the findings, discusses the conclusions and gives recommendations.

5.0 Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

This study set out to investigate how selected writers represent character perception of self and others in relation to the characters' physical and socio-political circumstances and the kinds of textual interactions on race, identity and space that inform and result from this representation and perception. The preceding chapters have analysed various aspects of this issue with a view to establishing the relationships among place, space, race, dialogue and the perceptions by characters of their identity and that of the other races. The general conclusion is that racialised categories of identity are fluid and, therefore, indeterminate but they are the basic forms of inter-racial knowledge. For this reason, these categories are the means through which writers seek to apprehend characters from the three races this study focused on. Characters from each race too perceive themselves as sets of ideas that are opposed to the other race. Additionally, the study concludes that all the texts recognise that place and place meanings are significant in the formation of identity and that it is for this reason that groups seek to dominate place. It is the meanings attached to place, race and other categories that denote community that determine the type of spaces that the same produce.

The study also makes the conclusion that only some of the texts are able to institute genuine dialogue among the races but even for those which are not successful there are markers of this kind of dialogue. For all the texts, however, the idea that emerges, whether by inference or plainly, is that one sided views of

the other culture are responsible for incomplete apprehension of difference and race, and this impacts the representation of the same.

The other overall conclusion that the study makes is although identity may be contested and variable, there are forms of identities with which the characters in the studied texts make sense of themselves and others. The meanings of such identities may change but each of the three racial groups perceive of themselves as constituted by some core ideas at specific history moments. The perception of the other is mostly oppositional and negative.

5.2 Specific Conclusions

The rest of this chapter discusses the above findings in detail in a descending order that corresponds with the study objectives.

Place is key to conceptualization of self and of others for though in practice identities may be delinked from places, discursively they remain the points of reference. It is for this reason that individuals conceive of their identities in geographical and historical terms even when such histories and geographies are incongruent with practise. The various forms of control over place in these texts reveal how the control of the meaning of place is crucial in the identity formation process.

The main competing narratives in regard to the colonised places are those of entitlement and indigeneity; the settlement of the land is enacted through both laws and discursive practices intended to disrupt traditions developed in relation to the land. The disruption of traditions is concomitantly a

disruption of a sense of community and, therefore, history. The colonial topography of meanings cannot be rewritten without acts of violence, in the sense that such rewriting is an uprooting. Although place meanings are crucial to identity formation, especially group identities, the postcolonial identity has to be negotiated as a process not of recovery and reclamation of meaning but that of discovery of new meanings.

On narration and identity the study found that narrative stance is significant in conceptualization of identity but that both the third and first person can be deployed to effectively narrate interweaving and separate identities. The relationship between identity and narrative perspective is consequently non-essential and in the author's control. How this relationship is handled can either allow for access to knowledge of the dynamics of self understanding and how characters understand those they perceive as different or obstruct knowledge because what it reveals is partial. Such partiality is invariably a function of ideology preceding and even obscuring analysis so that between the writer's representation and what they represent there is a mass of ideas in the form of prejudices, stereotypes and preconceived notions, which collectively produce and influence the discourses that occupy this space and inform the writer's interpretation of reality.

Since identity is an attempt to make sense of oneself in relation to one's world, meanings of the basic terms that describe identity are crucial as a starting point in the process of self knowledge in the postcolonial state. However that the basic terms which are considered the locations of difference and therefore identity meanings are unstable and contested implies that the knowledge

communicated by these words has to be unstable and variable. These words are incapable of any consistent denotation and connotation of difference for the social contexts and daily lives of the characters constantly undermine the assumed differences. It is in this respect that the analysis of the lexico-semantic choices of these writers within the post structural context reveals meanings beyond the linguistically coded ones and their variants.

Lexemes that denote identity are sites of contestations and tensions which reveal their inability to fully account for the possible complex forms of identity that form and change in the colonial and postcolonial state. These nouns are indeed the locations of some critical debates within these texts and between them. The oppositional manner in which these words relate means that they are inter-dependent and that, as a result, change in one implies change in another. The most viable location of meanings is not therefore in whole terms but in the meeting points as suggested by the compounded identities like Asian-African in which the identity of those they refer to rests not in any one of these words but in their combination.

Though scholars like Kwame Appiah may have valid arguments about the constructed nature of race as a category of identity, race remains a meaningful category of identity both at the institutional and individual level. Although discursively race may be over-determined, in practise it remains a conceptual category through which people try to understand their world. However, owing to its problematic nature, race in its practise as a form of difference and therefore identity is inconsistently understood and therefore erratically applied.

While it is true that African experience is heterogeneous and therefore cannot be essentialised, constructions of Africans as the other by 'non-Africans' exhibit uniformity in the ideas they project on 'African' as an identity. Thus the colonisers' and even some of Asian Africans' dichotomy of 'they/us', by constituting themselves as homogenous identities defined by their difference from the African identity, dialogue with the practice of African identity seen in these texts.

The study argues that the postcolonial text is an interaction of discourses and can thus be viewed as an interlocutor in ongoing debates about the meaning of nationhood, community and the individual. For this reason these texts have to be understood in the general contexts of the conflicts they deal with. The relationship between them and other texts, whether by Europeans or Africans, is however not always adversarial, as novels like *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* seek to expand the debate on such aspects as the contribution of Asian East Africans in the development of the region, and not merely to dispute the other representations of this community.

How each of these novels handles the discourses that interact in it is crucial to their effective representation of identities in the colonial and postcolonial East African society. Those texts that allow for debate between discourses in representing inter-racial perceptions are more successful than those which do not. Even for those texts apparently dominated by singular perspectives however, there is dialogue between them and the other texts. Read together therefore these texts represent a discussion on the issue of inter-racial relationship and the extent to which the different races understand each other.

What emerges is that the Asian African characters and, by implication, writers are more conscious of their position in these societies and therefore portray racial relations more sensitively than the indigenous African writers who only pay serious attention to racial prejudice in its colonial moment but seem to endorse asymmetrical representations in the postcolonial state.

While the representation of Asian African characters has received varying degrees of attention both in the colonial and postcolonial eras in all the texts, which contributes to the contestations over the images that emerge in these presentations, the focus on Europeans is mainly in the colonial period, apart from in *Homing in* whose main character is white. On this aspect, the study finds that the white characters are assumed to be easily explainable through their role in colonialism. The second explanation for this paucity of detail on white characters is that their forms of interaction with the indigenous Africans and the Asian Africans is limited so the other characters, and by implication the writers, are unable to imagine them as anything else other than colonial administrators and settlers.

The third explanation for the little concern with white characters is that they are not associated with the ambivalence of political identity attributed to the Asian Africans who are perceived simultaneously as citizens and as outsiders. The assumption is that the political identity of white characters ceases to be a problem with the achievement of independence. This assumption is however challengeable.

5.3 Recommendations

As a result of the above findings, this study makes the following recommendations.

i. There is therefore need for further investigation of this angle of East African literature: the colonial and postcolonial white writers' (whether citizens or not) representation of the identities of Europeans in East Africa.

ii. Since understanding of place and space is significant in the appreciation of the representation of social relations and politics in East African literature, more studies that focus on specific places should be carried out, an example of such a place is the settler farm.

iii. This study dealt with only three races in East Africa but it is felt that there is need to study how the other major immigrant race, Arabs, represent themselves, whites, blacks and Indians in their literary texts.

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Endnotes

¹In relation to authors, black, Asian and white describe skin colour but the meaning of these terms in the analysis of characters is variegated and, therefore, nuanced in line with the post-structuralist framework that informs the study