Subalternspeak: An International Journal of Postcolonial Studies
(Online ISSN 2347-2013) **Vol. III Issue I, Oct. 2014**

SHIFTING IDENTITIES IN *THE IN-BETWEEN WORLD OF VIKRAM LALL*

Alina Rinkanya
Department of Literature
University of Nairobi
arinkanya@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper traces the evolution of identity in the Indian characters of The In-Between World of Vikram Lall. Exploring nativism and patriarchy as one of the founding aspects of both colonial and post-colonial identity of the Indian characters, the paper, apart from the discussion of the social, cultural and historical aspects of colonial and post-colonial identity in the novel, tries to outline new, hybrid types of identity that several characters of the novel tried to create in order to move beyond the confines posed by nativism and patriarchy in post-colonial times. The author asserts that this new hybrid identity may be considered as an important aspect of the new vision for Kenya, the need for which, as suggested by scholars, is underscored in the novel.

Since the earlier period of formation of post-colonial theory, the notion of identity has occupied its rightful place as one of the key concepts of this theory. According to Achille Mbembe, post-colony itself "identifies specifically given historical trajectory – that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonization and the violence which the colonial relationship, par excellence, involves" (Mbembe 1992:3). The question, however, is whether this colonially imposed violence vanishes, transforms or remains as an integral part of new post-colonial identity? And another one – actually, what generally are the types (or, at least, examples) of identity that emerge in different locations and periods of post-colonial reality? One of the possible ways to look for an answer may be to trace the historical aspects of identity loss, shift and formation as shown in the works of the prominent figures in post-colonial writing. Of these, the novels of M.G.Vassanji appear of specific interest, since in his works he deals with the characters and situations that illustrate multiple aspects of formation and functioning of these identities. Of his works, this article speaks of the novel *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003). We chose this novel because, in our view, it appears of specific importance and illustrativeness in terms of the portrayal of loss, shift and formation of identities in colonial and post-colonial context. Thus, the purpose of this article is to trace these stages of identity (trans)formation, as reflected in this penetrating and talented novel.

The novel, centred on the life story of Vikram Lall (through his young years referred to as Vic), an older child in a Punjabi Hindu family resident in Kenya and consisting of Kenyan-born father and mother whose land of birth is India, is narrated through Vikram's voice. The novel features two groups of characters, Indians and Africans, brought together by one particular trait – their initial identity as sons and daughters of, respectively, Indian and African soil (or, in a less poetic way, products of Indian and African culture) was lost, or, more precisely, destroyed by colonial and post-colonial practices. In the sections below we will try to outline the founding aspects of identity of the most prominent characters of the novel, representing one of the two above-mentioned groups, specifically the Indians, because, in our view, exactly this group of characters provides a reader (a critic) with the most favourable material for the analysis of the above-posed questions.

Older generations

According to Nalini Iyer, in the case of Vikram's grandfather, a railroad builder, "transforming the African landscape for the British master enables Anand Lall to carve out a political identity as British colonial subject […] whose ties to his ancestral land are through daily practices and cultural life" (Iyer 2011:207). She further states that "Anand Lall's son, Vikram's father, although raised in Kenya, has cultural ties to Punjab" (208). Agreeing, on the one hand, with this statement, we at the same time would like to stress a striking duality of Mr. Lall's identity – he maintains these cultural ties largely "by virtue" of his ethnicity (of which he is always reminded by colonial structures) but mostly against his will – even his son characterizes him as "proudly Kenyan and hopelessly (as I now think) colonial" (20). Mr. Lall is passionately devoted to Kenya, where he was born and raised, and even has a strong dislike for India – during his only trip there "he found everything in India dirty and poor, and for the most part had a miserable time of it" (20); the fact that this trip ended in his marriage only increased his pride as a Kenyan-born and a subject of the mighty Empire.

In other words, Mr. Lall seems to be an almost perfect embodiment of the words of Thomas B. Macaulay, the architect of English colonial education in India, when he spoke of creating "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (qtd. in Anderson 1991:91). In fact, quite a few other episodes in the novel confirm Mr. Lall's loyalist sentiments – such as him sitting "with ears glued to the radio" on the coronation day of Elizabeth II ("how proud we were to be her subjects then, to belong to the mighty empire" – comments Vic, 70-71), his elations when the young Bruces, the English friends of his children, send them a postcard from London ("look, said Papa, who was holding up the postcard, the biggest city in the world… it was his dearest wish to visit that centre of the universe once in his lifetime. It was his Mecca, his Varanasi, his Jerusalem. A visit there confirmed status…" – 104); on their way to Mombasa for a holiday at every station they are met by relatives, friends and acquaintances – which made even mother happy, and her husband's reaction was a far more bombastic one: "This is Africa, he said to mother, all this beauty and vastness […] Have you seen anything like this in your country?" (106) – by "your country" meaning actually India, the land of his ancestors that he so disliked.

However, the above-mentioned project of creating that new "class of persons" even in the case of the Lall family could have been implemented only partially – for even Mr. Lall and his father, no matter how staunch supporters of colonial order could they be, were constantly reminded of their inferior status in the white-dominated colonial society. Suffice it to recall corresponding episodes in the text - even Anand Lall was subject to these painful reminders down to his old days: taking a stroll with his old friend down to the railroad in Nakuru, they are harassed, Vic witnessing that, by a drunk white settler emerging from the restaurant ("Who gave you the permission to come inside? Imbeciles! […] I thought he would strike one of them" – 61). Anand's son, Vikram's father, has even larger share of his – an Englishman in a tailor's shop inNairobi is offended when the shop's owner, an Indian, intends to use on him the same measure tape as he used on Mr. Lall – «you going to use the same tape on me as the coolie?» (110). After the Bruce family, the English settlers, with whom Mr. Lall and his children were on good terms, is killed by the Mau Mau guerillas, the Lalls are not even able to attend the funeral – it is out of question for them, for Mr. Lall "had been informed it was not appropriate to do so, it was a family and a European affair" (130). Even the cricket match between the white-only Nakuru Club and Asian XI is won by the European team solely because of them abusing the rules – but it is perceived as normal (65). In view of this, Macaulay's "new class of people" could hardly come true – for even staunch supporters of colonial order, like Mr. Lall and his father, were constantly reminded of their Indianness – i.e. Otherness, and therefore inferiority – by the architects and purveyors of colonial structures.

As the time passed, though, Mr.Lall seemed to change his mindset – meeting Njoroge in Nairobi shortly after Kenya's independence, in 1965, he comments: "What a time that was, I am glad it is over and now it's uhuru" (143). In 1970s, during their joint trip to London, where, as Vic says, his father "had arrived a decade and a half too late ", he seems at last to recognise the British as opposed "they": "that is from where they ruled us", he tells Vic (297). And, at the beginning of Vikram's fateful return to Kenya in the 1990s, Mr. Lall, during their dinner at the New Stanley, a once white-settlers-only hotel, comments: "There was a time when we couldn't lay a step inside this place […] We would stand outside and watch the Europeans carousing" (355). Nevertheless, we would probably be not very much mistaken if we assume that all these "anti-colonial" statements of Mr.Lall are in fact filled with nostalgia for "colonial world of repressive, undignified subjecthood, as also of seductive order and security" (7), where everyone knew his or her assigned place, and this nostalgia will remain with him forever.

Almost a similar case of a person "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, etc." is observed in the character of Mr. Verma, father of Mr. Lall's wife, Inspector of British colonial police in India, who, although living all his life in the country of his birth and his ancestors, nevertheless identifies himself with Her Majesty's British Empire. «He worked for the British, and in his duties to maintain law and order he often had to arrest Congresswallahs agitating for independence… or send laathi charges against street demonstrators". Although

not having a very high regard for Indian diaspora in East Africa, Inspector Verma, suspecting that "the civilising order of the day … seemed to be on the wane", agreed to let his daughter "get away to a part of the world – be it in Africa – where the Empire still held firm, English values and manners still ruled the day" (22). Thus, the happiness for his daughter lay, in Verma's eyes, definitely not in her love-based marriage to a son of the former railway coolie, but in the fact that this marriage gave her a chance to remain a subject of the Empire.

Here we seem to see at work the same mechanism as in case with Mr. Lall, the future husband of the Inspector's daughter – only the Inspector's case is, so to speak, more severe, since he demonstrates his adherence to the ways of the colonizer in the midst of his own people, on the land of his birth driven under the colonial rule. As noted by Ania Loomba (1998:181), in colonial (and even post-colonial) times "large numbers of people in the third world have not physically moved, and have to speak from 'where they are', which is also often an equally ideologically, or politically, or emotionally fractured space" – and exactly this ideological, or political, and to a no small extent emotional fractures in the space around Mr. Lall, his father and his father-in-law lead by similar fractures in their minds and hearts. Metaphorically speaking, these fractures occlude with a new tissue, which forms the new identity of the characters. If, according to Homi Bhabha (1985:153), in a colonial subject "mimicry has the effect of undermining authority", then it is not the case of Verma and Lall. For them, their self-identification with 'things English' is not the mimicry, but deep, although maybe even semi-conscious, urge to acquire a strong and secured identity; since their identity as 'proud Indians' was destroyed by the Empire, it is exactly the Empire they opt to identify with ("if you can't beat them, join them") – its strength, its invulnerability, and its promises, all embodied in its "civilization".

In other words, Inspector Verma and his son-in-law Mr. Lall are the bearers of the identity founded on two pillars: on the one hand, involuntary self-acknowledgement as Indians (through adherence to some traditions, such as patriarchy, and also through being reminded of it by upper structures of colonial power), and on the other – voluntary (as it seems) self-acknowledgement as a subject of the British Empire, as a source of "the civilising order of the day". This type of identity we would, in the context of Vassanji's novel, deem as colonial identity. The mention of patriarchy, made above, is, in our view, crucial – as we will discuss below, exactly through it the dual identity of these characters finds one of its most expressive manifestations.

Seemingly different type of identity is borne by brother and sister, the daughter and son of Inspector Verma, the wife and brother-and law of Mr. Lall and, respectively, the mother and uncle of his children – Mrs. Lall (her first name is Sheila, but it is mentioned in the novel for a very few times – e.g., 142) and Mahesh. Here the foundations are rather similar to those of the characters discussed above, but in the reverse perception: if we paraphrase the above-quoted characterization of Mr. Lall's identity, given by his son, we may call his wife and brother-in-law "proudly Indian and hopelessly (or, maybe, hopefully?) anti-colonial".

Mrs. Lall, contrary to the loyalist sentiments of her husband, for her life kept devoted to the country of her birth and youth, and it always remained for her a criterion of whatever is good and acceptable ("This is India" – a compliment she pays to Mombasa town, the stay in which she thoroughly enjoyed – 111-112), and for her life she nursed the dream to come back to the land of the ancestors, but, by bitter irony of fate and post-colonial developments, she never returned there, her last decisive attempt ("India was calling her, she was ready to end her African sojourn and return finally home" – 293) being cut by mortal disease. Mrs. Lall never perceived Kenya as anything but, in her own voice, the land "where I have married and made my home, […] my husband's and children's country" (106).

As a "reverse side" of her devotion to the homeland, Mrs. Lall has a strong dislike towards the British, so strong that while, occasionally, daring to demonstrate that, she even neglects the unwritten rules of modest behaviour, pertinent for an Indian wife – suffice it to recall the episode when her husband "fussed over Mrs. Bruce", the wife of a white settler, reluctant to let her travel home alone because of the Mau Mau threat.

> When they had gone, Mother scolded Papa, Why do you have to be so craven in front of her, they don't care one cent for us. To which he said, Our children play with her children. Came the reply, So what, are they doing us a favour? Why didn't you offer to drive her home, then?
>
> That last remark was unusually sarcastic; he looked at her, surprised, but did not say a word (15).

Later, in 1970s, Mrs Lall refuses to accompany her husband to London ("You go with Vikram, I don't mind. I have no desire to see London, anyway" – 294). Moreover, Mrs. Lall seems to have a genuine empathy to all the other people around her who are subjected to the colonial powers, first of all Africans, which is embodied in her kind treatment of Njoroge, the son of their servant and gardener Mwangi.

One real devotion to a person that Mrs. Lall seems to have in her life – not by order of being married or given birth to, but through those 'strings of the heart' that frequently seem to be stronger than any other bond – is her relationship with her younger brother Mahesh, who joined her in Kenya in 1948, after the dramatic split of the former "jewel of the Empire" into Pakistan and India. Mahesh, a man of education with a degree in English, is also a strong opponent of the British rule (for him they are simply "arrogant bastards" – 24), a person of radical leftist stand, and soon his Marxist inclinations and personal offenses ("I could have been in the diplomatic service, Mahesh Uncle said, if only I stayed in Delhi" – 73) take a more constructive shape – from a mere sympathizer of the liberation struggle in Kenya he turns into its rather active participant, helps some Mau Mau fighters to escape the hunt by the government troops and even steals a pistol from his brother-in-law – Mr. Lall – to assist in equipping his newly found comrades.

Therefore, can we state that the "reversely arranged" sentiments of Mrs.Lall and her brother – their devotion to the land of their birth and hatred towards the colonialists – really

turn them into persons completely different from those "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste" and enable them to develop a totally different kind of identity, an identity based, among other aspects, on the solidarity with the oppressed and the rejection of racially based subjugation?

As we mentioned above, Mrs. Lall showed remarkable tolerance and sympathy to her fellow colonial subjects in Africa, seemingly regardless of their origin and culture. Vic himself praises that feature of hers by saying: "I have often wondered at this innate kindness in my mother – her spontaneous sympathy for an old man who was sick (*Mwangi the servant – AR*), and how she always treated Njoroge as a boy, like me, and not the grandson of a "boy", a servant. She was intuitive and not political, and though she had her prejudices, they were hardly consistent" (97).

However, the events described in the novel show that Vic's judgement seems to be largely dictated by his filial emotions, and that some prejudices of Mrs. Lall were much more consistent that her innate kindness, which turned out to be rather selective. Moreover, these prejudices of hers were, surprisingly enough, largely race- and class-based – and although we will try to shed more light on this while discussing the issue of patriarchy, even a few episodes from the text will illustrate this assumption rather eloquently. For one, Mrs. Lall is harshly disparaging to Bengalis – and, we assume, for no other reason but the age-old notion of them as 'inferior race' because of their dark skin, the notion that goes far back into history and was also cultivated in colonial India. When Mahesh, because of his well-known "communist" sympathies, receives another portion of mistreatment from Mr. Innes, a white settler and shop owner, Mrs. Lall is furious – also because one of those British whom she loathes so much chased her brother out of his shop, but mostly – because he called Mahesh a "Bengalee bastard": "But you are not dark-skinned, how *dare* he call you a Bengali!" (23). For her Bengalis, her fellow Indians and fellow colonial subjects, are something even more despicable than the British themselves – she and Mahesh even clash over her attitude to Subhas Chandra Bose, who led several detachments of Indian soldiers to side with the Japanese and fight against the British during the war. For Mahesh he is a hero, because he fought the hated Brits, but his sister cannot perceive him this way – for Chandra Bose was a Bengali. Thus, as we see, pre-colonially and especially colonially ethnic (and other) prejudices form quite a part of Mrs. Lall's mentality, many a thing can be sacrificed for it – and exactly this part will reveal itself in full when provoked.

Her brother Mahesh builds in his mind a different hierarchy – "colonial/anti-colonial, our men/not-our-men", and in the latter the upper part belongs to those who prefers the way of "revolutionary violence" – thus he rejects Gandhi's way of passive resistance (49), preferring the fight at any price (thus laying his sympathies with Chandra Bose). And this necessity of positioning himself not just as Indian, as Mrs. Lall does, but a "revolutionary Indian", makes him ready to endanger the future or maybe lives even of the people from the family of his beloved sister. When he steals a pistol from Mr.Lall, he definitely knows that

his brother-in-law may be arrested (fortunately he is only fined) and that innocent people will suffer (which really happens – home servant Juma, who has nothing to do with the theft, is nevertheless taken by the police, and is most likely killed in the concentration camp). But for Mahesh, these two are colonial yes-men, and he is ready to fight them even in his sister's family – yes, it may also ruin her life, but does he care of anything when 'struggle' is concerned?

However, anti-colonial sentiments and activities of Mahesh do not bring him a long-sought identification with other Kenyans – after independence he is also used and thrown away by new, no less corrupt and violent, structures of power. A cunning Kenyan politician (Okello Okello, under whose name, as it appears, the late Oginga Odinga is shown), whose employee Mahesh becomes, sends him to the Eastern bloc in search of political contacts – fully aware that, if the operations flops, Mahesh with his 'communist-Marxist-troublemaker' reputation will be an ideal scapegoat. It happens exactly this way – the Eastern bloc card proves not so beneficial, and Mahesh, as an 'agent of influence', is simply forbidden from returning to Kenya (he still retains an Indian passport). Eventually he settles in his native India, being, by irony of fate – and, again, of post-colonial developments – the only character in the novel who is granted the return to his homeland, being actually the one who least needed it, and returning there in fact as an exile.

In view of the above we dare assume, that Mrs. Lall and her brother are also, in fact, the bearers of an identity very close to that of Mr. Lall and his father – only in their case it can be deemed as 'reverse' type of colonial identity. No matter how different or even opposed may the sentiments be, the founding traits of these two types of identity are similar. With all four characters, we seem to notice the loss of initial Indian identity, largely destroyed by ideological, political, and emotional fractures, and shift to an identity of a colonial subject (be it that of "unwillingly Indian" or "proudly Indian"), identity founded on various well-soaked and/or newly generated prejudices – racial, social, gender – and largely stipulated by the same colonial structures instead of the destroyed one for the purpose of the planned functioning of the Indian ("Asian") subjects in the colonial and, later, post-colonial context.

Younger generation

Nalini Iyer in her seminal article on Vassanji's novel gives the following characteristic to the younger generation of the Lall family:

> For Vikram and his sister, Deepa, who represent the third generation in Kenya, the connections to India are mostly mythical and represented by the family's recollections and reworkings of the Ramayana epic as part of the children's play. While the children speak and understand Punjabi, celebrate Hindu holidays like Rakhi and Diwali, and eat gulab jamuns and pakodas, they also speak Swahili, become more engaged in local cultural and political life, and eat ugali and spinach with as much relish as they do chappatis. For the first generation, Indian identity was distinctly

> connected to birth and to Punjab as land and culture. For the second generation of Lalls, Punjab is mostly symbolic either because of distance as in the case of the father or by forcible loss and distance as in the case of the mother. For the third generation of Lalls, however, the tie to ancestral land and culture is still symbolic, but ethnic identity as Punjabi seems to matter very little. (Iyer 2011:208)

Yes, the younger ones are different – and not only from the previous generation, but also from each other. Below we will try to outline these differences, that put Vikram's sister Deepa (and her sweetheart Njoroge) and Vikram himself on different sides of the divide, the divide caused both by societal vicissitudes and their personal attitudes and aspirations.

Deepa and Njoroge

The main difference between the world view (and, in that, identity) of Deepa, Njoroge, on one side, and Vic – on the other, the difference that even a not-so-attentive reader can notice more or less easily lies, in our opinion, in the fact that the world views of Vic's sister and her sweetheart are largely based on idealism; in this case, we tend to interpret the term 'idealism' positively, as the vision of a new world, the world where all the currently existent prejudices about race, ethnicity, gender, culture, religion etc. will cease to be, and in which one will become a sole decision maker in the matters of his or her life. The vision of such a world is shared by Deepa and Njoroge, the latter passionately describing it in his letter: "The most wonderful thing about us is that we've learned, we've discovered a new terrain in human relationship, a new trait of the heart 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). This vision cements their relationship; however, both are aware of the endless difficulties that they are going to face, as Njoroge put it, "from our respective ends". Both are tempted by the idea of escape – even to London, suggests Deepa – but both are aware of their responsibility for their country and its future. "I have a role to play in that future, - Njoroge writes, - I feel it in my very bones – how can we run away to seek refuge in the arms of or former colonial masters?" (194). Deepa agrees, and on her part encourages her sweetheart: "Your father and mother, he began. They will surely object. - This is a new Africa, Njo […] We are the next generation" (177).

Deepa's evolution of identity seems to be accelerated by another idea – that of self-independence, self-made decisions; the first episode that caused the major concern of her parents was, in fact, her statement – in reply to her mother's umpteenth marriage arrangement, this time to a friends' son – that "I'll marry whom I want, mother, and I am not going to marry Dilip" (174). Apparently these ideas are not 'internally generated' – Nairobi, a cosmopolitan city, is open to the world, and one of the strongest persuaders that Deepa poses against racial and ethnic divisions is that "the rest of the world does not behave in this manner" (278).

Deepa's tolerance and respect to people from different races and cultures is genuine and natural – she easily made friends with an African woman, a street vendor outside her

school, to such an extent that she helped Deepa with a place to hide after her brief escape from parents' house (225); later Deepa adapts successfully to an altogether different environment in Canada. We can see that in these and many other aspects Deepa's identity drastically differs from the colonial one – she is far from dreaming to achieve "whiteness", she wants to remain an Indian, a Kenyan, but an Indian Kenyan free from the shatters of both patriarchal and colonial subjecthood, when, in both cases, she is not allowed to make choices and decisions about her life, but remains the subject of choices and decisions made by dominating others. Similarly, while retaining her Indianness, Deepa seeks to break from the fetters of nativism, that dictates to her, through her parents, that "there is nothing wrong with being an African or Asian or European; but they can't mix" (178). Deepa feels the contrary – in fact, what moves her towards rebellion against the dictate is what Sara Suleri calls a "radical inseparability between feminism and ethnicity" (Suleri 2008:251), the cry of a third world woman to break from all the forms of subjecthood, be they emerging indigenously or created by colonial and post-colonial structures. And Deepa does it in no less radical a way – as her brother stated with a mixture of sympathy and regret: "Times were changing, certainly, but Deepa in her typical impulsive way had leaped ahead of them" (175).

Writing about a novel by a prominent modern Ugandan writer, Ilieva and Odiemo-Munara notice that the characters of this novel "discover that one of the ways out […] is to transform themselves into a new identity that does not often recourse to the indigenous/outsider binary" (Ilieva 2011:191). This observation, in our view, is quite applicable to Deepa and Njoroge, and we suggest to call this new identity of theirs a hybrid identity. Of course we suggest it conditionally – since even the identities of Deepa's parents and grandparents, as well as that of Njoroge's granddad and other African characters in the novel, are also characterised with their own kind of hybridity. We would, however, refer to the hybridity featured in the characters of Deepa and Njoroge as constructive hybridity, featuring, on the one hand, their own cultural background that they do not deny, but are deeply devoted to, and on the other – tolerance to and respect of other cultures, religions, races (note the devotion with which they visit the temples of each other's religions - 197), fascination with Western idea of individuality and personal independence and genuine concern for the fate of their newly born country. Their hybrid identity is in fact what Ella Shohat calls "the creative transcedence" (Shohat 1993:110). Although largely based on idealism, this hybridity gives an idea of a new world, a world in which, as put by Bhabha, "The people are now the very principle of dialectical reorganisation, and they construct their culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information, technology, language, dress. The changed political and historical site of enunciation transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of the people of the future" (Bhabha 2008:157). For Deepa and Njoroge this future was not going to happen, but through them the author seems to send a message about the general possibility and, moreover, desirability to break the chains of nativism.

Deepa's and Njoroge's formation of personal identity acquires a further symbolic meaning, since it coincides with the change in their country, Kenya, from colonial to post-

colonial (or, rather, neo-colonial?) state. Like Kenya, Deepa wants to part with the ideology of domination (as Ania Loomba observes that "patriarchal oppression and colonial domination [are] conceptually and historically connected to one another" - Loomba 1998:xvii) and become independent of any dictates – and like her country, she fails in her efforts. Njoroge, on his part, seeks freedom from nativism of a tribal kind, which he rightly sees as a major threat for his country's future – and his efforts end even more tragically. However, as we stated above, we stand far from suggestion that the authorial idea here was to show the total vanity of such constructive attempts. According to Peter Hulme, such love plots postulate "the ideal of cultural harmony through romance" (Hulme 1986:141), and that, in our opinion, was one of the primary tasks of the writer – to show that people will always seek such harmony, no matter of how many hardships they could encounter and how many unsuccessful attempts will they face.

Colonial identity at work in post-colonial times

But if the ideal of cultural harmony is, seemingly, postulated in the novel through the romance between Deepa and Njoroge – why, then, did that romance so tragically fail?

In our view, the major factor that brought their love affair to its unfortunate end lay exactly in the identities of Deepa's parents – those identities that, as we discussed above, featured both patriarchal worldviews and the perspective of race and social class, inherited from Punjabi background and enhanced by the colonial predicament. These aspects, being woven together, form a conglomerate as destructive as paradigmatic it seems for the colonial and, to an even higher extent, for the post-colonial state.

As noted by Ania Loomba, "Colonialism intensified patriarchal relations in colonized lands, often because native men, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, became more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the woman as emblems as their culture and nationality" (Loomba 1998:168). If, in application to Mr. Lall's case, this statement may sound paradoxical, it is so only at the first glance – in real sense, instead of his strong pro-colonial sentiments, he is also "increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere", being reminded constantly of his status as a "second-class citizen"; at home he is not maybe tyrannical, but exactly patriarchal towards two women in his possession – thus re-establishing his social status and, moreover, holding to them as "emblems as their culture and nationality", in this way re-affirming his Indianness, with which he is unhappy and which, at the same time, seems to be the only reliable identity he has. Moreover, as further stated by Loomba: "Women on both sides of the colonial divide demarcate both the innermost sanctums of race, culture and nation, as well as the porous frontiers through which these are penetrated" (Loomba 1998:159). Exactly these "innermost sanctums of race, culture and nation" Mr. Lall sees in his women, and at the same time one of them – Deepa – becomes such a "porous frontier" through which new, previously unknown notions of individuality, self-choice and personal freedom start to penetrate. In order to prevent this penetration, Mr Lall again appeals to his otherwise resented Indian identity,

suddenly remembering that "we are not Europeans, we are […] proud Indians, we have our customs, and we marry with the permission and blessings of our parents!", and ends with categorical "You will do as you are told, girl!" (174).

Earlier we have stated, that Mrs. Lall's personality was characterised with hatred towards the British, as colonial despots, and also with a peculiarly selective attitude to other people subject to colonial power – she seemed to sympathise with them, but this sympathy was impeded with such factors as race or ethnicity (as an example, we quoted her distaste towards the Bengalis). Speaking about her mother's innate kindness and sympathy, Vic mainly refers to her hearty relations with their African servant Mwangi and especially – his grandson Njoroge, whom she often called a brother to her children, invited to the house on holiday dates (85), was deeply upset with separation when Njoroge was sent to a boarding school in Nakuru (135), and no less deeply rejoicing when Njoroge, a university student, turned up in their Nairobi house in 1965 (145). She sympathised with him as a child growing without mother's care, remembering similar experience of her own (46), and mostly, as it seems, she saw in Njoroge her fellow victim of the hated Brits (especially after his grandfather Mwangi, the house servant of the Lall family, was accused of supporting the Mau Mau guerrillas, arrested and killed by the colonial police).

However, as the events of the novel unfold, we can conclude that Mrs. Lall's treatment of Njoroge was also very selective. She was kind and sympathetic to Njoroge as long as he kept within the capacity that Mrs. Lall assigned for him – that of a victim of the hateful colonisers (who suffered more than she did) and a family friend (playmate of her children, so close that he became almost "a brother"). Things changed radically when Njoroge started wooing her daughter. At that, Mrs. Lall turned into a furious warrior, defending her worldview, her identity based on hierarchical differences in gender, age, race, class – on the foundations of patriarchy, compartmentalisation and nativism, which finds the concise expression in her phrase: "There is nothing wrong with being an African or Asian or European; but they can't mix. It does not work" (178). Even Vic admits that their mother was a driving force behind the split. As he confesses, "Papa would have relented, I thought, for his darling Deepa. He would have accepted Njoroge as his son-in-law; he has hardly been strong on tradition anyway. But it was Mother who still said, We have to think of the samaj, the community, don't we" (220). However doubtful, in view of our above argument, is their father's supposed "lenience" towards the case (especially bearing in mind his statement about "proud Indians" and obedience), many more episodes suggest the decisive role of the mother: she was spying on her daughter (195), hiding Njoroge's letters to her (179), arranged the talk with Njoroge in which she managed to persuade him to abandon his marriage plans with Deepa ("let my grandchildren grow up as Indians, as Hindus" – 214), and when the relationship between Deepa and Njoroge resumed (after their respective marriages), tries to call her daughter 'to order' ("There are ways of behaviour for a woman. […] where is our lajj, our dignity in that?" – 277; also worries about Njoroge's visits to Deepa's shop – 325). Only on the brink of her death of cancer she seemed to feel certain remorse of her deeds; as

put by Vic, "I came to believe that my mother was ultimately sorry for causing Deepa the unbearable pain […], the unhappiness from which, we all knew, my sister never recovered. […] The world had changed, and interracial marriage did not appear as offensive as before" (340).

Why, then, was Mrs. Lall so infuriated by the love relations between two people she seemed to love – Deepa and her long-time friend and "brother" Njoroge? As posed by Vic after discovering that Mother destroyed Njoroge's letters to Deepa: "Mother, you went too far. Why this streak of intolerance, this fear of the unknown […]? Is it simply envy of the older for the younger who are so free and ready to break the shackles?" (179).

In our opinion, the answer again lies in Mrs. Lall's identity, namely, in prejudices and stereotypes (or shall we call them "founding principles"?) inherited from her "proud Indianness" and enhanced by colonial, and to a high extent also postcolonial layout.

According to both traditional Indian and colonial mentality, Njoroge is a person from an inferior race. Dark skin in many Indian communities is traditionally associated with inferiority (remember the episode with Bengalis), and in colonial racial hierarchy the Africans – the "darkest" – occupied the lowest position, being regarded as inferior to "Asians" – Indians. It was confirmed even by legal practices in Kenya colony, such as denying the suffrage for Africans and granting them to Indians. Also, British colonialism (unlike, for example, Portuguese and Spanish) did not allow for easy social or sexual contact with local peoples – thus we conclude, that the Indian vision of "dark race" as inferior one was largely supported by colonial ideology and practices. On the one hand, as argued by Peter Simatei (2001:74), the Asians' feeling of racial superiority, together with the notion of exclusion, so ingrained in their caste-centred social organization, militate against social/sexual relations between them and the Africans. On the other, according to Loomba, in colonial world "race has thus functioned as one of the most powerful and yet the most fragile marks of human identity, hard to explain and identify and even harder to maintain" (Loomba 1998:121) – hence, that is how the Lall family is trying to maintain it by physically destroying Deepa's future with Njoroge, by separating one from the other.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that the 'illicit' relationship between Njoroge and Deepa was transgressing the established hierarchy of social classes. Tight association between race and social class/group in colonial societies has been numerously noted and outlined by scholars. As Loomba (1998:126) states, in colonial society "the ideology of racial superiority translated easily in class terms", and further: "Race relations are not determined by economic distinctions alone, rather economic disparities are maintained by the ideologies of race" (128). Africans, occupying the lowest position in the colonial racial hierarchy, are therefore also the lowest in the hierarchy social, and for Deepa's parents her association with an African (it would not matter that he is a part of the new elite!) is an obvious descent down the class ladder. As it was aptly put by the main character in another Vassanji's novel, for a member of an East African Indian community "a whiff of an African blood from the family would be like an Arctic blast, it would bring the mercury of social standing down to unacceptable levels" (Vassanji 1989:150) – and certainly Deepa's parents

do not want such a fate for their grandchildren; in view of this, Mrs. Lall's plea with Njoroge "let my grandchildren grow up as Indians, as Hindus" has more to do with class position than with religion or anything else. Mrs. Lall, as we noted above, empathises with Njoroge as an orphan, as a colonial subject (like her) being in the straits direr than herself, – but when he, a person of lower social/racial status, infringes her own rights as a person superior, by courting her daughter, such a misalliance can hardly be accepted by Mrs. Lall.

Speaking about the effects that colonially bred identities of the older generation of the Lall family produced on the younger one, we should remind ourselves about the paradoxical situation – in fact all the tragic events related to the young lovers take place in *post-colonial* period, after 1963. But this is only a seeming paradox, - suffice it to remember that "the race relations that are put into place during colonialism survive long after many of the economic structures underlying them have changed" (Loomba 1998:129). Moreover, most of the structures in already independent Kenya are still founded on racially and ethnic-based hierarchies – Vic Lall, with his sharp and observant critical mind, characterised the post-colonial situation as follows: "We lived in a compartmentalised society; every evening from the melting pot of city life each person went his long way home to his family, his church, his folk. To the Kikuyu, the Luo were crafty, rebellious eggheads of lake Victoria, the Maasai backward naked nomads […] There were the Dorobo, the Turkana, the Boran, the Somali, the Swahili, each also different from the other. And then there were the Wahindi – the wily Asians who were not really African" (267). In view of this, as put by Nalini Iyer, "even as 'native' African identity is fragmented by the push for ethnic solidarity and the political process in the country is fraught with negotiated alliances, corruption, and betrayal, Deepa and Njoroge's relationship threatens the very idea of difference that is the foundation of new political power and influence" (209-10). Hence, we can assert that love between Deepa and Njoroge was demolished by both the remnants of colonial and mis-developments of post-colonial era. Or, to put it differently – the new liberatory identity of the "people of the future", that they propagated, was killed by retained colonial and emergent post-colonial identities, the two being tightly interrelated and build on the ideas of institutionalised Otherness, subjecthood and, inevitably, violence – we should remember that the clash of these identities caused physical death of Njoroge and Deepa's spiritual decline. According to Bhabha, in the name of postulating cultural differences "something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of the pastness that is not necessary a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic" (Bhabha 2008:156). That is how the 'remnants' of ancient patriarchal and more recent colonial past happen to shape the present, being embodied in various forms of identity.

Vikram Lall

The character of Vikram, and his identity, appear to be the most complicated in the book. And one of the main distinctions between him and his peers – Deepa and Njoroge – seem to be the fact that, unlike these two, Vic, at the sensitive age of ten, has suffered from a trauma

unknown for the two others – he lost his first, childhood love, a white girl Annie Bruce, the daughter of a settler; she and her family were killed in the Mau Mau raid. Since that time, Vic's life seems to be permeated with the idea that whatever is dear to someone can be easily and irrevocably destroyed. This idea, brought by the painful childhood experience, also seems to stipulate one of the main traits of his character – lack of commitment. He avoids finalising his love relationships (suffice it to recall his love affairs with Yasmin, an Indo-African of Muslim background, and an Italian girl named Sofia), he is not particularly devoted to his occupations (a railway clerk and later – personal assistant to a minister), and in the long run, as he confesses, "I could not engage morally in my world" (318), he is not able to assess his own deeds or those of other people from the moral point of view. This seems to draw a major demarcating line between him and his sister with her lover – because for Njoroge taking "country's freedom as a personal boon" was the only way possible, bearing in mind his positive idealistic convictions, whereas for Deepa it simply was the way to personal freedom, freedom of choice. However, below we will try to outline a few other factors that, in our opinion, have shaped the complicated and different identity of the novel's main character.

Another trait that considerably differs Vikram from other characters in the novel is his early concern with his in-between state as an Indian in Africa. This awareness comes to him at a very early age: "When we played together (*with Bill Bruce the English child and Njoroge the African – AR*) I couldn't help feeling that both Bill and Njoroge were genuine, in their very different ways; only I, who stood in the middle, Vikram Lall, cherished son of an Indian grocer, sounded false to myself, rang hollow like a bad penny" (48). Being less than ten years old, he remembers, "we don't have heroes, I grumbled to Mother once"; after Mrs.Lall's attempt to remind him of the legendary heroes of Indian epics, Vic screamed: "Not those kind of heroes, Ma! Not gods" (46). At this tiny age Vic already wants heroes to identify with – and he envies the Bruce children who has their own heroes in comics and movies, and even Njoroge, whose hero is Kenyatta; for Vic, the heroes from Indian past are as distant as the past itself and the land from which they came and which he had never seen. He tries to find another hero in the figure of her grandfather, Inspector Verma ("he was my past and there was a mystery about him" – 52), but Verma's physical and emotional distance from Lalls family soon discarded him from the rank of Vic's heroes, which Vic himself describes in symbolic way: "In Nakuru my nanaji's photo had been prominent in our home; high on a wall, he looked imposing to my young eyes […]. In Nairobi he hung in the dimly lit corridor outside the bedrooms, faded and barely noticed" (210).

Still looking "for a place to call home", in other words – for identity, Vic in later age, as an adolescent, is trying to follow his father's path and identify himself as a Kenyan; crossing almost half of the country during the trip to Mombasa, Vic can hardly withhold his patriotic feelings: "this was my country – how could it not be?" (105-106). But already in his journey his hopes are seriously shattered – in a Nairobi tailor shop his father is humiliated in front of the whole family by a white settler (see above), and even in Mombasa itself "it was not easy to be a Nairobi boy – as I was derisively called – with my shoes and socks, […], my

manner of speech, my language" (112); apparently, even in this case his Indian origin was the reason.

The coming of independence arouses new hopes in Vic's soul – in this new country, where "the sun shone more brightly than before" (141), he has a chance to become a true Kenyan. However, even after independence Vic's doubts, suspicions and fears about his in-between state are not dissolved, but only strengthened further. Moreover, in new independent Kenya it happens even more frequently, than in colonial times. Vic manages to release three former Mau-Mau fighters from police detention, they are grateful to him, but Vic is unpleasantly struck by the fact that, talking to each other, the three refer to him as "muthungu" – a white (169). In the late 60s he already feels that he is "a young Asian graduate in an African country, with neither the prestige of whiteness of Europeanness behind me, nor the influence and numbers of a local tribe to back me, but carrying instead the stigma from a generalised recent memory of an exclusive race of brown "Shylocks" who had collaborated with the colonisers" (238). In the 1970s the feeling is further aggravated; Vic speaks of general tribalism in Kenya – "try as a coastal man to open a pub in Nakuru or as a Luo to look for a job in Nyeri"; but again, "we Asians were special; we were brown, we were few and frightened and caricatured, and we could be threatened with deportation as aliens even if we had been in the country since the time of Vasco da Gama and before some of the African people had even arrived in the land" (282). And his suspicions are not groundless – at one point a Cabinet minister Paul Njeri, who hired Vic as his personal assistant, openly tells him that "you people have your feet planted in both countries, and when one place gets too hot for you, you flee to the other", with which Vic is so upset that for the only (!) time retorts rather harshly: "it's rather that 'we people', as you call us, don't have a place anywhere, not even where we call home" (292). Even more significant is the small episode during one of Vikram's meetings with President Kenyatta – Mzee has previously thanked Vikram for his "service for the nation", he himself helped Vikram, but nevertheless Kenyatta also starts with one of his phrases with "You Indians" (287) – more than anything else it shows that "Asians" will never become rooted on the land of their birth.

In the end, Vic seems to have acknowledged that "the world was what it was, a far from perfect and a tangle manifold. It was not for me to change this world. Moral judgements, therefore, I shied away from, and this became the secret of my success. […]I therefore prefer my place in the middle, watch events run their course. This is easy, being an Asian, this is my natural place" (285). However, this 'defeatism' does not seem to bring him long-awaited internal (at least) comfort – even after immigration to Canada in 1990s he again is to regret about the lack of closeness and confidence between him and Njoroge's son Joseph – "I had believed I deserved to be acknowledges as a concerned adult, a friend of his father, and therefore a father. You should have known better, I chided myself […] You are still an Asian" (342).

Together with this sharp awareness of his in-between state, and depression caused by it, we would like to outline another trait of Vic's identity that, contrary to the previous one,

brings him closer to his sister. Vic also, throughout his life, suffers from patriarchal dependence – but in his case it takes different shapes and is manifested in different spheres, from personal life to politics. In other words, in many (if not in most of) the important moments in his life Vic has to ask for permission from those higher in the hierarchy, probably the first and the most painful occasion being his childhood love to Annie Bruce, encountered with passive non-permission of his mother and later – with active interference of those who will soon stand higher than Vic by virtue of "influence and numbers of a local tribe". Vic's love for his fellow student Yasmin in Dar es Salaam fell apart to a high extent through non-permission of her family – parents and brothers, and passive but obvious disapproval of his mother (202); his later one with an Italian girl Sophia – again through obvious disapproval from his family; into his marriage he was simply pushed, again, by the activity of his relatives. It applies to his jobs – at the Railways ("according to my family, my arrival at East African railways was pure destiny – kismet and karma combined, sheer good fortune and just reward" – 239) and even to his shady employment with Paul Nderi ("you can quit your job – but later, in the future", advises father – 257); family and relatives encourage him to go on with his ambiguous meetings with Kenyatta and his successor. Even his very being in Kenya is granted only through the permission of the political authorities that use his services – in other words, Vikram through his life literally 'lives by permission'. This deprives him not only of cultural, but even of human identity as a person – that is why, it seems, he is so envious of his late friend Njoroge, who "had a conscience that engaged", and his current girlfriend Seema, a Canadian Indian (a Bengali!), who "is right in her liberal attitudes; they may be simplistic but contain a germ of Gandhian truth" (318-19); we assume that Deepa also falls into the same category. These three people, dear to Vikram, through their strong standpoints have acquired what he always strove for – equally strong and self-created identity; whereas Vikram, with his lack of commitment and the desire "watch events run their course", was lacking both the former and the latter.

In view of the above, we dare assume that Vikram's decision to come back to Kenya looks like not so much as being caused by stabs of conscience (even he himself doubts that – 319), but as his last – and maybe desperate – attempt to acquire his identity, to try once more to reconcile with that unwelcoming land of his birth, since now both Vikram and his land have, so to speak, a record of mutual credit – Kenya has mistreated him as a person and a cultural entity, and Vikram has revenged by numerous economic mistreatments. By doing this, he also wants to reconcile with Njoroge's memory, with Deepa, and even more – with Seema; Vikram himself formulates all these briefly but expressively: "I look at Seema, this new lover who understands my race, my needs, my loneliness, but not my career. There can be no reconciling between her idealism and my sins; her home is here in a zone of temperance, and mine far away in the tropics. There is no choice but to return to Nairobi and meet my destiny" (349). Thus, by returning to his home "far away in the tropics" Vikram hopes to make these multiple reconciliation and to acquire in the end a definite identity. Whether he may succeed – we do not know exactly, because the author leaves the finale of the novel 'teasingly inconclusive'. However, as supposed by Nalini Iyer, the "long and dark

shadow over Kenya's future" (see the quotation below) is very likely to shade the future of Vikram Lall.

Conclusion

In the concluding section of this study we will try to answer a few questions, first – the one posed in the introductory part: whether the colonially imposed violence vanishes, transforms or remains as an integral part of new post-colonial identity? We hope that the foregoing argument shows that – yes, institutionalized violence of different types and of different origins (based on race, gender, ethnicity, class), inherited from the colonial times and colonial mentality, lies in the very basis of the "idea of difference that is the foundation of new political power and influence". It is that violence which destroys the original identities of two older generations of Lalls and thrusts them into the Procrustean bed of colonial identity; it is that violence that destroys the efforts of Deepa and Njoroge to acquire the new constructive (hybrid) identity; and it is that violence that shapes Vikram into an in-between person, whose life is possible only through the permission of the superiors.

Another question posed earlier – what generally are the types (or, at least, examples) of identity that emerge in different locations and periods of post-colonial reality? – should, in our opinion, be answered for every particular case under study. And in case of the characters of Vassanji's novel, chosen for this study, this question actually seems to generate another one – whether two generations of the Lall family did at all manage to acquire in the days of post-colony any identity of a traceable kind?

Characterising the identities of the colonial era, Ania Loomba states that "colonial identities – on both sides of the divide – are unstable, agonised, and in constant flux" (Loomba 1998:178). In our view, this assertion is quite applicable to the state in which the Indian characters of the novel found themselves even in post-colonial days. For the older generations of Lalls, deprived of their original identities through colonial practices, the attempts to adapt their colonial identities to post-colonial times actually ended in nothing but the lives of their children, and therefore their own, lying in ruins. For Deepa (and also Njoroge) attempts to create a new identity had equally tragic results – Njoroge dies, and Deepa through the rest of her life is bound to an elusive identity of an Indian immigrant in Canada. The latter tortures Vikram to such an extent, that he sees as the only way out "to return to Nairobi and meet my destiny" – however dreadful (most likely) could these destiny be.

Justus Makokha in his recent book *Reading M.G.Vassanji* wrote that "Asian Africans developed their interstitiality but […] they have lost their sense of a secure identity, there is now an identity of the in-between space…" (Makokha 2009:69). This, in our opinion, is the only type of identity that can be ascribed to the above-discussed characters of the book. And no matter how painstakingly do they try to escape from this identity of 'unrootedness' – the older generations through 'colonial' or 'anti-colonial' inclinations, the younger one through constructive hybridity – this identity of the in-between space still finds them, Vikram Lall the main character being the most obvious case. The "nervous conditions', which, according to

Fanon, are "the status of the native", are quite applicable to the above-discussed characters of the novel – only in their case these conditions seem to last.

In her above-quoted article Nalini Iyer asserts: "Although the novel underscores the need for a new vision for Kenya, the history of the nation from indenture and colonialism to Mau Mau and neo-colonialism […] suggests that history casts a very long and dark shadow over Kenya's future" (213). Above we discussed the attempts of Deepa and Njoroge to create new identity, which seemed to embody that new vision – but, as we found out, these attempts failed exactly because the 'old vision' proved to be stronger.

Thus – can it be concluded that the author denied any character (or characters) in the novel any possibility to develop this new vision, to come any closer to this new identity? In the same article, Iyer further assumes: "At the end of the novel, [Vikram] is living in a poor neighbourhood in Nairobi in the home of Ebrahim, an Indian Muslim married to a Luo woman. Vikram's widowed father is now living with an African woman and he awkwardly confesses the relationship to his son. These cross-racial relationships mark the possibility of a new Kenyan identity…." (Iyer 2011:213). This is even confirmed by Vikram himself, when he states: The world had changed, and interracial marriage did not appear as offensive as before" (340). Still, one should also bear in mind that even these seemingly free inter-racial marriages (or "free partnership" in case of Vikram's father) are in real sense done in full compliance with the patriarchal mindset – both Ebrahim (although claiming that his marriage to a Luo lady is a love marriage – 366) and Mr. Lall *choose* their life partners.

However, we suggest that the author at least gives the reader a hint about a real, physical possibility of this vision come true, expressed, as frequently happens, through secondary and 'not-very-much-noticeable' characters. In Chapter 21, when Vic is just starting his post-university career at East African Railways, he comes across an ageing married couple whom he meets at the remote and almost defunct railway station of Jamieson. This couple consists of Janis, "a large white woman in khaki shorts […] wisps of white and gold hair blew across her face" (242), and her African husband Mungai. This couple immensely fascinated Vic – in his own confession, "for some reason, I became particularly attached to Jamieson and its two inhabitants, and in the future I would find occasions to visit there again" (243). During one of his later visits he adds: "There was a quiet, gentle intimacy between them, and also a deep difference they did not pretend to bridge. For example, she would apply fork and knife to pick at a sizeable bone, even though her prematurely wrinkled skin, the frazzled, curly hair, and the gnarled hands hardly bespoke daintiness" (305). It seems, however, that this "daintiness" of Janis is the only "deep difference' between the spouses that Vic manages to observe – but what fascinates him are things of a much deeper nature, exactly this "quiet, gentle intimacy between them" and the fact that, as Mungai himself admitted later, supported by Janis, "we care for each other very much" (361). The fact that Janis's first husband and two children were murdered in 1952 by a gang of local burglars, and the two not only managed to overcome a natural fear and hatred for the Other, but turn it into harmony, impresses Vic so much, that at one point he even dreams that "perhaps it is here, I tell myself,

that I should start my life anew, a life as simple and pure as a mountain stream from the green misty Aberdares. An empty, desperate dream, I know, for I am very much tied to my world" (360).

It seems that they are able to lead their life of harmony because they are remote from the oppressive regulations of the society – but at the same time we learn that they are honoured by the local community (241). That couple has seemingly erased (or re-created positively) all the other related differences – in race, in gender, in class – the differences that ruined the lives of Njoroge and Deepa, of Vic himself, of their parents and many generations of people raised in colonial and post-colonial times. In this old couple, the author seems to create a somewhat Utopian ideal, but in our opinion, here he simply makes an attempt to show that such a harmony is really possible – speaking metaphorically, to strike a spark of hope under that "very long and dark shadow" that history casts over Kenya's future.

We would like to finish this study with a quotation from a well known work of a well known critic, one of the founders of the post-colonial theory Edward W. Said, who wrote: "Moving beyond nativism does not mean abandoning nationality, but it does mean thinking of local identity as not exhaustive, and therefore not being anxious to confine oneself to one's own sphere, with it own ceremonies of belonging, its built-in chauvinism, and its limiting sense of security." (277). And further: "No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was all about" (408). This, in fact, seems to outline the long-sought vision for Kenya (and, on a wider scale, today's multi-national world) – and it is, in our view, symptomatic that this vision is formulated in the most expressive and emotionally captivating way in works of literature, such as the novels of Moyez Vassanji.

Works cited

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London-New York: Verso

Bhabha, Homi K. 1985. "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, may 1817", Critical Inquiry 12 (1), Autumn: pp. 144-165

----------. 2008. "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences" – *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Ascroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds). 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 155-157

Hulme, Peter. 1986. Colonial Encounters, Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-797, London: Methuen, 1986

Ilieva, Emilia, and Lennox Odiemo-Munara. 2011."Negotiating Dislocated Identities in the Space of Post-Colonial Chaos: Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Waiting*". *Negotiating Afropolitanism: Essays on Borders and Spaces in Contemporary African Literature and Folklore*. Wawrzinek, Jennifer and J.K.S.Makokha (eds.). Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, pp. 183-204

Iyer, Nalini. 2011."No Place To Call Home: Citizenship and Belonging in M.G.Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*". *Negotiating Afropolitanism: Essays on Borders and Spaces in Contemporary African Literature and Folklore*. Wawrzinek, Jennifer and J.K.S.Makokha (eds.). Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, pp. 183-204

Loomba, Ania. 1998. Colonialsm / Postcolonialism. London and New York: Routledge

Makokha, Justus Siboe. 2009. *Reading M.G.Vassanji: A Contextual Approach to Asian African Fiction.* Saarbrucken: Verlag Dr. Müller

Mbembe, Achille. 1992. "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony". *Africa* 62.1: pp. 3-36

Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Knopf

Simatei, Peter T. 2001. *The Novel and the Politics of Nation Building in East Africa*. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies

Shohat, Ella. 1993. "Notes on the 'Post-colonial'". *Social Text* 31/32: pp. 99-113

Suleri, Sara. 2008. "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition". *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* Ascroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds). 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2008, pp.250-256

Vassanji, Moyez G. 1989. *The Gunny Sack.* London: Heinemann

---------- 2003. *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall.* New York: Vintage Books, 2003