

“Ontological and Epistemological” Discourse of Cultural Identity: Making an Orientalist in V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*

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Abstract—The impact of colonial educational system or colonial cultural discourse on the cultural identity of the colonized is a prominent theme of postcolonial studies. According to Said Orientalism as a discourse recognizes an "ontological and epistemological" distinction between the East and the West. Consequently, for Said anyone who thinks, works and acts based on the existence of such a distinction is an orientalist. This paper argues that V. S. Naipaul's *Half a life* illustrates the workings of this imaginary distinction that European cultural discourse finds between the Orient and the Occident on the formation of the cultural identity of the colonized people as they become subject to colonial cultural discourse. In *Half a Life* we observe Willie, the anti-hero of the novel, gradually losing his faith in the ingredients of his own cultural identity replacing them with the material served in the menu of colonial educational system to adopt himself with the requirements of being a colonial individual living on scholarship in the metropolitan London.

Index Terms—identity, culture, colonial, ontological, epistemological, Naipaul, cultural discourse, orient, education

I. INTRODUCTION

Colonial cultural discourse initiates itself into colonies mainly through their civil institutions like schools and colleges. In fact, such educational spaces are among the most powerful cultural institutions that have the capacity to inculcate elements of colonial cultural discourse into and onto the minds of the colonized people, especially children who are the main subjects of such places at primary level. They initiate a change into the cultural identity of the students or colonized subjects by cutting their ties with their traditional historical, social, religious and, in short cultural roots. One of the starting points for the orientalist approach to the Orient, according to Said, is to lay a philosophical distinction between the East and the West, ontologically and epistemologically (Said, 2006, pp. 2-3). As a result, anyone or any institutional or disciplinary entity thinking, working and acting based on the acknowledgement of this contradistinction between the Orient and its corollary, the Occident is orientalist. *Half a Life* 2001 by V. S. Naipaul is the story of Willie Somerset Chandran's life from early childhood as he enters into a missionary school till his youth and as he goes on a scholarship to follow his studies in England. Here we will examine the impact of colonial cultural discourse to initiate a wholehearted change into the traditional identity of his as an Indian child born to a family of Brahmin priest ancestry making him an Orientalist who thinks of his people and his past in terms defined and determined by the western cultural discourse he has been fed in the course of his falling into the hand of colonial educational machinery from his early childhood till late in his life.

Since its publication in 2001, *Half a Life* has attracted much attention from those who are interested in postcolonial theory and criticism. Almost all studies find strong thematic similarities in Naipaul's earlier works with that of *Half a Life*. For instance, according to Edward Baugh, the central theme of *Half a Life* is what has already been worked out in *A House for Mr. Biswas* that is "restlessness and rootlessness" (2007, p. 5); or, in his discussion of Naipaul's career in "Late Naipaul" Bruce King finds *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* as the works of his final phase. He observes these two works as the "recapitulation" of Naipaul's earlier themes with the added flavor of mastery in techniques and keener sense of vision that comes with "age and experience". Also, according to King *Half a Life* depicts a personality in sharp contrast with Naipaul himself. Since Willie misses all opportunities for success (2006, p. 223). Haldar perceives a constant concern with India and Indian people in Naipaulean works including *Half a Life*. Jain finds a Naipaulean pattern in the novel that has been continued in his next fictional work *Magic Seeds*. For him these two novels are the fictional illustrations of India as a country of failed revolutionary attempts (Jain, 208, p. 10). Sing sees the story as the illustration of permanent exile. For him the text depicts Naipaul's still existent feelings of being an outsider despite his long stay in England. He finds *Half a Life* the story of Willie's "self-development and self-knowledge" (2006, p. 20). But as we will see in this study *Half a Life* represents rather the self-loss or self-destruction of Willie Somerset Chandran, as he stalks within the colonial cultural spaces from his early childhood. Diaspora or diasporic consciousness

is another major area of interest in *Half a Life* (See Dooley 2003, Mishra 2002 and Galvan Alvarez 2012). Naipaul's treatment of women in his fiction has been a problem for G. Dooley in "Alien and Adrift" and "What Trouble I Have with Jane Austen!". For Dooley treatment of women is cold and insincere since none of the female characters do not fulfill their hopes.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Thinking in terms of Foucauldian discursive notions, Said considers the whole mass of western knowledge about the orient as a discourse, especially those amassed from the beginnings of European colonial expedition or "during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said, 2006, p. 3). To illustrate and document the distance of this discourse with the existing realities of the geographical entity called orient, he refers to the writings of a French journalist during the time of civil war in 1975-1976 Beirut who speaks nostalgically and "regretfully" about the loss of what he calls "once seemed to belong to ... the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval". Said commenting on the writings of this journalist states that the reporter is "right about the place, of course, especially so far as a European" is "concerned" (emphasis is mine). In other words, Said believes that the newspaperman's statements about the orient is *true* or "right" since he is checking what he witnesses with his knowledge base about the orient not coming from his direct encounter and experience of the orient in an earlier time in his life but formed by the textual writing of the likes of "Chateaubriand and Nerval" he had read and studied about in the course of his formal education at schools and universities. Then, Said states that "Orientals themselves" living the place do not feel the same sense of loss and "suffering" that the French newspaperman talks about (Said, 2006, p. 1). To put it other way round, the journalist finds an incongruity or inconsistency between the textual representations of the orient in Nervals and Chateaubriands with what he witnesses. But thinking and writing based on the presumption that the accuracy, precision and authority of his prior knowledge is default he misreads and misinterprets the present condition of affairs and as a result misrepresents the present conditions to his European audience. Thus, the European representations of the east is completely under the shadow of orientalist discourse or to use Saidean wordings "not with a correspondence" with the "real" Orient (Said, 2006, pp. 2-3).

One of the starting points for the orientalist approach to the Orient, according to Said, is to lay a philosophical distinction between East and West, ontologically and epistemologically. As a result, anyone or any institutional or disciplinary entity thinking, working and acting based on the acknowledgement of this contradistinction between the Orient and its corollary, the Occident is orientalist. Therefore, substantial mass of theoretical, literary, social, representations and civil renditions of nations, traditions, beliefs, and fates centering on the Orient and the thinkers, men of letters, sociologists, politicians, anthropologists, philologists, to name but a few, who have rendered them whether creatively, imaginatively, methodologically and/or academically are Orientalists. The scope of this Orientalism has the potential to accommodate and gather the whole sway of writers and thinkers from the beginnings of European history to the present, like Herodotus, Sophocles, Hegel and Dickens, to mention but a few, under one roof (Said, 2006, pp. 2-3).

All the above mentioned names are European writers and/or thinkers working in the context of their own cultural tradition and not many but almost all of them have not seen or been in the East, or, even if they have been and seen the East in person (especially those who come in the later part of the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth century) like Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, (to name just two of the well-known examples) are the agents of their own soil. Thus, if they think, work or act to further the cause of their own cultural tradition and proliferate what they have absorbed from that soil is not (if will not be) surprising; because their identity has been cultured, rooted and irrigated in their native soil. The signs of confusion or puzzlement may be read on the face of an impartial observer who spies a person from the Orient who walks in the same direction that his Occidental rivals have walked, that is to think, work and act as the agent of European culture, a cultural tradition which is, at least, foreign (if not alien) to the cultural bed he/she was born to.

Willie Somerset Chandran, the son to Mr. Chandran the ascetic who is the grandson of Great Chandran the Brahmin Priest arrives at England to follow his studies at a college in London and falls in the ways of and walks in the ways of Rudyard Kipling and his likes. In other words, he becomes an agent of European cultural tradition furthering their aims and ends and helping them to further the mass of knowledge about the Orient, that which Said calls Orientalist discourse:

...deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient. (Said, 2006, p. 5)

According to Said, the matter at stake here is not the consistency of the discourse about the Orient with the geographical entity called the Orient but the unity and cohesion of the "ideas" and propositions within the discourse, regardless of the congruity or incongruity, convergence or divergence of such notions and beliefs with the existing reality outside in some part of the world. This is the fault that Said finds with the mass of knowledge gathered and created by European scholars, thinkers, writers and politicians about the orient in his *Orientalism* 1978. When there is a lack of "correspondence" between the knowledge and the existing reality, there is no doubt that some questions as to the veracity of such knowledge and the honesty of the man or men who have assembled them may come into the fore.

Finding the answer to the question as to the veracity of the western cultural discourse about the orient, Said calls this discourse "Orientalism" and states that only if one does not examine:

Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the *erroneously systematic discipline* (emphasis mine) by which European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (Said, 2006, p. 3)

Therefore, for Said, "Orientalism" is a falsely organized and methodological discipline which empowers and capacitates its creators to not only manage and control but also to fabricate and "produce" a false representation of the Orient across many fields and territories of knowledge. Elaborating on the extent of the predominance of this discourse on the western conceptions and understandings of the world, Said states that:

so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. (Said, 2006, p. 3)

Exactly, this is the trap that Willie Chandran of Naipaul's *Half a Life* 2001 falls into during his stay as a student in London. He starts to think of his past, his family history and even the history of his country in terms and conditions imposed upon his frame of thought by the Orientalist milieu of London as he comes across with very many emblems of this discourse in various occasions: in classroom, in newspapers, in library books, in his meeting with a London journalist, in his dealings with his instructors and in his interactions with other students.

III. DISCUSSION

The leitmotif of a young unmarried man from England's colonies arriving at London as a stranger who knows nothing of the ways of the world and the life in metropolitan city is what V. S. Naipaul develops in the second chapter of *Half a Life*. Here the reader explores London together with Willie as he roams about in the city spaces: metro stations, clubs, buses, taxis, restaurants, streets, college rooms and radio studios. First impressions are usually of great importance and leave indelible marks on the minds of people. Willie's first impression of London was not consistent with what he had imagined of the place as a dazzling glamorous city of fantastic beauty. Naipaul's narrator says "He felt let down". He found out that he "knew little more of London than the name" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 35). Buckingham Palace dejected him. Maharaja's palace at home was more stupendous, more like a kingly place. The sharp contrast between what he had imagined of and what he was observing at made him think of English kings and queens as "imposters, and the county a little bit of a sham" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 35). He felt deceived and was ashamed of his naivety and ignorance. In mission school classes they had read and discussed about Speakers Corner and he had written quite knowingly of Speakers Corner in his exam papers. He had expected to see big shouting crowds of people quite like his revolutionary uncle who protested for the cause of backwards. But, instead he saw a few indolent people gathering around few talkers while buses, cars, pedestrians were passing by paying no attention to the speech of the talkers. Even he did not like their ideas, some of which were completely aberrant.

This incongruity between reality and its (con) textual representations evident in the physical brute reality of London provokes some true feelings in Willie's heart. That English royal personalities are "imposters, and the county a little bit of a sham" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 35). English kings and queens maybe or may not be fake to their people (that is another question) but to the eyes of a colonial subject who had been introduced to their presence and majesty through the medium of missionary schools and teachers, through the medium of textbooks they are contrived to be the kings or the queen of British colonies. Because, in the presence of kings and queens he has felt the presence of more magisterial and royal presence. Because the relations between the two is not an accepted, agreed upon non hegemonic one but an imposed and hegemonic one of power, domination and repression, in all aspects that one can think of economically, politically, socially, psychologically, and culturally, for instance. Willie compares Buckingham Palace and Maharaja's Palace in his town, for instance. Though, his hometown is a small one located in an unknown part of India Maharaja's Palace inspires more awe and respect than its English counterpart in the eyes of Willie, the place where is the lodging of the people who assume themselves as the rulers of the world. In other words, Maharaja's palace can claim for its own aesthetic standards of beauty and splendor with regard to the Buckingham Palace. But what had built these palaces. They are the signs of and the embodiments of the tradition that has built them, the tradition which has defined and given their respective architectural identity; and the cultural edifice that has nursed and grown these aesthetic and architectural edifices. Therefore, there must be something different at stake which has given English kings and queens and their culture authority and superiority over the superior culture of the east which can claim its own authority over, (if not all) at least its own people when the two are witnessed by the same person.

A.

To launch a counter attack strategy requires the knowledge of the interior lines of the enemy. Willie lacks this knowledge. Being in London, in the interior lines of enemy; he has conceived the enemy strategy of deception or false representation and the fault with his own, "gullibility" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 35). Besides, he finds out the source of his simplicity and unworldliness in knowing nothing about the world, "Willie knew nothing about" the world. He finds out the fault with his own approach to the world. At home he had little interest about the matters that did not affect "him or his family or his town. He had no idea of the history of the" world; he had heard some great names like Colonel Nasser or Mahatma Gandhi or Krishna Menon or Churchill; he just knew that they are great but he had no knowledge of what they did, what they are great for. At home he used to look at newspapers but "he had learned to *shut out* the main stories," about the endless wars somewhere in the world, about election campaigns that appeared for weeks in the

papers repetitively till ended, “very often quite *lamely*” he had given little or no time and energy to them; like poor books or movies he paid no attention to them. “He knew the big names; very occasionally he looked at the main headline; but that was all” he did at home (Naipaul, 2001, p. 35). So, at the present he watched at things without being able to see, he heard things without being able to listen to like a mindless body; he had no perception of the world. This was the source of his simplicity, his unworldliness.

Hence, he starts to read but he does not understand; he does not know what to read; he reads about the Suez Canal, he reads about the Egyptian conflict but they are of no use. Newspaper stories were written based on the assumption that the reader knows about the places, the names or history of them. He was cut off from the world. Like the one living in the sea of ignorance without an understanding of the “time”. Now, he realized that he had lived without a knowledge of “time”. And thought with himself that ““This *blankness* (emphasis is mine) is one of the things I have got from my mother's side” (Naipaul, 2001, p. 36). Disappointedly, he turns to a book about the history of the world and begins to build a conception of “time”, of history and the space and the temporality he lives in and the past to fill in the “blankness” of the slate of his mind and to get rid of “the habit of non-seeing” and to get an idea of the significance of the events. At college he has to “re-learn everything” anew. He learns the rules of the conduct; how to salute, how to enter a room, how to talk, how to dress, how to eat. He learns “quaint rules of his college”, the rules that were copied from Oxford and Cambridge, the rules that the staff were proud of; the rules that when he asked about from the teachers they knew nothing of the philosophy behind, just a cursory knowledge of it they had. For instance, when he questions for the history of college gowns, the teachers just say that it comes from Roman toga; when he searches toga in college library he finds that nobody is certain about the form or the style of toga and its drawings were quite unlike the one’s they wear at college. In short he learns to suspend his disbelief and to pretend like the kings and queens of England who were pretending “imposters”.

A new dimension is added to his identity; Willie learns how to pretend and be an imposter. In other words, he succumbs to the over empowering, overwhelming, over determined rules of the time and the place he is lodging; or in other words, he surrenders to the politics of his present spatial and temporal conditions and compromises his identity traits accordingly. He acquires the culture of the time and the place to the very details of culinary, raiment, salutary, etc. He fashions his self anew, according to the fashion of the day. He becomes a pretender, an impostor, a copy of the cultural traits propagated in the college. The teachers seeing the sea of change in him complimenting and commenting on the shift in his personality state that “You seem to be settling in” (Naipaul, 2001, p. 39).

Willie is “settling in” because he is yielding to the cultural discourse imposed by the college, “a semi-charitable Victorian foundation” (Naipaul, 2001, p. 39), an institution like missionary school at home in the service of enlightening people and minds, but lacking the religious aspect of the school at home. The same degree of control over the curriculum and subject matter is held and exercised here with no interference from the institution of family exerting its power over or inscribing its identarian features over the cultural identity of innocent pupils and, by so doing guarding them in varying degrees against the designs of missionary school passively and unconsciously through providing the cultural ambience and environment. Here, students live in dormitory, a place dominated by the ghost of metropolitan life style. Hence, if we want to compare its working to have a better understanding of its mechanisms of enforcing and inscribing its cultural demands on the minds of the students, we can state that college is a cultural institution established based on the English politics of personal conduct that requires the person “to ask for something without being peremptory” (Naipaul, 2001, p. 38); here the college is asking for Willie’s cultural identity without being peremptory. And as Naipaul’s narrative of Willie’s life story in the work at hand, *Half a Life*, vouchsafes, the Victorian semi-charitable institution is triumphant at its project of inculcating the sense of superiority and ascendancy of western cultural discourse over Willie’s domestic one. As Said has brilliantly sketched the boundaries of the discourse of Orientalism, the college acts as the colonizers axis in introducing its “supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (Said, 2006, p. 2), getting Willie out of his implicating and debilitating local cultural identity, and making him an Englishman at heart and a native Indian at the surface, the amalgamation which Frantz Fanon ingeniously describes and interprets about African people in the metaphorical title of his book on colonial psychology as *Black Skin, White Masks* (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, 1952) can be applied to him as brown skin, white masks. Or to use Naipaul’s own interpretation of Willie’s situation implied in the title of the Novel, he is half Indian half British; his body, the first half is Indian and his cultural identity, his psyche, his subjectivity, the second half is British.

One who accepts the existence of a philosophical distinction between East and West, both ontologically and epistemologically, Said argues, is an Orientalist. By submitting to the Faustian pact of the Victorian college he is studying at, Willie accedes to the presence of such a distinction between his domestic eastern identity and the college’s western discourse of identity. Henceforth, Willie’s mind consciously and/or unconsciously starts to think, work and act based on the recognition of this distinction, what Naipaul’s omniscient narrator does not fail to relate to us:

Yet something strange was happening. Gradually, learning the quaint rules of his college, with the churchy Victorian buildings pretending to be older than they were, Willie began to see in a new way the rules he had left behind at home. He began to see—and it was upsetting, at first—that the old rules were themselves a kind of make-believe, self-imposed. And one day, towards the end of his second term, he saw with great clarity that the old rules no longer bound him. (Naipaul, 2001, p. 39)

The scene depicts a climatic point in the formation of Willie's cultural identity. This shift in vision, in the way "he began to see" is a new filter added to his consciousness. Not only anything he sees but also everything he has seen is sifted through this filter. He begins to conceive and reconceive his perceptions of the present and the past, his interpretations of spatialities and temporalities past or present, his conceptions of his immediate environment that is "the churchy Victorian buildings" which wear the façade of dating back to an earlier historical time than they are or his understandings of "the old rules", the traditions, customs far off at home. He begins to build his subjectivity anew, to reshape his psyche, to reform and re-mold his experiences of the world, to redefine his relations to the world past and present both; He works to repaint his mental picture of the world in a different color; he acts to redraw and remap the cartography of his mind by the new visionary tool fabricated and made available to him by college education. In short, Willie subjugates his cultural identity to the recipe of western cultural discourse of identity served at the college.

This shift in vision, also, takes its toll on Willie's emotional world, the fact that searching eyes of Naipaul's omniscient narrator remarks on his relation of Willie's mental status at the time of change. It is disconcerting, "upsetting", to depart with the endearing old beliefs that form the structure, the framework that held them together in his mind; that they are imaginary, pretended "make-believe"; that they are "self-imposed" fictitious fabrications. But, as any other feeling that is eroded by the passage of time, the sensation does not plague his mind for long; it does only harass his mind "at first" till the end of the term two. Later the pleasures of freedom from the burden of living under the weight of "rules" that now have become "old rule" shoves the tide of unsettling sensations away and he becomes fully engrossed in present spatially and temporally "no longer bound[ed]" identity of his.

But the pleasures of untying oneself from the anchor of "old rules", traditions and beliefs does not take long; for one can surf the waves for a time and when the favoring waves behind and bellowing winds fall, the surfer has to come ashore; otherwise he will sink deep in the chaotic sea of non-identity. Willie unfettered from the old ties delivers his cultural identity to be checked by the new vision that has dwelled on his body and spirit: that rules are pretended "make-believe[s]" and "self-imposed" fabrications. Thus, he begins to retie his identity to his past and present by pretention and imposition of fictitious fabrications of his own based on the spatial and temporal politics of identity that he finds more in line with the spatial and temporal prerequisites of living in the metropolitan center of British colonial world. And, as it is as clear as a day, the dominant discourse of cultural identity in London will be in accordance with colonial Eurocentric discourse which believes in the ontological and epistemological disparity between the two poles of the binary oppositions of east and west, what Said believes it to be the foundations of European Eurocentric Orientalism, calling anyone who believes in it as Orientalist.

B.

Willie's new identity shell will use the ingredients of his past cultural identity together with the recipe provide to him by his London life and education to cook a food that can be served in the spatial and temporal constrictions of the English metropolis. In other words, the identarian characteristics of his new identity will be more identical, commensurate and convergent with the narratives of identity narrated by colonial discourse of the period current in the metropolitan spaces that he walks in and out of such as college, dormitory, street, radio studios or publishing houses, for instance. We believe that his new shell will be more commensurate with European side of the binary opposition between east and west because it is the western side of the binary logic which has made the subject to reconsider his identity, to recognize the essential distinction between the two, and to impose itself and the recipe provided by it to be employed as the basis for structuring, ordering and forming and/or restructuring, reordering, reforming his identity. Below we will see the rage of the terrains that this shake of identity will cover on Willie's identity domain.

Willie succumbed to the discourse of identity enforced by his college at London gets to a new perception of what "the rules" of the culture are; that they are fictitious and invented rules by the subject himself. Therefore, he came to the understanding that he has the liberty "to present himself as he wished"; he thought of it in terms of writing "his own revolution" in which the prospect of "possibilities" were inebriating; he had the power to refabricate his identity and "his past and his ancestry" from the very beginning; the "revolution" came slowly. He took hints from here and there; he read newspaper stories about trade unions and began to wear the garb of trade union leader, "a pioneer of workers' rights" for his maternal uncle who was a radical revolutionary for the cause of the caste of backwards (Naipaul, 2001, p. 39). Also, his college was a supporter of missionaries at South Africa, he read in the magazines about it and adopted some facts from those magazines to remold his mother's mission school background:

It occurred to him at another time that his mother, with her mission-school education, was probably half a Christian. He began to speak of her as a full Christian... he spoke of his mother as belonging to an ancient Christian community of the subcontinent, a community almost as old as Christianity itself. He kept his father as a Brahmin. He made his father's father a "courtier." So, playing with words, he began to re-make himself. It excited him, and began to give him a feeling of power. (Naipaul, 2001, p. 39)

Power has something in it that inebriates its possessor. To exercise one's power over the world is a privilege reserved only for the kings and queens. Feeling to possess the absolute degree of power over the world of his identity, Willie fabricates fables about his past, his parentage and his ancestry; especially, his mother from the caste of backwards who have no religion becomes almost a Christian belonging to a line of "ancient Christian community of the subcontinent" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 39). If we pay attention to the vocabulary of his newly written identity, we can easily perceive that

part which has been borrowed from the socio-religious discourse of missionary magazines, “ancient Christian community”, “half-Christian”, “as old as Christianity”, for instance. The word “subcontinent”, an expression from geography books takes the extend of Willie’s fictitious stories far beyond the family history to that of the whole India, a point that one of the B.B.C producers he meets in a party fails not to grasp while Willie was relating the new version of his family history to him: “Over here we don’t know much about your kind of Christian community. So old, so early. So isolated from the rest of India, from what you say. It would be fascinating to hear about it” (Naipaul, 2001, p. 47). Hence, he asks Willie to write a five-minute script of six hundred and fifty words for a radio program about colonies. He starts to write the family history he was developing for some time, dropping parts and bits of it here and there, occasionally. So, he starts to script a complete history of his fake cultural background for a radio program broadcasted all over the world:

The beginnings of the faith in the subcontinent rendered as family stories (he would have to check things up in the encyclopedia); the feeling of separateness from the rest of India; no true knowledge of the other religions of India; ... people of Christian conscience, champions of workers’ rights (a story or two about the rebrand relation who wore a red scarf when he addressed public meetings); the writer’s education at a mission school, and his discovery there of the tension between the old Christian community and the new Christians.... (Naipaul, 2001, p. 48)

What is interesting here is the degree of consistency between his false family stories with the main lines of the colonial narratives of identity proscribed by and worked for by the colonial institutions. In other words, as we have discussed above, according to Said what is essential for the European Orientalist discourse is not the divergence between Orientalist ideas and the Orient, “but with the *internal consistency* of Orientalism” as a discourse “despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a “real” Orient” (Said, 2006, p. 5). What is essential for Willie in his distorted narratives of identity is the consistency of these narratives with the Orientalist discourse running at his immediate place of lodging that is London. The story of the “Christian conscience” of his mother and her people hijacked from missionary magazines, the story of union leader uncle made out of newspaper stories on current trade union debates in London, Willie’s missionary school background and his recognition and realization of the conflict between his mother’s Christian conscience with that of mission fathers at school are all copied narratives with the flavor of local color and his personal creativity add to them. They are totally convergent with the main lines present within colonial discourse for they are taken from contemporary sources.

The work and the effect of Orientalist institutions are heavily felt in what Willie contrives about his family history. The “vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines” of his stories are heavily indebted to teachings and the knowledge imparted by these institutions (Said, 2006, p. 2). The religious, political and commercial doctrines, and imagery expressed in the terminology of the stories such as “Conscience”, “faith”, “new Christians”, “old Christian community”, “champions”, “public meetings” and “workers’ rights” for instance, are provided by mission magazines and daily papers. Willie goes to college library to investigate and examine the “scholarship” available on the subject. It is very interesting that in order to write about his own family history he refers to a foreign encyclopedia written by writers from the other side of not the country but the world.

It is not surprising that B.B.C producer is interested in Willie’s story since every line, even every word of his stories are consistent with the internal ideas of Orientalist discourse of cultural identity promoted by media as another institutional axis of colonial cultural discourse. Therefore, the radio does not look for the veracity of the knowledge provide by Willie that is the story of the life of Indian people of Christian conscience with the reality that existed outside far off in India, the reality that Willie himself is completely conscious and aware of its fictitious nature. In other words, even if the radio people wish to check the information provided by Willie, the result will not change since they will refer to those sources of scholarship that he has referred to in his writing of the script for them. Therefore, since the information is commensurate with the existing knowledge or scholarship, there is not only no point for Willie to worry about falseness of his story being revealed but also he can continue his work in the same line, as he does in his later scripts for the radio. Another point that makes the radio producer interested in Willie’s stories, again is related to the source of his stories, that is Orientalist discourse or the discourse and ideas provided by “the supporting institutions” of Orientalism (Said, 2006, p. 2). The terminology, ideas, images all sound familiar to the English ear. Therefore, its veracity is the default assumption. And the last point is that the stories, as mentioned above, are founded on the basis of the existence of the binary oppositions between “the Orient and the Occident” and the acknowledgement of this ontological and epistemological contradistinction between the Orient and its corollary, the Occident (Said, 2006, p. 2).

IV. CONCLUSION

Therefore, according to Said’s second definition of Orientalist as one who thinks, works and acts based on the recognition of the contradistinction between the Orient and Occident is Orientalist, Willie is Orientalist. As we have seen above, Willie re-writes his cultural identity based on this binary logic provided by the colonial discourse of cultural identity in the spatial and temporal conditions or politics enforced by the institutions of colonial discourse. The weightiest or influential institution on the reformation of Willie’s identity is formal colonial education within the spaces administered by the colonizers based on the colonial Orientalist cultural discourse, spaces such as missionary school at home and the Victorian college in London.

Here, we learned about the subjectification of colonized people to the colonial cultural discourse in the context of Naipaul's *Half a Life*. We discovered that western cultural discourse is essentially built upon the existence of epistemological distinction along with the ontological one between the East and the West. What made this disastrous for the colonized people and their identity was that this imaginary distinction formed the basis on which western educational system and its proprietors thought, worked and acted. As a result, those colonized subjects like Willie who enter into such a system gradually lose their ties with their traditional cultural identity and began to think, work and act based on what was imposed on them by western educational institutions. What are the ramifications of such a mentality on the life conditions of personalities like Willie is a topic yet to be explored.

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