

**"THE TREATMENT OF ESCAPE AND CONSERVATISM IN
NAIPAUL'S FICTIONAL WORKS"**

**BY
KYUNGUTI PATRICK NTHEI**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION**

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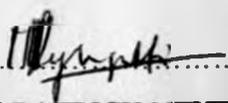


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**Thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for M.A Degree
of the University of Nairobi**

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another University.

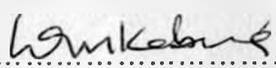
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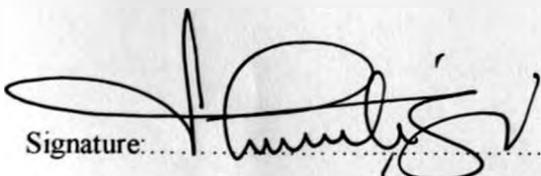
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DEDICATION

To my father who was the greatest source of my inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the portrayal of escape and conservatism in Naipaul's selected works. It further seeks to examine the author's employment of satire as a crystallization of his regenerative quests and lastly, to evaluate the gender responsiveness of his texts.

Guided by the sociological theory of literature and stylistic criticism, the study examines the author's biographical data and his creative output. A confluence is noted between his literary constructs and his personal experiences. He has fictionalised real situations, real people and real incidents from his own life. The study goes on to elucidate the author's treatment of escape and conservatism and their relation to human progress. While escape, it is revealed, is portrayed from varying perspectives as a condition for and at the same time an impediment to progress, conservatism is treated marginally as an antithesis to the survival and continuity of a society. An examination of the author's presentation of women characters alongside men reveals that the former are, to a large extent, portrayed as more escapist and conservative than their male counterparts. The analysis of satire in the texts shows that Naipaul has realized this device through unique linguistic strategies which have enabled him to effectively integrate his pedagogical motives with his inimical sense of humour.

This study concludes by arguing that the author's selected works are socially regenerative. He has an affirmative social vision which finds expression in his adoption of satire, a mechanism of exposure. However, as a male focaliser, Naipaul has subscribed to a phallogentric ideology in his delineation of gender roles and images.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is a prolific writer whose creative output has carved a niche for him among the great writers of the world writing in English. He has written on varying themes and has used different societies as backclothes to his creativity: the West Indian, the English and the African. Despite his creative vitality some critics have branded him a pessimistic writer (Nazareth 76; Pyne-Timothy 262; and Rao Susheela 28). They have argued that Naipaul has a cynical view of third world societies. Rao Susheela, for instance, has denounced the author's creative genius by arguing that the emerging portrait of India in the author's updated travelogue is a distortion of reality and therefore unwarranted (29). Pyne-Timothy asserts that the image of third world in Naipaul's fiction is an explication of the author's personal paradigm, an intensely private way of viewing these societies (248). The question as to whether or not Naipaul is a visionary writer has perplexed a number of his critics. His treatment of escape and conservatism and their relation to human progress reveals his concern with human development. This, in all due respects, is a field for serious critical discourse that has eluded the notice of many critics.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For many years, literary writers have preoccupied themselves with the advancement of the human race in all spheres of life. To achieve this goal, writers condemn the ills prevalent in their societies or create utopian states and compel readers to aspire to them. Loosely categorized, the former belongs to the realistic mode of writing while the latter to the romantic school. Writers who write within the realistic mode portray glaring truths about society as their works mirror life as it is lived in all its dimensions. Such works of art not only make a statement on social life but also show the pattern of social relationships, including gender, that emerge from the society. Realistic art is basically affective and demands an act of participation on the part of the reader. It is bound to shock as the reader is presented with hard social facts. It is in this context that Naipaul's regenerative quests and aesthetic claims can become intelligible. He writes with a fidelity to factual truth and exhibits immense antipathy towards the romantic school (Theroux 35).

The author's portrayal of life with its gross imperfections has made most critics prejudiced against his fiction. Little attention therefore has been paid to the treatment of escape and conservatism in the early works and their relation to progress. Preceding critics have not analysed the author's fiction from a gender perspective and looked at the way the different sexes are presented as they relate to social issues. They have also not examined how the author harmonizes his social criticism with the use of satire and how this linguistic choice has been in consonance with his regenerative motives.

Due to this, the study's inquiry is threefold: firstly, to examine Naipaul's treatment of escape and conservatism and their relation to human progress. Secondly, to investigate how the different sexes are portrayed and thirdly, how the writer uses satire and the way he reconciles his reformatory goals with this stylistic choice.

1. 2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives: Firstly, it aims at mitigating the tendency to see Naipaul as a pessimistic writer who laughs at his society for its own sake by looking at his treatment of escape and conservatism and how they affect human progress.

Secondly, it tries to find out how the author portrays women characters alongside men and their respective responses to escape and conservatism. In a word, this study seeks to find out whether there is any bias in character presentation and consequently expose patriarchy or lack of it in this society.

Thirdly, the study aims at investigating how Naipaul manipulates the resource of language to realise satire and the way he utilizes it to ridicule the escapist and conservative characters in his fiction.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Human beings have similar basic characteristics the world over. Literary tradition shows

that members of the human race have been faced with similar problems, have nurtured similar fears and have exhibited similar aspirations in their struggle to survive. The particularities of experience that are evident are as a result of variations in environment, culture and gender. It is due to a shared human nature that literary expression has universal relevance. In addition, literary works can thus shape the world views of readers from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds. Naipaul's works from the Caribbean become intelligible to critics from other areas because they express a general human condition. His imaginative engagement with the social issues of escape and conservatism, which are prevalent in the Kenyan society, gives his works a universal reference. It is against this background that Naipaul's fiction is worth serious study by a Kenyan scholar. Its fundamental correspondence to the Kenyan situation is thought-provoking and therefore regenerative.

This study has been prompted by the need to address certain areas within the author's fiction that have not been adequately explored by preceding critics. A focus has not been made on the author's treatment of escape in all its dimensions, and conservatism and how these are related to human progress.

Naipaul's fiction has not also been looked at from a gender perspective. An investigation has not been conducted on the way the sexes respond to escape and conservatism. This study is justified in that it focuses on areas of the author's fiction that have not been given the attention they deserve. Unlike its predecessors, the study will highlight the gender relations that emerge from the author's fictional world. A literary inquiry that adopts a gender perspective is desirable in the wake of the current literary scenario. Literature provides a mirror of the society. Its prime concern is to make society a better place to live in for all members irrespective of their sex, culture and creed. Literary expression also exposes the obstacles that stand in the way of human beings realizing their ultimate goals of existence. It is an acknowledged fact today that women have been marginalised in almost all spheres of life. This knowledge has been acquired through empirical studies conducted within the societies that human beings inhabit. An example of such a study is

Charge William's *Women and Equality*. Literature as a mirror of society has also been a source of the same sociological data in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Kiiru's "The Woman's role in Alex La Guma's Fiction", Kabira's "Images of women in Gikuyu Oral Narratives", Matian'gi's "Images of the African woman in Buchi Emecheta's Fictional works" and Chesaina's "Women in African Drama".

It is in this light that Naipaul's fiction is analyzed from a gender perspective. This study contributes to the necessary exposition of patriarchy or lack of it in the society the author operates from. It aptly recognizes that being conscious of a problem in society is the prerequisite for social change.

The study's aim in this respect is not to condemn the author but to demonstrate that writers are products of the constructed cultures of their times. This study, therefore, seeks to find out whether the author has produced stereotypical images of women which are bound to perpetrate gender inequality by conditioning readers' attitudes.

Critics have also seen Naipaul as a cynical and a pessimistic writer. Their basic argument is that writers should not only pose questions but also offer solutions. They have further held that Naipaul writes negatively about third world societies for a western readership (Rao Susheela 28). This study feels justified to effect a modification of this stance by showing that studied from a different perspective, Naipaul's early fiction yields a nobler message for the societies in question. Such scholars (Nazareth; Pyne-Timothy; Rao Susheela) have remained silent on the regenerating aspects of the author's fiction.

The centrality of satire as a tool of correction in Naipaul's fiction warrants a serious study. Preceding critics have avoided a detailed analysis of the author's appropriation of this device. Most have only mentioned it in passing among other aspects of style the author adopts (Theroux; Ramchand; King; and Nazareth.) This is a gap in knowledge that the present study feels justified to fill. It is not enough to hold that a text satirizes specific human vices by making the reader laugh down certain characters. Critics should go a step

further to demonstrate the architectural designs of the cutting humour that pervades most satirical works. Unlike preceding critics, the researcher also feels persuaded that, Naipaul's repeated use of satire crystallizes his view that the West Indian problem is not only due to the colonial experience but also to individual limitations. His early works are alive with humour that is not an end in itself. It is aesthetically functional in the larger frameworks of his narratives.

The study also analyses escape and conservatism because they are foregrounded in his early fiction. Further, Naipaul has been subject of attack because of his "escape" into the metropolitan London and continuing to write from there. Critics have focused on this form of escape at the expense of other facets of escape that are evident in his fiction and non-fiction. Existing critical opinion has also eschewed an analysis of conservatism in the author's fiction. The present study thus fills in these gaps. Apart from being persistent features of Naipaul's early fiction, these issues seemingly have drawn the author's attention in his travels across continents, in his early childhood in Port of Spain and in rural Trinidad while engulfed within his grandmother's extended family as will be demonstrated. In a word, these are central issues in the author's early fiction which deserve critical attention.

As it is aesthetically impossible to separate form and content, the study is justified to adopt a stylistic approach. It recognizes that the act of interpretation is a purely linguistic experience. Any criticism that treats the structural details of a text peripherally is self-defeating and therefore lacks its own logic.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

This study proceeds from the assumption that writers being the most sensitive sections of humanity are not just passive participants and chroniclers of social life. They boldly point out the ills of the society and act as guides or teachers (Achebe, *Hopes* 27-31). Naipaul's ceaseless direction of sharp satire to individual characters is therefore not an end in itself but an attempt to castigate negative escape and conservatism and thus regenerate the society.

The second hypothesis for this study is that there is a difference in the portrayal of the sexes as they respond to escape and conservatism in Naipaul's fiction. It is also assumed in this study that form and content are inseparable and therefore profess a certain complementarity between Naipaul's use of satire as his most central aspect of style and his reformatory goal.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* defines "escape" as getting "away especially from confinement or restraint or to stay out of the way of; avoid". *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* sees the term as getting away from, eluding or even succeeding in avoiding anything painful or unwelcome. Escape is used in this study to connote the withdrawal by members of society from the painful or harsh reality around them and submerging themselves into illusory worlds of success, unproductive demonstration of wit and superstition. Lacking a positive participation in solving societal problems and leaving the destiny of one's life to fate or to others is a form of escape explored in this study. The term is further used to refer to the act of evading one's responsibilities and duties in pursuant of one's self interests. Any government or those in authority who do not strive towards the realization of the highest and the best good of human existence are said to have "escaped" from their responsibilities and contributed to the detriment of the fabric of society. The word is also used to refer to the physical act of moving from incapacitating surroundings to more enabling environments. While the first three facets of escape are viewed negatively by the author as impediments to progress, the third is perceived positively as a prerequisite to desirable social change.

The term "conservatism" is defined by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* as the "dislike of change, especially sudden change" or the "belief that the established order of society should be kept as it is for as long as possible and that any change should be gradual." The word has been variously defined by scholars. Taban Lo Liyong sees it as "keeping within the sphere of the known" (x) while Glenn D. Wilson defines it as the "resistance to change and

the tendency to prefer safe traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behaviours”(4). This study uses conservatism to refer to the clinging to established patterns of behaviours and institutions for the sake of maintaining the status quo and refusing to conform to the dictates of change.

Satire has also been defined by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* as “literature, theatre, etc. intended to show the foolishness or evil of some person, organization or practice in an amusing manner”. Literary history testifies to the fact that a fixed and an all-embracing definition of the term has continued to elude scholars and critics. As Worcester lucidly puts it, the word has “shown a progressive change from a specific narrow meaning to an abstract, broad one...” arising “in modern English literature as a rigid poetic form...”(3-4). The term is used here to refer to a writer's critical way of looking at the world with its gross imperfections as well as a literary technique employed by creative artists to condemn the evils and follies of humankind in an amusing manner.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A combination of the sociological theory of literature and the stylistic approach are used as the basic theoretical frameworks within which this study is conducted. The central tenet of the sociological theory of literature is that literature is a product and a force in society. This approach aptly recognizes a correlation between literature and society which is fundamentally dialectical in spirit. Literature is produced by writers who are members of a society with definite social standings. The writers then react against the state, economy and some other articulate social phenomena as these in essence are the materials for their creativity. Literary works as a result are bound to show the pattern of social relationships that inhere within the social realities they reflect. As Wellek and Warren lucidly put it, literary works can be viewed as repositories of factual information though indirectly and can tell readers something about the society of their time (105).

John Rockwell is one of the proponents of this approach. He sees literature not only as a reflection of society but also an integral part of it. He holds that literature is a “product of

society rather than the crystallized result of private fantasy”(3). It can thus give readers a reliable image of a number of hard social facts.

Lowenthal, in support of the sociological approach, holds that literature, as a product of society, can be a source of socio-historical data. According to him, writers present the exact and often perceptive reality of a time as they are interested not with objects, events or institutions but with attitudes and feelings which their characters have about them (literature and the Image)

Smith also shares the same view, though his discussion is centred on the novel and society, when he argues that great works “are mimetic to some degree or allow elements of their social context to slip unquestioned, through the writer's imagination into the text”(7)

Similarly Bull, who coins his own framework and calls it the “socio-cultural approaches to the Novel” endorses the assertion that literature is a product of society by claiming that “novels do not simply 'appear' or drop out of the sky but are written by men and women with definable social origins and characteristics and are read by men and women who can be defined in similar terms”(1).

This study concurs with the above views as it suggests that Naipaul's works under study are a reflection of his society. The escapism and conservatism discernible in his characters is a representation of the nature of the society he writes about. As a writer, concerned with human development, he is reacting to social and historical circumstances which he believes are capable of arresting societal progress.

It may also be argued that his works reflect the gender relations that inhere in the society. The study's position is that Naipaul is a product of his society and that his treatment of women characters is a function of social conditioning and a reflection of patriarchal values.

The approach also views literature as a force playing a major role in influencing society. Literary works not only reflect the structure of society but also compel the reader towards certain norms and values. John Rockwell captures this more clearly when he asserts that “fiction is not a representation of social reality, but also a necessary functional part of social control, and is paradoxically an important element in social change”(4).

Literature gives pattern for behaviour as the fictional characters are used as prototypes for social roles and social attitudes. Ngugi wa Thiong'o endorses this functionality of Literature by holding that:

The product of a writer's pen reflects and also attempts to persuade us to take certain attitudes to that reality. The persuasion... can be an indirect appeal through influencing the imagination, feelings and actions of the recipient in a certain way towards certain goals and set of values. (Writers 7)

Literary works are also capable of shaping readers' attitudes and world views, a position echoed by Lowenthal when he holds that in the process of reading:

The reader is looking for prescriptions for inner manipulation, an abridged and understandable psychoanalytic cure, as it were, which permits him by way of identification and imitation to grope his way out of his bewilderment. (Literature, Popular Culture 157)

Elsewhere, Lowenthal argues that “because great literature presents the whole man in depth, the artist tends to justify or defy society rather than to be its passive chronicler”(Literature and image). Naipaul can be seen to defy his society by disparaging the conservative and escapist characters who inhabit his fictional world. He does not reflect the society as it is for its own sake. On the contrary, he denounces unacceptable behaviour which impedes social progress. As the most escapist and conservative characters in his fiction are women, it can be argued that Naipaul questions their introverted values which he sees as their major hurdle to progress. Indeed, he is defiant of their limited sensibilities though on the other hand he squanders an opportunity to create role models that can be emulated by readers. Irele also recognizes this central function of literature when he holds that “the writer's expression must not only capture the flow of experience but also propose a broader vision of life that transcends the immediate situation

to which his work refers”(2).

Achebe, in most of his essays, exhibits these sentiments of the sociological approach to literature. As a writer, he assumes naturally a well defined role: that of a teacher. He wishes to teach his readers (Africans) that “their past-with all its imperfections-was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans ... delivered them.” His literary constructs are geared towards helping his “society to gain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement” (Hopes 30).

It is again in this light that the study intends to look at Naipaul's fiction. The author does not reflect the society as it was for the sake of it. He uses his works to show how detrimental negative escape and conservatism is to human progress. By using his sharp satire, Naipaul seeks to draw the reader's attention to these individual human limitations which impede societal progress. He also purports to demonstrate how positive escape to enabling environments is a necessary condition for progress for individuals operating from disabling societies.

Further, Naipaul's fiction is studied in this light to suggest the dangers of the images of women that inhere in his texts. Their negative impact as mechanisms of social conditioning cannot be overemphasized. This study sees Naipaul's texts as socialization agents and thereby sets out to expose the dangers of negative portrayals of women characters in literary production.

Because of the above theoretical position, focus is then made in this study on the social context of Naipaul's early fiction. The study's view is that Naipaul had of necessity to respond to current social realities of his time. The nature of his texts was therefore much influenced by characteristic features of his own person, his experiences and the gender and class-power relationships that were prevalent in his society.

It is evident that no study of literature can be comprehensive without adopting a

sociological approach. It would be illogical to study literature as an abstraction from the matrix of social and historical circumstances as it does not exist in a vacuum. Being a product of society it would be a self-defeating exercise to study it as a separate entity. Literary theorists who advocate for the “death of the author” like T. S. Eliot in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *Selected Essays*, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida deny literature its social dimension which fundamentally makes it a discipline worth serious study. They rob it of its social relevance and therefore negate its role in human development. Jefferson, in her essay “Literariness, Dominance and Violence in Formalist Aesthetics”, considers an inquiry into the social context of literature as inescapable. She argues that even the basic principles of formalistic aesthetics have a social origin. She suggests that there is a correlation between Roman Jakobson's (one of the proponents of the formalist school) theoretical position and his personal experiences, which had a back cloth of violence(123-139).

The stylistic approach to the study of literature is also adopted. This approach lays emphasis on the language of literature. It is based on the premise that writers use language to give shape to their thoughts. Leech, in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, holds that language gives literature its form and therefore stresses the primacy of its analysis in literary criticism. He sees a dialectical relationship between literature and language when he argues that “literature cannot be examined in any depth apart from the language, any more than the language can be studied apart from the literature” (1).

The inseparability of language of a literary text from its content is also noted by Indangasi in his *Stylistics: Lecture Notes*. His argument is that the constituents of form in literary works are the structures, the plots and even the modes of characterization of various literary texts and that it contains themes and ideas of the writer (5).

This approach considers literature, like other language acts, a communicative utterance between the author and the reader (Ngara 14). What is advocated for by this approach is not just a haphazard analysis of the language of literature but a systematized one using the

insights of linguistics. Stylistics, which is a branch of linguistics, arms critics with the basic tools and terminologies with which to describe succinctly the language of literary texts. Literary language must be described in an orderly manner. Perhaps Widdowson puts it more pointedly by arguing that the critic should decipher a message encoded in an unfamiliar way and express this in familiar terms and thereby provide the private message with a private relevance (5).

Similarly, Leech believes that a literary critic cannot authoritatively talk about the language of literature without a recourse to linguistic methods. Fowler in *Linguistic Criticism* argues that a critic cannot discuss the language of literature without being armed with linguistic tools. These entail the basic terminologies thus enabling the critic to escape the limitations of personal, arbitrary and selected statements.

This study is conducted in cognizance of the fact that the process of reading is an inquiry into the language of a text. In order to arrive at the inner logic of Naipaul's texts, particular attention must be paid to the use of language: precisely the organizational strategies he employs. The texts' levels of stylistic realization have a direct bearing on the way readers receive and appreciate them.

The stylistic approach is also suitable for this inquiry as it looks at the way Naipaul has used satire as a communicative device. His literary construction and representation is achieved through language. The study suggests that satire, as the linguistic choice which the author centrally appropriates, is a product of social conditioning. The author's satirical attitude to the characters and situations has a lot to do with his social standing in relation to the reality of the texts he produces. Naipaul's treatment of escape and conservatism and his representation of gender images and roles cannot be sufficiently understood without an explication of the linguistic strategies he employs. Literary language has a social quality while social - historical facts are expressed in literature using language. This study recognizes the merger of the social dimension of literature with stylistic criticism attempted by Bakhtin and Medvedev in their essay, "The object, Tasks, and methods of

literary history,” as absolutely valid. Their argument is that literature reflects the ideology of an age and at the same time this ideology affects its form or its internal structures (Newton 33). The fusion of the sociological approach with stylistic criticism has also been endorsed by Wellek and Warren. They see literature as a “social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation”(94). Fowler has also injected a social dimension into linguistic criticism. According to him, literary texts do not have any formal autonomy from the society that produces them (qtd. in Newton 129)

Similarly, a number of contemporary scholars have recognised the need to integrate stylistic criticism with the sociological theory of literature. This attests to the relevance of a rounded approach in the present post-modern world where literary theoretical discourse has tended to be dominated by post-modern theories. Okeng'o Matian'gi' in his study, “Images of the African Woman in Buchi Emecheta's Fictional Works”, adopts this perspective. He studies Emecheta's works as the “reality of her society” and argues that the image of the African Woman she presents is the “real figure of the African Woman”(8). He again sees the primacy of “taking cognisance of the artistic aspects” of literary phenomenon. Mugubi in, “Rebeka Njau's Social Vision”, holds that “it is erroneous for any critic to analyse literature without placing it within its social background”(20). His analysis is stylistic in orientation as, in addition to the sociological approach, he adopts “Tragic realism” which belongs to the realm of stylistic criticism. Kahenya's study, which is based on the Tintin comics and their impact on the value system of children, is stylistic in spirit though it is conducted within the sociological framework.

In addition to the moral approaches, Kiiru in, “The Woman's role in Alex La Guma's Fiction”, uses formal critical tools he holds are derived “from the nature of literature”(16). On the same footing, Kabira in, “Images of Women in Gikuyu Oral narratives”, seeks to understand traditional society's conception of women and their roles through literature and the way negative images impact negatively on the well being of women. She therefore makes use of the sociological approach. However, her method of textual analysis is stylistic in nature as she adopts the narratological approach which focusses on “the nature and form of the author's utterances”. Similarly, Mahungu in, “A Literary Investigation into the Agikuyu Songs of

Independence”, uses Ngara's brand of stylistic criticism which has a sociological dimension. She not only looks at linguistic features of Agikuyu Songs but also at their power to arouse nationalistic feelings and political awareness in the people.

It is not within the scope of this study to list all the scholars who have integrated the two mentioned approaches. This is only a tip in the iceberg. The above studies, which have been conducted and presented in the University of Nairobi, have been selected due to their relevance to the theoretical premise advanced here and also their proximity to the researcher. These examples are used not only to affirm the appropriateness of a sociological approach to the study of literature in the post-modern world, but also to concretise the study's view that such a framework must be infused with a stylistic dimension to make it more perceptive in literary study.

An amalgam of the sociological approach with stylistic criticism is inevitable for this study as Naipaul's linguistic experience is looked at on the basis of its communicative purpose. His literary discourse cannot be cocooned from an integral relationship with the society that he writes about. A combination of the already discussed approaches, for lack of a better term, is referred to in this study as the socio-linguistic approach to the study of literature.

Since this study approaches Naipaul's fiction as a gendered literary phenomenon, the ABC of Gender Analysis is read principally as an eye opener to help the researcher identify the gender gaps and the disparities that inhabit the texts. This framework was developed by the Forum for African Women Educationalists with a view to raising the consciousness of key players in education. Its basic assumption is that every text, whether literary or otherwise, is gendered as it tells a story about people. It must of necessity reflect societal relationships between men and women, boys and girls. This framework is vital for this study as it provides the analytical tools needed to elucidate the gender inter-relationships, roles and images that inhere within Naipaul's fiction. The present study recognises that the gendered picture of the world represented in the author's literary works is capable of making a lasting impression on readers and thereby manipulating them to see the gender

roles and images created therein as the norm in society.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

For the last few decades, Naipaul has enjoyed a variety of critical opinions most of which do not focus on his constructive social criticism. A number of critics have found fault with the degree of earnestness with which he writes, and have labelled him a cynical writer. Others, though covertly, have acknowledged that his art makes statements on social life and have made sweeping remarks to this effect.

Peter Nazareth belongs to the first category of critics who view Naipaul as a pessimistic writer. In his *Literature and Society in Modern Africa: Essays on Literature*, Nazareth sees Naipaul's politics as cynical. He argues that the writer poses questions without giving solutions. He looks at Naipaul from a marxist ideological standpoint. To him any writer who "does not preach a party line" and is not committed to a political ideology cannot merit a favourable attention. He dismisses the author on the basis of not having an "ideological substance." Ironically, the same critic goes on to argue that *Mimic Men* is a novel that deals with "corruption of the body politic and corruption of the individual soul" He acknowledges the novel's relevance to readers in Post-colonial countries "undergoing rapid political change" but does not state on what terms. Peter Nazareth has not considered the author's treatment of escape and conservatism nor does he study the author's works from a gender perspective.

Elleke Boehmer in *Colonial and Post-colonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* also sees Naipaul as a pessimistic writer. She regards Naipaul as an assimilated writer who portrays a duality of post-colonial identity. Her argument is that the author paints alarming pictures of the West Indian society unnecessarily. To her, Naipaul is a lover of Western values and therefore has approached literature as a "means of connection with a British cultural heritage experienced but never fully understood as a colonial school boy "(77). She however notes the author's resistance to European cultural domination by "bending and mis-shaping" of the English language, a view that appears contradictory to her earlier

assertion. She recognizes rightly Naipaul's repudiation of the cultural invasion and dominance of the Europeans over the Caribbeans in *A House for Mr Biswas* when she holds:

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, the ideal school of journalism in London requires Mr Biswas to write about English lessons he has never experienced. Unsurprisingly he is 'stamped'. The authority of the imported idiom robs the society of relevance. (78)

She further argues that *Mimic Men* deals with the disenchantment of independence. She does not mention the author's attitude to the English society in the text. Naipaul's treatment of escape and conservatism and his use of satire is not the subject of her discussion. She has not also looked at the representation of gender images and roles within the texts.

Hellen Pyne-Timothy in her essay *V.S. Naipaul and Politics: His View of Third World Societies in Africa and the Caribbean* has a low opinion of the author. His works, she holds, are anachronistic. The political stances advanced in *A Bend in the River*, *In a Free State* and *The Mimic Men*, she asserts, are in fact those of the author and not those of the characters. She sees this as a negative attitude to third world societies which is unwarrantable. Her study does not focus on escape and conservatism. It does not also adopt a gender approach, neither has it analyzed the linguistic strategies the author adopts to satirize his characters.

Naipaul's realistic portrayal of the West Indian society has been criticized. Gerald Moore in *The Chosen Tongue: English Writing in the Tropical World* argues that Naipaul does not identify himself with the West Indian society and as a result depicts painful truths about it. It appears that this study does not appreciate the pedagogical potentials of realistic art which is meant to reform by way of shocking readers into self-assessment. The study does not focus on escape and conservatism, the author's use of satire, and his presentation of women alongside men and their relation to social issues.

Susheela N. Rao dismisses Naipaul's artistic works on the basis of his non-fiction. In her

study, *Darkness Visible: The Emerging Portrait of India in Naipaul's Updated Travelogue*, she holds that the author falsifies reality because of his negative attitude to India. To her, Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is a collection of untruths about the Indian society. She further asserts that the author writes for a Western readership. She has not looked at Naipaul's fiction.

Another group of critics have noted the regenerative capacity of Naipaul's fiction. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, for instance, rightly acknowledges the author's portrayal of disorder that has preyed on the Trinidadian society in *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. To him, *Mimic Men* deals with the emptiness of the individual after countless years of slavery and dispossession. He recognizes Naipaul's search for order and identity in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Of particular value to the present study is the fact that Ngugi has appreciated Naipaul's desire to restore the lost social order. He exhibits deep insights by holding that: "the search for order and identity is the theme of Naipaul's major work, *A House for Mr Biswas*" (Homecoming 93). Ngugi does not explicate the author's treatment of escape and conservatism, and their relation to human progress. He does not also look at the author's use of satire and the way women are portrayed. It appears that Ngugi's frame of reference is colonialism and its underlying effects on the colonial. The present study is a departure from this view and investigates individual roles in retarding societal progress.

Kenneth Ramchand attempts to put the West Indian novel in a social and cultural context in *The West Indian Novel and its Background*. He sees *Miguel Street* as a story of a "fictional community modelled from the East Indian presence in Trinidad." He further holds that *A House for Mr Biswas* established Naipaul as "the author of a major twentieth-century novel on the increasingly rare scale of...*Anna Karenina*..."(7). He notes the culture of escapism pervading the world of *Mr Stone* but does not analyze this social issue in the texts where it is most salient and pronounced. In an essay in his text he labels "The world of *A House for Mr. Biswas*" he rightly talks of the author's concern with exposing the fossilized Indian way of life and the rootlessness of an individual in the West Indian

society. To him, *A House for Mr Biswas* is a comment on life as it was lived in the Trinidad of Naipaul's time. He rightly notes the author's apathy towards conservatism and like the other critics discussed above, does not look at Naipaul's use of satire and the gender dimension of his fiction.

William Walsh has noted the author's repudiation, in *Miguel Street*, of the degrading facts of colonialism that leaves the individual without opportunities. In his study, *A Manifold Voice: Studies in Commonwealth Literature*, he does not seem to appreciate the author's attitude to the characters' escapism in this text. In *A House for Mr Biswas*, Walsh feels that Mr Biswas is a slave, a victim of the colonial experience. Though he holds rightly that characters in *Miguel Street* have reconciled themselves to their tragic destiny, he does not appreciate the functional nature of the small narrator who exhibits a sensibility different from the other characters. The study relegates Naipaul's style to the periphery and does not adopt a gender perspective.

Further, Bruce King in *The English Literature-Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World* is of the view that Naipaul's works reflect his background in the Trinidadian community and the deteriorating Hindu culture. He does not however expose the author's attitude to those who cling to meaningless ritual in a society undergoing rapid change. He sees *The Mimic Men* as an analysis of post-colonial society with the upper echelon betraying the local masses. The author's use of satire is not investigated. The study also neither looks at the gender dimension of the author's fiction nor analyzes the author's treatment of escape and its relation to progress.

Laban Erapu's brief analysis has touched on escape though not on its multi-faceted nature. In his introductory comment to the 1979 reprint of *Miguel Street* by Heinemann, he also sees this text as a reflection of the universal experience of alienation. According to him, Naipaul's thesis is that "the only way to overcome the society's limitation is to leave it altogether." He has not however looked at other facets of escape in the text, neither has he investigated the nature of female experience that inhere within Naipaul's fiction.

Paul Theroux is another critic who has investigated escape in the author's fiction in *V.S. Naipaul: An introduction to his Work*. He attempts a thematic study of the author's works. Theroux holds that central to Naipaul's fiction are thematic preoccupations like creation, fantasy, marriage and householders, rootlessness and travel, a sense of the past and casualties of freedom. Theroux has rightly recognized the author's negative attitude to fantasy, a form of escape. He does not however investigate this issue in its multi-dimensionality and its relation to human progress. Though apparently he is aware of the inseparability of form from content, he does not provide a detailed analysis of the author's linguistic choices. He mentions in passing Naipaul's comic gift and asks a series of questions which he does not answer and leaves the reader groping in the dark:

What is Naipaul's style? Is it those short single sentences of *Miguel Street*?
Can it be found in the long luxuriant paragraphs of *Mr Biswas*? (131).

William Walsh has rightly recognized the power of Naipaul's satire in *Commonwealth Literature* a text edited by Vinson James. He asserts that Naipaul's style lacks awkwardness and corresponds with unbending honesty which allows the author to depict the contradictory aspects of his characters. He is also worthy of credit for noting that Naipaul's satire is necessitated by his eye for dishonesty thereby acknowledging the novelist's preoccupation with social reform. He applauds Naipaul for depicting the facts of the society without hiding in cosy illusions. Walsh however mentions the use of satire without demonstrating the author's linguistic patterning in the realization of his satirical intentions.

Unlike Walsh, Rohlehr Gordon does not view Naipaul's satire positively. He endorses George Lamming's assertion that the author uses satire to laugh at his society as a means of escape in an essay entitled "The Ironic Approach: The novels of V S Naipaul" in Louis James' *The Island in Between: Essays on West-Indian Literature*. His argument is that Naipaul was wrong to use satire against his people at such an early stage in their history. He holds that Naipaul in his early works is "...at times the irresponsible ironist subtle but lacking a sensitive participation in the life he atomizes" (122). Naipaul, to him, has

rejected all things West Indian. He, however, goes on to argue that the author is concerned with satirizing ignorance, superstition, absurdity, knavery and self-interest. He also notes that Naipaul, in *The Mystic Masseur* and *Miguel Street*, portrays a distortion of moral values. This critic has not provided an in depth analysis of Naipaul's adoption and utilization of satire as a tool of exposure.

In conclusion, it is apparent from the literature review that preceding critics have not provided satisfactory analyses of Naipaul's treatment of escape and conservatism and their relation to progress. Satire, in the author's fiction, has not been adequately explored. It is also evident that Naipaul's fiction has not so far been approached as a gendered literary discourse. Naipaul's presentation of gender roles and images has not been investigated.

1.8 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

For a detailed textual analysis, this study has confined itself to three novels. These are: *The suffrage of Elvira*, *Miguel Street* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. These works, it should be noted, represent the early phase of Naipaul's literary career when his satiric tone is at its peak. His later works are excluded as they are pervaded by a sad mood ushered into his creative process by his travelling experiences. It is therefore in these texts that satire, one of the principle elements under investigation, is more pronounced.

The scope of this study is again in consonance with the time frame within which the research was to be carried out. As the approach adopted is stylistic in spirit, and therefore demanding a detailed analysis, a focus on more works would not only have consumed more time but also have produced insubstantial results. In addition, the researcher's attachment to the above novels due to their comic potential has played a significant role in their selection. The author's other novels have been read and are referred to occasionally when the situation demands as secondary materials. Their exclusion is justified on the basis of time and their formal properties which fall outside the study's area of inquiry.

This study was limited in its review of books. It focussed on works that were locally

available. Due to shortage of finance, materials, which perhaps would have been relevant, from other areas were inaccessible to the researcher and therefore were excluded.

1.9 METHODOLOGY

The study was primarily library centered. Two central approaches have been relied on: a contextual and a textual. In the contextual component, Naipaul's non-fictional works were read. Critical comments on him in books and the print media were also sought and examined. In this way, the study unveiled the author's biographical data and the social-cultural milieu he wrote from.

The textual analysis, on the other hand, consisted of a reading of Naipaul's selected works in order to appreciate his treatment of the issues under investigation. The ABC of Gender analysis was used as a methodological aid in the textual interpretation of the gender roles and images inhabiting Naipaul's fictional world. Using this framework, the author's presentation of his literary material was studied. A number of parameters were used to measure the gender responsiveness of the texts. These were: the nature of activities presented and the way they are relegated across the gender spectrum, the distribution of power, the locus of activity both for male and female characters, and the pertinent behavioural pattern privileged for each sex.

However, the study does not adopt wholesale the methodological premises of the narratological analysis because its main focus is to demonstrate that, in his treatment of escape and conservatism, Naipaul is informed by patriachal values as he is a product of a patriachal culture. Consequently, therefore, the researcher could not embark on a quantitative measurement of the female experience in the texts.

CHAPTER TWO

NAIPAUL: THE WRITER AND HIS CREATIVE OUTPUT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines Naipaul's life: his personal experiences and the social relations he has been engaged in. It provides an overview of the entire period of his artistic career. The chapter demonstrates how his life, his travel across continents and the impressions he formed about various societies that he visited shaped his sensibility and therefore informed his writing. Some of his works reflect his personal responses to the social life around him and one cannot rule out the presence in them of an autobiographical persona. Extraneous information about the author is found to be a valuable resource in facilitating a more comprehensive textual interpretation.

2.2 NAIPAUL'S LIFE

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born in 1932 to a wealthy Hindu family in rural Trinidad. His parents were East Indians shipped from India as indentured workers. Their presence in the new world was a consequence of an immigration policy agitated for by European planters in sugar plantations faced with a grave shortage of labour after Afro-American emancipation in the 1840's. The indentured labourers were free to return to India after serving for five years. These were volunteers who knew quite well the full implications of their decisions (Wood 111). Naipaul's grandparents found their way into the Trinidadian society in this way. The writer's family were brahmins, a privileged caste of Indians who enjoyed great prestige over other castes. Brahmins were believed to be of great purity and were known for their sensitivity to dirt, disorder and had a priority to cleanliness. This caste was the only one allowed to perform religious rituals. To maintain their purity, they had to observe certain taboos many of which related to diet and contact with other castes. Brahmins are supposed to be vegetarians.

Naipaul has exhibited an incorruptible sense of cleanliness. A keen eye for dirt is a characteristic feature of his artistic world. His description of dirt in both fiction and non-fiction is so vivid that it not only appeals to readers' sense of sight but also to their sense

of smell. His preoccupation with decay, both moral and physical, is a common feature that again unites his works. As Walsh lucidly puts it, the author has retained over time Brahmin delicacies and repugnancies (V.S. Naipaul 1).

Naipaul's childhood was spent in Chaguanas engulfed within his grandmother's extended family in rural Trinidad. Interestingly, he grew up in his mother's family other than his father's. This was a large traditional Hindu family that clung desperately to the waning Hindu way of life in the new world. This family set-up is represented in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Mrs Tulsi, one of the principal characters in this text, is seen clinging to her caste position even though the society is on the verge of change. The text captures a fast deteriorating Hindu way of life as a result of contact with different cultures. As he grew up, Naipaul was exposed to an Indian way of life that had suffered from cultural borrowing in the new world and practiced by an "alienated people" cut off from their ancestral home. This perhaps explains why the author was innocent of religious faith. Indian cultural and religious practices were seen as lacking in philosophical depth by later generations of Naipaul's stature in Trinidad who had imbibed western modes of thought. The author holds in *Among the Believers*:

I was without religious faith myself. I barely understood the rituals and ceremonies I grew up with. In Trinidad, with its many races, my Hinduism was really an attachment to my own difference... (11)

Sometime later the family moved to Port of Spain. This city held many opportunities. Americans had already permeated the Trinidadian society as a result of the Second World War. There were job opportunities in the American army bases and these acted as pull-factors for the people in the countryside to migrate to the city. This American presence in Port of Spain is lucidly captured in *A House for Mr Biswas* and *Miguel Street*. During this time, Naipaul's father was working with the *Guardian*, the local Trinidadian paper.

After a short lively stay in Port of Spain, it was decided by the writer's overbearing grandmother that the family move to a cocoa estate in the hills of north-west Port of Spain. This movement is recorded in *A House for Mr Biswas* when Mr Biswas and his

family are made to join the Tulsis at Shorthills. It is worth mentioning that his father who had married into the grandmother's family and absorbed in it had no say on the matter. The author's family was unwilling to move but they had no alternative as he asserts in *Finding the Centre*:

We had to leave the house in Port of Spain. After the quiet and order of our two years as a separate unit we were returned to the hubbub of the extended family and our scattered non entity within it.(39)

Obviously the author did not approve of this communal mode of life as it seemed to rob them of their own individual identities.

Life in this cocoa estate became chaotic with his father becoming wild due to lack of space from which he could assert his individuality. After another two years, the family returned to Port of Spain and into the same house they had occupied before. His father left the *Guardian* and started working with the government. At this time Naipaul entered the Queens Royal College where he was exposed to a European mode of thought which was inherently scientific. This sharpened his critical faculties thus making him view phenomena in a scientific manner. The European education system, which introduced him into a different way of perceiving the world, further alienated him from Hindu cultural practices which were already losing ground in Trinidad. These practices, to the already modernized East Indians, contradicted the basic tenets of scientific inquiry. Naipaul viewed them as outdated practices which thrived on superstition and the Indian attachment to drama and were unquestionably passed from one generation to another. This kind of alienation, inevitable as it was, arguably explains the author's attitude to Hindu culture in his early works.

Hinduism in Trinidad had lost its religious philosophical depth. Nevertheless it gave the East Indians an identity among the other races. Its practitioners started grasping the economic possibilities of their offices. The author has exposed this clique of self-seekers who masquerade as religious men for what they are: Ganesh Pundit in *The Mystic Masseur*, Pundit Dhaniram in *The Suffrage of Elvira* and Pundit Jairam in *A House for Mr*

Biswas. Naipaul's grandmother, who believed in the old order, kept up with the Hindu cultural practices even in the capital. The author could not reconcile himself to the myriad of Hindu cultural ceremonies performed there. He holds in *An Area of Darkness*:

I took no pleasure in religious ceremonies that were too long, and the food came only at the end. I did not understand the language-it was as if our elders expected that our understanding would be instinctive and no one explained the prayers or the rituals.(35)

These ceremonies were all alike to the author. He developed a distaste for ritual and together with his cousins refused to go through the "janaywa" ceremony of the new born.

At the age of 18 years, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul left for London to study at Oxford on a Trinidad government scholarship. He took English. He did not return to Trinidad immediately he completed his studies but stayed on in London trying to establish himself as a writer. He was consequently engaged by the British Broadcasting Corporation Caribbean service on a part-time basis. His duties entailed editing and presenting a weekly literary programme for the Caribbean. Naipaul and others of his calibre were supposed to produce scripts for the corporation at a back room set aside for this purpose. It was in this freelance room that Naipaul started writing his first publishable work, *Miguel Street* (Finding18). He was precisely 22 years and 9 months when he wrote his first novel. Between the 1950's and the 1960's while living in London, he was also engaged in reviewing books. Paul Theroux asserts that between may 1959 and may 1960, Naipaul reviewed 61 novels for the *New Statesman* while at the same time writing *A House for Mr Biswas* (127).

In September 1960, Naipaul went back to Trinidad on a three-month scholarship granted by the government of Trinidad and Tobago. The author holds that no conditions were attached to this offer in *The Middle Passage* and it enabled him to revisit the country he had written about in *The Mystic Masseur*, *The Suffrage of Elvira* and *Miguel Street* which he had long been separated from (5). While in Trinidad, the authorities suggested he write a non-fiction book about the West Indies, the publication of which would be supported by Trinidad government. This is the time he started travelling, an event in his life that was to

influence his future literary production. After Trinidad, he visited British Guyana, Surinam, Martinique, Jamaica and some parts of South America including Venezuela. His impressions about these societies are cinematically recorded in *The Middle Passage*.

After his return to London, he embarked on another explorative journey east, precisely to India his ancestral home. This perhaps was prompted by his deep sense of homelessness. The journey east could be viewed as a journey towards his self-discovery. Understandably, all East Indians in Trinidad felt a certain attachment to India and still considered it as their mother country. Naipaul felt a longing to acquaint himself with this India which had only existed in his imagination and in “posters for Indian films” (An Area 12). He stayed in India for one year during which he travelled through out the country to gauge its social, cultural, economic and political condition. In *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul says that the India of his imagination was a direct contrast to the India he visited in reality. It was an India of squalid conditions, of abject poverty and of the most extreme conservatism. It was a depressing picture for him. He could not find any sense of belonging with this India. At the end of this journey, India was still incomprehensible for him, “an area of darkness”. Trinidad could not be home for him and neither could India. His experiences in India amplified his acute sense of rootlessness. He chronicles his attitudes to India during his first visit there in *An Area of Darkness*. He could not understand the Indian way of life and sensibility even after his second visit to the country in 1975 as he says:

A hundred years had been enough to wash me clean of many Indian religious attitudes; and without these attitudes the distress of India was-and is-almost unsupportable. It has taken me much time...to understand how far the “Indian” attitudes of someone like myself, a member of a small and remote community in the New World, have diverged from the attitudes of people to whom India is still whole.
(India: A Wounded 9)

Since then Naipaul has travelled to the United States of America and to eastern societies to learn about Islam which was seen at the time as a vehicle for revolution. He has visited Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan and Indonesia. His experiences in these countries are recorded in *Among the Believers* which is an inquiry into Islam. He has also visited Africa, particularly

Ivory Coast and Uganda. His impressions of Africa are the subjects of *A Bend in the River* and *In a Free State*. His literary works have won him a number of prizes. *The Mystic Masseur* won him the John Llewelyn Rhys Memorial prize in 1957, *Miguel Street* the Somerset Maugham Award, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* the Hawthornden prize in 1963, *The Mimic Men* the W. H. Smith Award in 1968 and *In a Free State*, the Booker prize in 1971.

Naipaul is, at the time this study is conducted, a resident of London. He occasionally makes trips to Trinidad to visit his sister. He has been married to two women so far. His present wife is a journalist of Pakistan descent. He married her after the death of his first wife. This second wife, it is alleged, has recently contributed to the death of his friendship with his age-old friend and literary son Paul Theroux (Shapiro 47). He was knighted in Britain in 1991 and has recently won the British David Cohen prize for the best living imaginative writer in English.

2.3 NAIPAUL: THE SOCIAL CRITIC AND HIS WORKS

Naipaul can be regarded as a prolific writer who, according to the Newsweek of March 16, 1998, has written 23 books. He has a talent not only for fiction but also for non-fiction. His fictional works include *The Mystic Masseur* published in 1957, *The Suffrage of Elvira* in 1958, *Miguel Street* in 1959, *A House for Mr Biswas* in 1961, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* in 1963, *The Mimic Men* and a collection of stories-*A Flag on the Island* in 1967, *In a Free State* in 1971, *A Bend in the River* in 1979, *The Enigma of Arrival* in 1987, and *A way in the World*, his latest available text in 1994. His non-fiction works are: *The Middle Passage* (1962), *An area of Darkness* (1964), *The loss of Eldorado* (1969), *The Overcrowded Barracoon* (1972), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), *The Return of Eva Peron* (1980), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), *Finding the Centre* (1984), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1991), and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted People* (1999).

It is arguable that Naipaul's ambition to write was shaped by his father's journalistic career.

The latter had since 1929 contributed occasional articles on Indian topics to the *Trinidad Guardian*. At the time Naipaul was born, his father had become the *Guardian* staff correspondent in Chaguanas. As a young man, the author used to steal occasional glances at his father's articles which were usually kept in a big ledger. He developed a keen interest in "newspapers and the idea of print" at a very tender age. He argues in *Finding the Centre*:

The ledger in the desk was like a personal story. In it the idea of 'once upon a time' and my father's writing life in old Chaguanas came together and permeated my imagination. (39)

His father also read stories written by other writers for him. As would be expected, Naipaul started nursing hopes of becoming a writer some day. It is with this ambition that he left for London to pursue his studies. His mind had already been made about the career he would take. After his studies, he started realizing his goal by writing *Miguel Street* at the British Broadcasting Corporation's freelance room.

The author's personal experiences permeate his writing. His childhood in Port of Spain and rural Trinidad provides material for *Miguel Street* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. Most of the characters in *Miguel Street* are molded upon real life personalities. Naipaul says in *Finding the Center* that Hat, a major player in this text, is the portrait of one of his neighbours in Port of Spain who incidentally was also called Hat (18). The character of Bogart is woven around an introvert young man who lived at the separate one-room building at the back of his grandmother's yard. This text is again set during the Second World War when Americans had started invading Trinidadian society and thereby introducing their unique moral values. This phenomenon is lucidly represented in the text.

Mystic Masseur, his first novel to be published, chronicles his experiences and his view of Pundits and politicians in rural Trinidad. The novel shows Naipaul, the satirist, at work. With his ceaseless sense of humour, he castigates the superficiality of Pundits and politicians who thrive basically on the ignorance of the masses. The latter, however are not spared but are, through the resource of hostile humour, ridiculed for placing the destiny of their lives at these rogues' feet.

The Suffrage of Elvira exploits bitter humour to condemn the society of egoists and escapists: the likes of Mr Baksh, Chittaranjan, Dhaniram, Lorkhoor and other Elvira residents who do not exercise their democratic rights wisely under the universal adult franchise. These characters apparently do not mind about their political destiny. Naipaul, it should be noted, has a perpetual striving to have fidelity to truth in his creative process. The Hindu family set-up is the subject of *A House for Mr Biswas*, Naipaul's greatest creative achievement. His grandmother's engulfing family within which he grew up is reflected in the text. There is in Mr Biswas, the quality of the author's father who in reality was embittered by the communal life of such a family. Like Mr Biswas, Naipaul's father continuously sought to have his own space. While the author's father in reality worked for the *Guardian*, Mr Biswas is made to work for the *Trinidad Sentinel*. The father managed to break from his in-laws' household when Naipaul was 14 years, a phenomenon captured in the text when Mr Biswas at long last breaks free of the Tulsis and buys his own house. Similarly, Anand is also arguably the author's self portrait. His distaste for ritual and his incorrigible apathy towards superstition are those of the author. Like Naipaul, Anand leaves Port of Spain for London to study and does not return.

Mr Stone and the Knights Companion was written immediately Naipaul returned to London after his journey across the Caribbean region and South America. Unlike his earlier works, this text utilizes an English setting. It revolves around the story of an individual, Mr. Stone, haunted by visions of impotence and hopelessness in old age, a fear out of which springs creativity. *The Mimic Men* makes use of an English and a West Indian setting. The novel records the experiences of an individual who tries to create order in a society in chaos. It also captures lucidly the spirit of disenchantment pervading post-Independent societies. Kripal Singh fails to restore order to this unstable society and becomes disillusioned and gives up the attempt. The author depicts the loneliness and restlessness of the individual living within the impersonal world of a great city. It appears the author echoes his own experiences while in London. Naipaul demonstrates his gift of narration not only for the novel but also for the short story in *A Flag on the Island*. The

stories in this text deal with a wide range of themes. "My Aunt Gold Teeth" captures, for instance, the cultural confusion that resulted in Trinidad because of the coexistence of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The morals of a changed permissive society is the subject of yet another story *A Flag on the Island* whose title also serves as the title of the whole collection.

Naipaul's style of writing changes after he starts to travel. His works become less humorous. A different mood pervades his literary discourse. The form of his later novels becomes more journalistic though not less artistic as his power of description is still very strong. His tone in *In a Free State* is that of melancholy. The novel has three plots which focus on the image of travellers. In one of these, an Indian servant comes from Bombay to Washington, in another, two West Indian brothers are moved to London and in the third an Englishman and an Englishwoman are seen travelling through an African country. The text also brings out the themes of cruelty and terror that gripped African societies immediately after independence. In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul condemns the disorder, decay and meaningless violence that characterized third world societies as they emerged from colonialism and started to take charge of their destinies. He also exposes to ridicule those in the same societies who remain indifferent to their predicament and privilege escape in the face of seemingly insurmountable problems. The escapism of totalitarian African leaders, typified by the "Big Man", who squander their country's economic energies on "white elephant projects" like the "domain" with the aim of creating miniature European cities, is also in the direction of the author's sharp criticism in the text. This, Naipaul demonstrates, is done to gratify their fantasies amidst millions of poverty stricken individuals in the vicinity of their palaces.

In the *Guerillas*, Naipaul presents characters who have lost touch with the reality around them. The novel is a panorama of violence, both sexual and political, which the author portrays as quite irrational and just as destructive as that in *A Bend in the River* and in *In a Free State*. The text exposes the experiences of an alienated people whose escapism turns them into moral degenerates.

Naipaul remains a social critic in both his fiction and non-fiction. He does not hesitate to condemn those who deviate from the path of acceptable values even in his travels. His immense antipathy towards escape is captured in *The Middle Passage*. He holds that even with the knowledge that “something was wrong with our society, we made no attempts to assess it...our own past was buried and no one cared to dig it up”(42-43). He does not approve of tolerance, which is a way of escaping, for what he refers to as “picaroon society.” It is this tolerance that he condemns in his fiction: tolerance for a society devoid of morality, a society full of decay and disorder. He condemns the Jamaicans in the same text for escaping from the squalid conditions around them and hiding beneath the “Rastafari” creed that has no vision for a better life. In Jamaica, Naipaul argues, “...one found the attitudes, little changed from those of Trollope a hundred years ago, of people who objected to regular work and were content to live from hand to mouth” (224).

The issue of escape seems to have dominated the author's mind in his one year stay in India. He was critical of the Indians who lived in abject poverty and made no efforts to better their conditions of living even when opportunities offered themselves (*An Area* 58). Elsewhere in the same text, Naipaul decries Indians who denied the existence of decay in their society. They “did not see defecating squatters beside the railroad... they denied their existence” (230).

Naipaul is known for his comic gift and his power of narration. He has stepped aside of the literary tradition of his time and created his own. He can be considered a modern pioneer in original thinking and has consciously avoided looking at the world through the eyes of western writers. At the commencement of his literary career he does not write within the British tradition though he is writing in Britain. His style is uniquely his own as he domesticates the English language to communicate authentically West Indian experience. In addition, he utilizes the domesticated English as a tool for his social reform. He is a writer who believes in the realism of art. Literature, for him, should reflect the society in its prevailing situation. He frowns at writers who “...turn their backs on the

here and now to satisfy what President Radhakrishnan calls 'the basic human hunger for the unseen' "(An Area 231). Writers should show a hunger for the "seen" which Naipaul interprets as an "expression of concern with men." Though the novel is a European invention, Naipaul demonstrates that it can be shaped to reflect a society's peculiar experience. He captures the ethos and the flavour of the local idiom like Achebe does when writing about his Igbo community. His early works contain resonances of the daily discourses of the Trinidadians though he exploits this on another level to create humour that he uses to laugh down certain characters.

His later works tend towards naturalism, are less humorous and are inherently bitter. Their form reflects the anger of a writer trying to come to terms with the disorder and decay of society. Naipaul presently writes narratives based on his real-life experiences and his perceptive responses to various societies that he visits. In a recent interview conducted by Rahul Singh, an Indian writer, in Mumbai, Naipaul says he writes truthfully about people so that they can recognize themselves in his narratives. In the interview which appears in the Newsweek of March 16, 1998, Naipaul has this to say about himself:

I think of myself as a recorder. I had a sense from a very early age that books live only if they are true. And only people without prejudice, without dogma can write books that are true....(54)

In the same interview, he explains the change in his narrative technique thus:

It developed out of my understanding that the amount of imaginative fiction one could create out of ones entrails was very limited. So I began to travel...for me, the essence of what I find when I travel... is the complexity. And one has to find a way of not making it reportage. It becomes profounder kind of story. (54)

In a word, his travels are the wells out of which he draws his literary material. *A Bend in the River* and *In a Free State* are texts which were produced in this manner. It is worth mentioning that Naipaul's description of women in his non-fiction strikes one as odd. One of the women he met in Surinam is described in *The Middle Passage* as: "...fat, with ugly white tights and an ugly white-and-yellow straw hat fastened with innumerable hair grips to untidy brown hair" (174). Interestingly, the author does not show the identity, the

attitudes and the experiences of his female companion in India in *An Area of Darkness*. Her presence is perhaps unintentionally revealed to the reader when he says: "And at this point my companion slumped forward on her chair, hung her head between her knees and fainted" (24). It can be noted in *A House for Mr Biswa* that Naipaul was aware of the plight of women in the society. In this text he writes of the "Aryan Association" which his hero joins at one time. One of the principle aims of this association is to fight for the rights of women though it is in the direction of Naipaul's satirical barbs at another level.

This chapter has shown how Naipaul started as a writer and how his life has informed his literary output. The chapter also demonstrates that the author's style of writing changes over time as he enters a new phase of his life. Naipaul, it is noted, remains a social critic not only in his fiction but also non-fiction. An understanding of his personal experiences is indispensable if one is to arrive at a more comprehensive textual analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 NAIPAUL'S TREATMENT OF ESCAPE AND CONSERVATISM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the central issues that are given prominence in *The Suffrage of Elvira*, *Miguel Street* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. It attempts to investigate Naipaul's treatment of escape and conservatism and the way they impact on human progress. The chapter does not aspire to counter the criticism levelled against the author. On the contrary, it strives to show a facet of the author's fiction that had previously been overlooked. The researcher therefore argues in this chapter for a modification of the view to see Naipaul as a cynical and a pessimistic writer by demonstrating his concern with social regeneration. His castigation of various social behaviours is in itself an indicator that he is a visionary writer preoccupied with human development.

3.2 ESCAPE AND ITS RELATION TO HUMAN PROGRESS

The social issue of escape, which is a unifying thread of Naipaul's early fiction, elicits an in depth analysis. Escape is a social phenomenon that has a significant effect on both individual and societal progress. The concept of human development is the greatest goal of human existence. It is in the nature of the human person to ceaselessly wish for a better condition of life. The attainment of this prime goal however calls for a maximization of the human effort and a positive integration of all members of society into social life. Creative artists, being the sensitive sections of humanity, express in significant degrees, their profound resentment against those who are obstacles to this much cherished human good. Naipaul, as a visionary writer, concerned with human development, has launched his criticism against not only those who obstruct human progress but also those who slow down its pace. The treatment of escape in his early fiction is suggestive of his preoccupation with social reform. He further sets out to demonstrate how positive escape is the necessary condition for the progress of not only that of an individual but also that of the entire society.

3.2.1. ESCAPE AS AN ANTITHESIS TO PROGRESS

In almost all his works, non-fiction included, Naipaul expresses a negative attitude towards the escapist tendencies of characters. His artistic career is inspired by a desire to right the wrongs prevalent in the society and a decisive disengagement from people who do not seek to improve their conditions of life. His wish, as he holds in *Finding the Centre*, at the beginning of his literary career, was “to seek at some future time for justice” (45). Like Achebe, he believes that writers have a role to play in telling their people (in his case the West Indians) who they really are and where they stand. Naipaul sees himself as a seeker of truth and to him mature literature can be attained when “writers cease to think about letting down their sides” (Finding 69).

Naipaul writes to show readers that their social organization is not what it should be; it is diseased. Writers who write thus endeavour to:

...discover a more apt decalogue from the experience of human life, in short, they are looking within themselves for salvation instead of waiting for it to fall from heaven; they have waited now for centuries in vain... (Mendes 23)

He seeks to reveal to the readers that darker side of humanity they would rather ignore. Naipaul believes that writers should use their art to expose the evils and chaos in their societies. Literature should not only depict the lighter side of people's lives, “the dance floors, the western mimicry” but also the background, the most obvious (An Area 73).

According to the Newsweek of March 16, 1998, Naipaul sees his values as being:

The truth. Liberalism. Wishing human beings to live better. Wishing to obliterate pain-no that is impossible. Wishing to lessen pain. Try to understand why things have happened when they have happened, and try to see where things have gone wrong. (54)

It would appear from the above that Naipaul is concerned with the advancement of the human race and advocates for a re-assessment of not only people's pasts and present social situations but also their individual tendencies that help to retard their own progress.

He portrays a dissatisfaction with people who denied the reality around them and seemed contented with their prevailing social stations even in his travels across continents. Indians are condemned in *An Area of Darkness* because of their denial of the desolation around them. The complacency of the West Indians who do not aspire to better the conditions of their lives is depicted in *The Middle Passage*. This thematic thread runs through his works. Ganesh Ramsumair, the self-proclaimed pundit owes his success to the ignorance and the superstitious nature of the masses. He sees himself as “GANESH mystic” and has his house filled with books. While the reader expects an individual of such mannerism to exhibit immense intellectual abilities, he remains a hollow but crafty, witty crook concerned with gratifying his own desires at the expense of the other people.

The masses in this text are depicted as escapists. Those who come to Ganesh for “spiritual rejuvenation” are a blind people who obviously waste their resources to satisfy their fantastical dispositions. Ganesh himself is objective enough to know he is not what he seems to be. It appears Naipaul is on the side of his hero, though obviously he does not approve of his moral values. This deference is justified by the dramatic movement of the narrative as Naipaul wishes the reader to appreciate the hollowness of the other characters. This kind of presentation is meant to reveal how their escapism, their personal incapacities to transcend their limited sensibilities in appreciating who Ganesh is, serves as the latter's source of power to progress. Due to their love for ritual and fantasy, they are taken advantage of by the likes of Ramlogan. As a result, Naipaul himself remains a very active character in the novel as he continuously satirizes the people for leaving the destiny of their lives to the likes of Ganesh. Ganesh owes his success from teacher to masseur, from masseur to mystic, from mystic to Member of the Legislative Council (M.L.C) and from M.L.C. to Member of the British Executive Council (M.B.E.) not to his own individual efforts, as he himself is aware, but to other forces which he refers to as “divine providence.” The masses are the same characters who spur him on by applauding his so-called mysticism. They encourage him for a further demonstration of wit.

Ganesh exploits their escapism and grows very rich over a short period of time. The other

characters do not attempt to critically appraise Ganesh and perhaps see through his little games. They have only themselves to blame when Ganesh abandons them and throws his lot with the oppressor. He forgets his responsibility to his people and joins the colonialist. The novel ends when Ganesh's transformation is complete. He has become synonymous with the oppressor. This is especially apparent when, with every good intentions, the narrator calls him pundit Ganesh in London but he does not take up the cue and only retorts "G.Ramsay Muir" coldly (The Mystic 220).

The situation is the same in *The Suffrage of Elvira*. The novel is the epitome of the author's demonstration of a people's withdrawal from the reality around them and the undesirable consequences that result. Evidently, Elvira residents are not integrated into their political life. The author depicts this as a step in the wrong direction. It is a truth universally acknowledged that human beings live in pursuit of happiness. Such a goal is usually realised within the confines of a social institution called a government. The latter is supposed to evolve its own values: social norms and policies which are geared towards the realization of this highest good for humanity. The ruled and the rulers have a dialectical relationship. The former have a duty therefore to find out whether the leaders have satisfied their part of the social contract. This calls for a continuous critical appraisal of the leaders and a fast removal of those who do not live up to the expectations of the populace. Not participating positively in the political life of one's society is a form of escape that retards progress. This is aptly demonstrated in *The Suffrage of Elvira*.

The residents of Elvira are depicted as automatons. They are manipulated according to the whims of the politicians. They are all depersonalized and perceived as a crowd. In the politicians' minds, their individuality is non-existent and therefore the tendency to see them in the abstract as mere numbers. Mr Baksh talks of the "muslim" votes, Mr Chittaranjan the "Hindu" votes and "the Spaniards of Cordoba votes" implying that little thought is focused on their unique personalities. The voting patterns in Elvira are not a function of individual judgements but are in terms of "blocks." This testifies to a gross lack of individual assessment of the politicians and hence an absence of a rigorous political

participation. The consequence of this is docility and a stripping of the individual of his or her assertive role. This has retarded the political progress of the Elviran society.

Those characters who are at the forefront of the campaign, the text reveals, are goaded by self-interest. They are escapists and show little concern for the development of the Elviran society. Mr Baksh and his son, Foam, see the campaign as a world of possibilities. Their thoughts are focused on the benefits they are bound to reap from the electioneering process. Interestingly, Foam becomes a campaign manager not only to get money but primarily to level his score with his arch-rival Lorkhoor. Mr Baksh thinks of the legacy of the campaign as it would leave him with a van and a loudspeaker for his own uses:

To be frank, boss, I ain't want it so much for the elections
as for afterwards. Announcing at all sort of things.
Sports. Weddings. Funerals. It have a lot of money
in that nowadays... for a poor man....(The suffrage 20-21)

Evidently, he is not thinking of the welfare of his society but is concerned with his personal enrichment.

Chittaranjan hopes that by helping Mr Harbans in the campaign, he would have his daughter married to the latter's son. Dhaniram, a pundit, agrees to assist Mr Harbans with a personal benefit in mind: he "had been promised something-contracts for his tractor". He hides beneath empty rhetoric as readers note the discrepancy between what he says and his real motives:

Is not as though you giving things to we pussonal, Mr Harbans.
You must try and feel that you giving to the people. After all, is
the meaning of this democracy. (55)

This apparently is the people's definition of democracy. Lorkhoor has taken to campaigning for Preacher because it would provide him with an opportunity to express his pomposity and exult his status above that of the other Elviran residents. He later sells out to Mr Harbans and elopes with Pundit Dhaniram's daughter-in-law to Port of Spain. Harichand, the painter, can only vote for Mr Harbans if he is given the contract for printing the campaign posters. These characters, Naipaul reveals, are concerned with personal gains at the expense of the welfare of the whole community. Their allegiances are

portrayed as fluid. Baksh, for instance, shifts his over time. Readers see Elviran residents exploring the possibilities of their situations and are made to feel that their perceptions are warped and blighted by self-interest. The candidates' weaknesses and strengths are inconsequential.

Baksh, being a schemer and an egotist, declares himself a candidate for the election not because he has public service in mind but in order to enrich himself financially. Foam and his father help to concretize Naipaul's conception that political alliances in this society are dictated upon by material gains:

'All right, you supporting preacher', Foam said, and Mrs Baksh noted that for the first time Foam was talking to his father man-to-man. 'Preacher could give you anything?' Baksh smiled, 'It ain't *preacher* who going to give me anything. Don't worry, you. I calculate everything already. Everything' (139)

They are not concerned with the political destiny of their society and this is to their own peril as the text reveals later.

Other characters escape the reality of the event in their midst and submerge themselves into a world of superstition. Most of them believe in the "obeah" cult, which incidentally, is the residue of African culture and religion in West Indian secular life (Ramchand 123). Tiger, the small dog collected by Herbert is bestowed with magic qualities by the narrow-minded Elviran people. The characters, over a short time, become suspicious of each other. They are under a spell of fear emanating from the feeling that "obeah" is being worked against them. The narrating consciousness makes the readers see the naivete of the characters and invites them to laugh at their mediocre preoccupations. The reader is made aware that their fears are unfounded. Engrossed in such fears, Elvira residents have withdrawn from the demanding task in their midst: the impending elections.

Other characters do not see the need to participate in the political system and have completely left the destiny of their society to others. Mrs Baksh has withdrawn from the political system as she cannot appreciate the power of the ballot. She is suspicious of the entire electoral process and ceaselessly nurses a fear which is portrayed by Naipaul as

absurd and bordering on the grotesque. She misinterprets the looming elections as a sign of doom.

The elite of this society, represented by teacher Francis are escapists. His “intellectual abilities” have enabled him to understand the nature of Elviran residents. He is aware that they do not “know the value of their votes” (96). Ironically, he does not use his intellect to sensitize the masses into a clear comprehension of the value of the vote. Like most elites in society, he is not integrated into Elviran social life and therefore withdraws from the political system. He expresses his “progressive views” to the Bakshes. However, he does not fool the reader who remains aware of his egoistic motives behind his clever insinuation. The reader knows he is trying to coax Baksh to speak on his behalf to Chittaranjan, who had barred his daughter from attending the private lessons which were additional capital to him. He feels threatened by poverty. He, like Mrs Baksh, upholds the fatalist philosophy of non-involvement in the political system and eventually leaves Elvira. Mahadeo escapes the reality around him, the campaign, and the impending elections by succumbing to a fear that becomes a neurosis. He is throughout the text preoccupied with the good health of old Sebastian fearing reprimand from Mr Cuffy. He does not participate in the election even after Cuffy’s death. Naipaul says that he “didn't even vote. He had clean forgotten”(216). Similarly, Haq and Rampiari's husband have condemned themselves into a state of political inertia. They do not see any value in voting: Rampiari's husband chooses to vote due to threats from Chittaranjan while Haq is less concerned with the political destiny of Elvira. He escapes into drink and stays in Ramlogan's shop for a whole day.

The politicians, as the people's voice, have also strayed away from their responsibilities. Mr Harbans seems oblivious of the demands of the seat he is aspiring for. Leaders are elected not to enrich themselves but to serve the public and take their society to greater heights of prosperity. The Big Man in Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* can be said to have escaped from his duties. He has squandered tax payer’s money on the “Domain” which turns out to be a white elephant project. Mr Harbans in *The Suffrage of Elvira* has used

his position as a springboard to material opulence. Naipaul, like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, demonstrates the degrees of absurdity politicians are prepared to go in order to win elections. Ngugi shows how even misfortunes are made use of for political gains in "A Mercedes Funeral", a story appearing in his collection *Secret Lives*. Wahinya in this story is of no consequence to Hon. John Joe James and the other candidates when he is alive. Immediately he is dead, he commands a lot of respect from all the candidates and has the power to decide the outcome of an election in a remote village of Ilmorog.

Similarly, Mahadeo in *The Suffrage of Elvira* seeks the negro dead or sick, not because he has any spiritual concern for them, but because he wants to use them as tools for the campaign. It is only when Rampiari's husband falls sick that he becomes a key figure in the campaign. His recuperation is not their candidate's concern but swaying the masses to vote in his favour is. Mr Cuffy's death is a blessing in disguise for the campaign team. It offers Mr Harbans an opportunity to display his "magnanimity". What in normal circumstances would have been a mourning session turns out to be a celebration. In the final analysis, Mr. Harbans wins their total allegiance by settling the burial expenses. Immediately after his victory, Mr Harbans severs his physical and psychological connection with the masses. He evades his responsibility as a leader like Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* and the Big Man in *A Bend in the River*.

Naipaul presents such escapism as the reason for the backwardness of Elvira society. Being a short-sighted people, Elviran residents are concerned with individual gains. They interpret, wrongly of course, Mr Harbans' economic mightiness as a quality of good leadership. He has spent money on them and therefore he is their ideal leader. Mr Harbans' true character becomes visible when it appears to him that he would win the elections. Readers recognize his malevolence when he has this to say to the taxi driver who did not turn up on the election day:

We go fix him up, Goldsmith. Going to put the police on his tail.
Parking. Speeding. Overloading. From now on he going to
spend more time in court than driving taxi.... (216)

The Elviran residents realize the fruits of their own escapism when Mr Harbans later

comes back to Elvira to give out the case of whisky donated by Ramlogan to the winning committee. Evidently, there is a rising consciousness in the people. However, Naipaul shows how belated this realization is as the situation is beyond redemption. Harbans' transformation within so short a time is miraculous:

Gone was the informality of dress... He was in a double-breasted grey suit... didn't wave. He looked pre-occupied, kept his eyes on the ground, and when he hawked and spat in the gutter, pulled out an ironed handkerchief and wiped his lips-not wiped even, patted them - in the fussiest way. (227)

He is seen driving, not the "old Dodge lorry" but a "brand-new blue-and-black jaguar". He has lost touch with those whose votes took him to the legislative council. Having withdrawn from a positive participation in the political system, Elvira residents have only themselves to blame for their economic and political woes. They are depicted as an escapist lot who do not comprehend the power of the ballot. They have placed their destiny on crooks like Mr Harbans to their own detriment. The violence they resort to at the end of the text is portrayed by Naipaul as irrational, destructive and unproductive as it does not solve their problems. The situation is irreversible.

The author's narratorial voice draws the reader's attention to the individual petty successes which are negligible when measured against the prevailing condition of Elvira as a whole. Baksh gets his van and loudspeaker, Foam gets Lorkhoor's job which entails announcing for the cinemas in Caroni, Lorkhoor gets a job with the Trinidad Sentinel and Tiger gets the chance to grow unhindered. Juxtaposed to these personal enrichments is the overall backwardness and neglect of Elvira society as a whole. Mr Harbans' loss after Elviran residents burn his jaguar is temporary: the insurance company compensates him.

The fictional world of *Miguel Street* is inhabited by characters who escape from the reality around them into illusory successes. Most of them are dreamers and, other than confront the reality around them boldly, they weave fantasies and attain momentary self-gratification. Brief moments of solemnity are experienced when one escapes the reality of one's oppressive life into fantasy. This basically is self-delusion. While on a small scale

dwelling in a world of fantasy helps one to live through daily stresses and strains, when it is more pronounced, as in *Miguel Street* it usurps one's will to alter the course of one's life.

Naipaul in this text presents characters who live in a world of make-believe and whose lives are hollow. Some critics read this text as Naipaul's repudiation of the degrading facts of colonialism (Walsh, *A Manifold* 65). Though one cannot rule out that the text invites such an interpretation, Naipaul's narrative perspective makes it difficult to absolve the characters themselves from blame. His attitude to characters, satirical as it is, suggests that their idleness and persistent escape into worlds of illusory achievements is the reason for their static lives. Bogart, the self-proclaimed tailor, is an escapist. He lives in a world of fantasy and refers to himself as a "Tailor and Cutter." Popo on the other hand declares himself a carpenter and preoccupies himself with "making the thing without a name." The narrating consciousness makes the reader aware of the fact that though Bogart refers to himself as a tailor he could not "remember him making a suit" (10). The street, the author shows, has evolved its own culture: that of idleness, indulgence in fantasy and a pathological demonstration of wit.

Miguel street characters are preoccupied with projecting false outward images of themselves. Popo that of a carpenter, Bogart that of a tailor, Morgan that of a clown, B. Wordsworth that of a poet, Big Foot that of a fighter and Elias and Titus Hoyt that of the street's elite. Naipaul's narrative voice shows how complacent and unproductive these characters are. They have an incomparable dislike for regenerative work. Popo has managed to build a little galvanized iron workshop at the back of his yard but his distaste for work is captured by the author when he holds:

And even that he didn't finish. He couldn't be bothered to nail on the sheets of galvanized-iron for the roof, and kept them weighted down with huge stones.(17)

And yet he pretended to be busy "hammering and sawing and planing." He ironically boasts of reaching the greatest height of creativity by "making the thing without a name." The signs that Popo and Bogart have in their homes to proclaim their "professions" are

quite indicative of their deep seated attachment to fantasy. The signs are too embracing and ironically help to foreground their superficial existence. Bogart's sign is "Tailor and cutter" while Popo's is "Builder and contractor." Titus Hoyt considers himself the elite of Miguel street and his sign is "Titus Hoyt, I.A". Elsewhere he refers to himself as an "headmaster." He is made by the author to appear the mediocre instructor he is. Morgan's title is "The pyrotechnist" which in a way accentuates his hollow existence. He escapes from the reality around him into a world of laughter and a demonstration of wit, a quality of the basest in society. His jokes, as overstretched as they are, destroy him. B. Wordsworth's title is "the greatest poet in the world" and cuts the figure of a caricature when he attempts to lead a poet's life. His supposed poetic talent is a figment of his imagination.

Escapism is a measure of true manhood in Miguel street. Popo for instance escapes into drink after he is deserted by his wife. He is accepted by the other members of the street when his wife leaves him. Idleness is the other norm in this society. George is not concerned with bettering the condition of his life and leaves everything to his wife. The narrator states:

You felt that George was never really in touch with what was going on around him all the time ... while George sat on the front concrete step outside the open door of his house, his wife was busy. (26-27)

Elias has escaped into religion to shelter himself from the tyranny of his father. He is a dreamer and believes that he is destined to be a doctor. He does not reconcile himself to his abilities and his blind ambition is juxtaposed to the Narrator's who does not fantasize but is realistic. Having obtained a second grade in the Cambridge Senior School Certificate, the latter does not attempt to transcend his abilities by aspiring for a first grade. In a word, he does not set a goal that is not commensurate with his abilities.

Manman lives in a world of fantasy, "never worked" but "was never idle." The text reveals that he was "hypnotized by the word, particularly the written word, and he would spend a whole day writing a single word" (47). He is an escapist as he does not preoccupy himself

with regenerative work. He assumes the roles of a messiah. The other characters welcome this demonstration of wit as they are a people who enjoy indulging their every whim. B. Wordsworth exhibits an unwillingness to respond creatively to the world around him by spending days watching natural phenomena, a way of actualizing his own conception of what constitutes the life of a poet. He admits before his death to the narrator that his was a life of fantasy when he holds:

That story I told you about the boy and the girl poet, do you remember? That wasn't true. It was something I just made up. All this talk about poetry and the greatest poem in the world, that wasn't true either. (65)

Titus Hoyt, who considered himself as a first class thinker, is in the direction of Naipaul's satire. His self-deception and his mediocrity as a thinker is underlined by the narrator when he indulges himself in self-defeating rhetoric. The narrator says:

One day he rushed up and said, 'I been thinking how this war could end. If Europe could just sink for five minutes and all the Germans go drown -'. Eddoes said, 'But England go drown too'. Titus Hoyt agreed and looked sad. 'I lose my head, man,' he said. 'I lose my head' .(100)

His achievements are a figment of his imagination and his thought processes are depicted as shoddy.

Laura has also escaped from the reality of her harsh life and the increasing number of her children does not bother her. She has withdrawn into a world of laughter, which is meant to cushion her from a clear comprehension of the futility of her existence. When Lorna, her daughter succumbs to the same situation, she is catapulted back to the world of reality with shock. Her escapist mentality is underscored by Hat who says "life is a helluva thing. You can see trouble coming and you can't do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just got to sit and watch and wait"(116). Evidently, Laura does not attempt to change the social and material conditions of her life.

Bhakcu's title "The Mechanical Genius" render credence to his hollowness and the illusory aspect of his life. He is depicted as being as good a mechanic as the narrator. He, according to the narrator, "interfered with motor-cars for the joy of the thing and he never

seemed worried about money". He also constantly reads the "Ramayana" as a way of escaping from the reality around him. Edward, Hat's brother, is an idler and preoccupies himself with petty issues like painting ties and offering them freely to his friends. Hat, who incidentally is the conscience of the street, is also an idler and therefore an escapist. He reads the papers "from ten in the morning until about six in the evening". Practically, he wastes the whole day and does not do anything to improve his welfare. He imitated Rex Harrison, a movie star, in his attempt to submerge himself into a world of fantasy.

It can be noted that the escapism of these characters has obstructed their own progress and that of the entire society. It is due to Bogart's escapist tendencies that he does not progress. He has a sewing machine that he chooses not to utilize. Popo at the outset remains idle. However, jail wisens him and consequently he starts making real things. Apparently, he acquires prospects for progress after he emerges from his escapist mentality. He has started to respond creatively to the reality of his life and the stage is set for him to improve his conditions of living. Again it is Manman's choice to stay idle. He has made a conscious decision not to engage himself in any meaningful work. He has willingly adopted an escapist attitude to life. He is juxtaposed to the little narrator who makes use of his time wisely. While the latter spends his time in school, Manman is involved with the unproductive task of writing a particular letter of the alphabet for a whole day on the ground in the event of perfecting his writing skills.

Miguel Street is arguably a prescriptive text. The author seemingly demonstrates that human beings can only progress as long as they transcend their escapist mentalities and actively get involved in transforming their own lives. Those who do not break free from their illusory lives perpetually remain failures. Popo's life has taken a more promising trend as he has started to engage in productive enterprises. Mrs. Hereira has managed to break from her world of illusory love. She has grasped the futility of her relationship with Tony and she eventually leaves him. Tony himself, at the end of the story, is in a better position to change his life as he has left the street and become a driver.

The narrator himself has, to some considerable degree, been infected with the culture of the street. However, towards the end of the narrative, he goes beyond it as he appreciates its impact on his own progress. To concretize his departure from this culture of escapism, he stops drinking. The progress of those characters who do not emerge out of their illusory worlds remains a dream. Naipaul demonstrates in this text that a society will always remain static as long as it is inhabited by escapist people who are not integrated into its social, economic and political life.

The same thematic thread is pursued in *A House for Mr Biswas*. The old generation of characters in this text exhibit escapist tendencies. Bipti's father, for instance, attributes all the problems surrounding his family to fate and sees no way out of his predicament (*A House* 15). Bipti's mother, Basisundee has submerged herself into a world of superstition. She cannot see through Pundit Sitaram whose "competence" Naipaul portrays as questionable. He presents this character in such a way that those who respect his office make a fool of themselves thus sparking off the reader's mirth. The author underscores Sitaram's mediocrity by prompting him to continuously consult the "almanak" without which he is lost. The same escapism is evident in Raghu. He almost starves his family by refusing to go to work following Mr Biswas' sneeze which he interprets as a bad omen. The author makes readers aware of the untenability of Raghu's fears as they know the same have emanated from a pundit who is fake. His escape into superstition ironically leads him to his own death. When Mr Biswas and Dhari's calf gets lost, Raghu and the other people confine the search to the pond. Following their superstitious instincts, they feel Mr Biswas could not be anywhere else as they are aware of the pundit's warning to keep him away from water. The mystical association of Mr Biswas with water prompts them to search for him in the pond.

Bipti herself has escaped from the reality of her life. At Pagotes, she has resigned to her fate. She has left her life and that of Mr Biswas to external forces. She does not attempt to better the conditions of her life and like her father "bewailed her fate". She attributes all her misfortunes to fate and condemns her life to the mud hut in the backtrace. Dehuti, her

daughter appears contented with her situation in life. Moreover, she has reconciled herself to her marriage with Ramchand. She is presented by Naipaul as a pathetic character who has even reached a point of self-denigration as she advises her husband to “stop running around giving people the idea that she had modern ambitions”. Her self-esteem has waned as she considers herself ugly. She has a habit of sulking when confronted with problems as if this was in itself a solution to her woes.

Mrs Tulsi's sons-in law, apart from Mr. Biswas, are depicted as escapist. They work with zeal for the betterment of the Tulsi household and give little thought to their individual progress. They have lost their own identities within the Tulsi cosmos and have been stripped of their individualities. The author tells readers that immediately they married into the family “their names were forgotten; they became Tulsis”(A House 97). The Tulsi cosmos has usurped their economic energies. The product of their labour belongs to the Tulsis. Mr Biswas, for instance, is not paid his dues for painting their store, as he has become a Tulsi following his marriage to Shama. Govind, at the time the reader meets him in the text, is presented by the author as an escapist and his life and that of his family is socially and economically static. He is engaged in menial work which eventually benefit the Tulsi family at his own expense. He is a victim of exploitation though he appears unaware of it. Mr Biswas, Naipaul's hero, comprehends after a short time, the Tulsi formulae of exploitation and draws Shama's attention to this fact when he reminds her that he had not been paid for his services. He thinks of Govind as a “fellow sufferer, but one who had surrendered to the Tulsis and been degraded”(106).

It strikes the reader as odd that Govind is prepared at all costs to protect and maintain the Tulsi honour and integrity without appreciating his own economic standing and importance within the Tulsi world. Hari on the other hand is engaged in an enterprise that has no tangible economic gains. He serves as a pundit in the family as he has been bestowed by the Tulsis with “mystical qualities.” He is idle and appears satisfied with his present station. He is a shallow character and his mediocre functions are seen through by Naipaul's hero who allows him to “bless” his shop at The Chase and the house he intended

to build at Green Vale because of Shama. Just like Govind before him, he is not willing to critically appraise his own social standing and that of his family within the Tulsi cosmos. Mr Biswas' progress once he becomes a reporter is sharply contrasted to Hari's uneventful and narrow life engulfed amongst the Tulsis. In one of Mr Biswas' visits to Hanuman house the author says Hari and his wife:

...barely greeted him. They both seemed untouched by his new fame or his new suit... Hari in his pundits clothes, looked jaundiced and unwell as always; his wife's solemnity was tinged with worry and fatigue. Mr Biswas had often surprised them in similar domestic scenes, *withdrawn from the life about them*. (A House 330. **emphasis researcher's**)

Hari, incidentally, remains an escapist throughout the text. His life consequently remains perpetually static.

Bhadat, like his sons, has also escaped from the life around him. He leaves the rumshop at Pagotes, which was economically paying, for an impoverishing illicit relationship with a Chinese woman in Port of Spain. Within a short time he falls into the lowest cadres of humanity. He does not attempt to change the course of his life but would rather be considered a "Deserving Destitute" by Mr Biswas. The latter is not affected by Bhadat's escapism and turns him down.

Similarly, his sons have turned their back to the harsh reality that surround them. They repeatedly indulge themselves in wild sexual fantasies instead of trying to alter the material conditions of their lives. The effect of this is telling as theirs become morally depraved lives. Rhabitat is satisfied with working for Ajodha and cannot appreciate the rationale behind Mr Biswas' ambition to build his own house. His escapism is made more visible when he tells Ajodha, ironically, his exploiter "I wasn't born with money, you hear. And I don't have the scheming mind to make any. My father either"(247). He would rather take care of his physical make up than improve his life. Jagdat is also contented with working for his uncle. He keeps asking for money without looking for it himself. He commits his entire life to unproductive enterprises, flirts around with women and sees this as a measure of manhood. Jagdat and Rhabitat do not attempt to carve their own niches in the society's

economic system and would rather depend on their uncle. They have a pessimistic attitude to life as they “knew that they were tied to Ajodha for as long as he lived”(456). Evidently, they do not see the need to go beyond their present economic situations.

Mungroo and his henchmen are portrayed as enemies of progress and function negatively in the narrative by arresting Mr Biswas' upward mobility . Mungroo himself is a nuisance and to foreground his escapist nature the narrating consciousness asserts:

By profession Mungroo was a road Mender. He preferred to say that he worked for the government, and he preferred not to work. He made it plain that because he defended the honour of the village, the village owed him a living (175)

Moti, Seebaran, Muslim Mahmoud and Mungroo do not carry out any regenerative work. The danger of having escapist people in the society is underscored by the author who holds that Mr Biswas took a long time to pay off the debt that Mungroo and his cronies got him into.

Naipaul further condemns the old men in the text who assembled in the arcade of Hanuman house and engaged in empty talk. They have escaped from the reality of their lives and the author says:

They could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they came for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. They continually talked of going back to India but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown...every evening they came to the arcade... smoked, told stories, and continued to talk of India...(194)

Obviously they give little thought to their individual and societal progress. To a large extent, Naipaul attributes the lack of progress in his characters' lives not to the absence of opportunities but due to their particular individual failings. Most of them are pathetic characters who do not make attempts to improve their conditions of life. The Tulsis, though rich, are not interested in improving the quality of their lives. From the author's point of view, a mere accumulation of wealth is not a measure of development of a society. Govind and W.C. Tuttle show some signs of progress like Popo in *Miguel Street*

after they transcend their escapist tendencies in Shorthills and Port of Spain. Though the author does not approve of their acquired moral values and juxtaposes their plunder with Mr Biswas' honesty, he is more on their side than that of the Tulsi sisters', Hari's, Dehuti's, Ramchand's or even Mungroo's.

3.2.2 ESCAPE AS A FACILITATOR OF PROGRESS

Naipaul's view that escape from incapacitating surroundings to more enabling environments is a desirable act has been an object of literary debates as was earlier demonstrated. This kind of escape, which is a characteristic feature of the works studied, was in reality a characteristic feature of people living in third world societies emerging from colonialism. Prior to independence, most able young men and women escaped the limitations of their colonial societies for the metropolitan ones in order to acquire knowledge. It had long been established that the invincibility of the colonialists demanded the adoption of sober means of fighting for freedom. These entailed becoming familiar with the colonialists' ways of life. As a result African nationalists, for instance, escaped to enabling societies where they acquired such knowledge. Amongst these were Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta who after their return spearheaded the liberation struggle to free their people from western imperialism.

Immediately after independence, many Africans and West Indians escaped from their limiting societies to pursue their studies in the more advanced countries. Renown writers also initiated this escape into more enabling societies in the attempt to acquire more knowledge. Some of these are: Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Claude Mckay, George Lamming, Sam Selvon, Edgar Mitelhozer and even Naipaul himself. The trend is the same today. Countless young men and women are escaping from their limiting societies to the west or the east in search of opportunities which can enable them improve their lives. This kind of escape is the same philosophy behind rural-urban migration. It is also interesting to note that Negritude was a brainchild of scholars who had "escaped" from their "limiting societies" to enabling ones.

Though apparently, Naipaul demonstrates the usefulness of this kind of escape in his fiction, he is constantly aware that a return to the disabling society should be initiated so as to revitalize its condition with the tools acquired from the enabling society. Interestingly, Naipaul himself fails in this respect as he has become a British citizen. The role played by the author's persistent feeling of homelessness, which incidentally gripped East Indians in the new world uprooted from India, cannot be over-emphasized. He could not belong to the India his forefathers left and neither could he identify himself with Trinidad which he did not consider as his ancestral home.

Most of Naipaul's protagonists in the texts under study exhibit an inclination to escape from their limiting environments to more enabling ones. It is Mr Biswas' preoccupation of a life time in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Naipaul's hero seems aware throughout the text that he can only escape from the reality of his life to his own detriment. It does not take him long to appreciate the Tulsis' exploitative and non-progressive mentalities. Shortly after he starts living with Shama, Naipaul holds that Mr Biswas "became cautious. Now he thought of escape. To leave the way clear for that he thought it important to avoid the final commitment. He did not embrace or touch her..."(96).

Mr Biswas is seen to meditate upon his life instead of escaping from it like the other sons-in-law. He realizes the futility of his existence engulfed within the Tulsi cosmos. Thereafter he moves to The Chase which in his rating is a more enabling environment than Hanuman house. He opens a shop and improves the material conditions of his life to a considerable extent. However, his progressive energies are usurped by the escapist Mungroo and his cronies who leave him in heavy debt. Even though the situation appears fundamentally bleak, Mr Biswas does not indulge in fantasy and thus withdraw from such a harsh reality. Although he consoles himself with reading philosophical and fantastical writing he "could never lose the feeling that they were irrelevant to his situation. The books had to be put down. The shop awaited; many problems awaited..."(A House 183). Unlike Mrs Tulsi's sons-in-law, privilege in the Tulsi house does not numb his progressive instincts. The author asserts:

And often, among the pundits and the cushions and the statuary in the dining room eating the enormous meals the Tulsis provided on these occasions, he was assailed by this sense of utter desolation... (190)

He can not indulge in self delusion and constantly appraises his own individual standing in relation to the economic life of the Tulsis.

Again with the opportunity of his upward mobility at The Chase diminishing, Naipaul's hero moves to Green Vale. Propelled by a dire need to preserve his individuality and better the condition of his life, he starts building his own house unlike the other labourers who seem contented with the life of the barrack rooms. Though Mr Biswas at times would engage in some acts of buffoonery which incidentally translates into moments of escape from his situation, he transcends this in time. He reaches a point of awakening in Green Vale which makes him hitherto assume progressive qualities. He realizes "he had for too long regarded situations as temporary; henceforth he would look upon every stretch of time, however short, as precious..." (265-266). His fear of failure like Chinua Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* drives him into mild insanity. He is carried from Green Vale while unconscious to Hanuman house. This environment being innocent of opportunities, Mr Biswas makes a conscious decision to escape to Port of Spain which to him was an area of numerous opportunities. He goes out to the world "to test it for its power to frighten. The past was counterfeit, a series of cheating accidents. Real life, and its especial sweetness, awaited; he was still beginning"(305). In Port of Spain, he is rewarded with a job with the Trinidad sentinel.

The Tulsis' escapist mentality later land Mr Biswas and his family to Shorthills where he still keeps his individuality. As he could not live with the escapism of the Tulsis who could not make any improvements on the estate, he escapes again and erects his own house in the neighbourhood. After this house is destroyed by fire, he later escapes back to Port of Spain. With his eyes targeted on higher sights, Mr Biswas leaves the Trinidad sentinel for the Community Welfare Department where he enjoys a higher remuneration. He starts to nurse hopes of escaping the narrowness of the Tulsi family altogether. He buys his own

house though it is heavily mortgaged. He has realized his dream as he can now assert his own identity and lay claim to some portion of the earth as his. The narrating consciousness asserts that Mr Biswas and his family's lives would be ordered, their memories coherent (581).

Naipaul has Owad undergo a tremendous change in London to underscore how pertinent escape from limiting societies is as a facilitator of progress. Owad, over a short time, has become wiser and analytical. With his return from London, the text undergoes narrative shifts with the author's attitude to him changing. He makes the same Owad he had despised through Mr Biswas restore the dignity of menial work to the young who carelessly sought for white collar jobs. Owad has ceased being a "little god" and now draws admiration even from Naipaul's hero, Mr Biswas.

Though Mr Biswas' progress is not total, he has managed to succeed due to his own escape from the Tulsis' cosmos. Savi and Anand, Mr Biswas' children, also escape their limiting society to metropolitan London. Savi returns, gets a job and helps the family while Anand, who is the author's portrait, does not. Similarly, in *The Mystic Massuer*, the narrator escapes the limiting environment of Port of Spain to pursue his studies in Britain. In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, Nelly Chittaranjan escapes to London and joins the "Regent polytechnic" of her dreams. After her success, she does not forget Elvira but "sent home presents that Christmas, an umbrella for her father, and a set of four China birds for her mother."

In *Miguel Street*, the narrator leaves the street to pursue a degree in medicine in London. The status quo is still maintained in the street. Hat still succumbs to his idleness. The narrator says that he left all this escapism "and walked briskly towards the airplane, not looking back." This aspect of escape, incidentally, is a distinctive feature of most West Indian writers who have escaped to London and continued to write from there. Trumper is made by George Lamming in *The Castle of My Skin* to escape, first to America where he becomes conscious of his people's predicament. After his escape to a more enabling

environment, Trumper is sensitized into a clear comprehension of the history of deprivation of his people.

Naipaul's narrative perspective suggests that he does not approve of those who do not maintain a link with their societies or later return to improve their conditions. Nelly Chittaranjan after her escape to London liases with her family: she sends her parents presents. The author evidently is on Savi's side but not on Anand's in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Anand, who is the author's self-portrait, does not return to Trinidad and ignores his family altogether. He writes under provocation "maudlin, useless letters" to his father. He does not attend his father's cremation and pushes the thought of his society to the fringe of his consciousness. The author's juxtaposition of Anand's negligence to Savi's caring mentality is very instructive. Savi comes back to Trinidad and assumes the duties of her father. Naipaul apparently expresses his feeling of remorse for neglecting his family after he went to London. It is an expression of his guilty conscience. The text lucidly captures the author's internal conflict for abandoning his family. His regret is echoed in *Finding the centre* when he heard of his father's death while in London:

Our family was in distress. I should have done something for them, gone back to them. But, without having become a writer, I couldn't go back. In my eleventh month in London I wrote about Bogart. I wrote my book; I wrote another. I began to go back. (85)

A House for Mr Biswas in a way expresses the uneasiness of a writer who clearly did not practice what he himself believed in his art. His prime task was to establish himself as a writer. His refusal to go back to Trinidad and his adoption of British citizenship could be interpreted as a weakness on his part as a writer. However, it would be illogical and unfair to use this weakness to obscure the author's artistic achievement.

3.3 CONSERVATISM AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO PROGRESS

The wave of change in society affects many aspects of human life. Because this wave cannot be arrested, it is inevitable that human beings have to look for ways of adjusting the old order to accommodate the new one. Taban Lo Liyong, in his *Popular Culture*, argues for a cultural synthesis. He holds that to keep abreast the pace of change "some

oral traditions” have to be subjugated (x). Achebe, in *The Arrow of God*, demonstrates through Ezeulu that the wave of change sweeps away those who blindly resist it. Implicit in these views is the feeling that it is illogical to hold on to all traditional values in a society in flux. This is Naipaul's view as it will be demonstrated here.

Wilson, in *The Psychology of Conservatism*, delineates the major characteristics of the conservatives in the society. He asserts that, firstly conservatives tend to adhere to religion of a dogmatic kind believing it as the ultimate truth. Secondly, they tend to interact with their kind and are often suspicious and hateful of those who are different. Thirdly, they show a preference for what is familiar, traditional, conventional in behaviour generally including art forms, fashions etc. The conservative, he further argues, are anti-hedonistic in outlook and restrict sexual behaviour. They regard pleasure as bad and therefore employ harsh punitive child-rearing methods. They also oppose scientific and progressive ideas and have a tendency to be superstitious and fatalistic believing that one's destiny is not within one's control and that one is a victim of super-natural forces (5-9).

Naipaul exhibits an immense antipathy to conservatism in his selected works. In *An Area of Darkness*, he talks of his distaste for ritual which he argues was performed for its drama. In his fiction, Naipaul demonstrates that conservatism is a principal obstacle to the progress, not only of an individual, but also that of society. Most of the characters whose lives remain socially and economically static are overtly superstitious in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Roger Boshier holds that superstition “indicates a tendency to shift responsibility from the individual onto outside forces beyond” one's control. It also “indicates that the ego might already have 'given up'...renounced the idea that it might determine the individual's fate by overcoming external forces “(qtd. in Wilson 150). *A House for Mr Biswas* begins on a conservative note with Bipti's mother and father seeing external forces as sole determinants of their lives. They see Mr Biswas' six fingers as a sign of bad omen. The pundit called to salvage the situation blows this into wild proportions. Believing in the office of the pundit, they take everything he says as a dry aphorism. When Mr Biswas is lost, they look for him in the pond following the fears instilled into them by the pundit.

This leads to Raghu's death.

Tara is old-fashioned and does not appreciate the value of education. While Mr Biswas is carrying on with his studies for a better future, she has already made plans for him to become a pundit. She evidently does not seem to realize that the society is changing and therefore making certain occupations irrelevant. She is not again conscious of pundit Jairam's hollowness and sends Mr Biswas to him to be trained to be a pundit. Jairam's superficiality as a religious man is suggested by his disapproval of the very practices Hindu religion sanctions when they are performed by somebody else other than himself. The narrator holds:

He believed in God, fervently, but claimed it was not necessary for a Hindu to do so. He attacked the custom some families had of putting up a flag after a religious ceremony; but his own garden was a veritable grove of bamboo poles with red and white pennants in varying stages of decay. He ate no meat but spoke against vegetarianism. (51)

It appears that pundit Jairam has no firm conviction about his religious beliefs and therefore uses his office as a means of enriching himself.

The Tulsis are portrayed by the author as a conservative family. Mrs Tulsi sees it as a calling of a life time to maintain the traditional image of the Hindu family unit. The communal aspect of life in this family set-up is seen to negate individual effort as one is bound to have the feeling that as the fruits of one's labour is supposed to be shared among all the people, there is no need to maximize one's effort. The progress of the sons-in-law remain a dream in the Tulsi household. The Tulsi sisters do not wish to go beyond their traditional patterns of behaviour. As a result, all the economic plans they conceive in Shorthills and Port of Spain do not work.

Mrs Tulsi herself operates "within the sphere of the known" and does not see anything wrong with her endeavour to choose suitors for her daughters. She arranges Shamas marriage to Mr Biswas with business alacrity and gives little thought to her daughter's feelings. Operating from the old order, she seems to be of the view that as a parent she

knew what was good for her children. Mr Biswas is shocked that Shama's feelings about the relationship are immaterial. Dehuti, Mr Biswas' sister, is frowned upon when she elopes with Ramchand. Mr. Biswas sees this custom as outdated and calls it “cat in bag” marriage business adopting misir's term. Mrs Tulsi believes in the Hindu caste system that is being attacked by the Aryan association members like Pankaj rai and Shivlochan. The Aryan association apparently stands for progressive ideas though Naipaul mocks at its members for their superficiality. They have nonetheless a more promising charter than the old order.

It can further be noted that the Tulsi sisters feel uncomfortable when Owad marries a “modern girl” with good education. Similarly, the old order is celebrated in *The Suffrage of Elvira* by Chittaranjan who does not see anything wrong with arranging for Nelly's marriage with Mr Harbans' son. George, in *Miguel Street*, does not hesitate to match Dolly, his daughter with Razor.

Due to their conservatism, the Tulsis live under squalid conditions even though they are rich. Mr Biswas sees Hanuman house as an old building with its hall “smelling of smoke and old wood... and the timbers revealed the ravages of woodlice which left wood looking so new where it was rotten”(87). The house at Shorthills has its own electricity plant that never worked and a swimming pool that could not be used for want of repair. The house itself needed repainting. Chittaranjan in *The Suffrage of Elvira* though rich dresses in rags. Mr Baksh, though a tailor, lives in desolate conditions using this as an excuse to solicit funds from the candidate. All these characters are engaged in mere “primitive accumulation” without improving the quality of their lives.

The conservative of Naipaul's characters indulge in rituals and ceremonies that are portrayed as wanting in religious depth instead of engaging themselves in regenerative work. Tara sticks to traditional Hindu practices as a means of passing time and amusing herself. The text reveals that Mr Biswas' importance to Tara was momentary as it was confined to the time the ceremonies he was required to attend were being conducted. He

was:

... treated with honour; stripped of his ragged trousers and shirt, and in a clean dhoti; he became a different person... In Tara's house he was respected as a brahmin and pampered; yet as soon as the ceremony was over and he had taken his gift of money and cloth and left, he became once more only a labourer's child... living with a penniless mother in one room of a mud hut. (49)

Mr Biswas is used as a mere accessory by Tara so as to attain her selfish gratification. The ceremonies themselves are not obviously geared towards spiritual rejuvenation of the participants but serve to alienate them further.

The house-blessing ceremony performed by Hari for Mr Biswas and Shama at The Chase deplete Mr Biswas' funds and therefore arrest his progress. Naipaul mocks Hari's preoccupation and shows how unhelpful it is. The house Hari "blesses" at Green Vale is destroyed by the storm and is later burned down by the labourers. The reader wonders how protective Hari's charms are.

Shama's conservatism is also an object of Naipaul's satiric onslaught. She is portrayed as a character who expected everything around her to follow the same routine. She does not seem to appreciate the necessity of adapting to changed values. The author sums up her conservatism when he holds:

There was no doubt that this was what Shama expected from life; to be taken through every stage, to fulfil every function; to have her share of the established emotions; joy at a birth or marriage, distress during illness and hardships, grief at a death. Life to be full, had to be this established pattern of sensation... (160)

Naipaul seems to question such a pessimistic attitude to life. Shama's conservatism is one of the obstacles that stand in the way of Mr Biswas' progress.

On the same level, Elvira residents in *The Suffrage of Elvira* are superstitious and therefore conservative. They exhibit a profound interest in the occult. Mr Harbans is a

conservative man. His political destiny, according to him, is in the hands of fate. He sees everything as a sign of his doom in the coming elections. He also believes in the “Obeah cult” like everyone else in Elvira.

Most of the characters in this text live under a perpetual fear. They constantly harbour a firm belief that obeah is being worked against them. Mr Baksh sees Tiger, the dog collected by his son Herbert, as a sign of “obeah” that is being worked against him by Preacher. Mr Cuffy believes Mahadeo is working “obeah” against the Negroes. The Elviran society is deeply permeated by superstition which plays a major role in obstructing their political and economic progress.

The narrator makes the readers aware that these fears are without foundation and as a result invites them to laugh down the characters. The author again with the help of the omniscient narrator perspective enters the characters' stream of consciousness and thereby sheds more light on their conservative natures. To underscore Mrs Baksh's conservatism, the author tells the reader:

She valued the status of her family and felt it deserved watching.
She saw threats everywhere; this election was the greatest.
She couldn't afford new enemies; too many people were
already jealous of her and she suspected nearly everybody
of looking at her with evil eyes...(22)

Because of her conservatism, Mrs Baksh chooses not to involve herself with the electioneering process and therefore helps retard the progress of Elviran society as a whole.

With their perverse reaction to social change, most of the characters in this text engage themselves in petty and mediocre preoccupations that are in tune with their established patterns of life. Mahadeo's preoccupation in the text bear testimony to his conservative mentality. The intense fear that propels him throughout the narrative is depicted as absurd. Through his authorial intrusions into his text, Naipaul shows the harmlessness of “obeah.” Through his adoption of dramatic irony he invites the reader to share with him knowledge

that he withholds from certain characters. This makes more visible the narrow-mindedness of the characters. Due to their conservatism, Elvira residents do not positively participate in the electioneering event. This leads to the backwardness of their own society.

Miguel Street characters also occupy themselves with petty issues as a way of keeping within the sphere of the known modes of life. Manman, Wordsworth, Morgan, George, Elias, Bogart and Big Foot are thrilled by trivial and absurd preoccupations. Hat believes in idleness and remains thus throughout the text. Manman's preoccupation of a life time is mediocre and he does not transcend his established pattern of behaviour. Most Miguel street residents are unwilling to go beyond the culture of the street. They keep within their "conventional modes of behaviour" and therefore do not progress. Those characters who go beyond the culture of the street either leave or are excommunicated. Popo cannot be accommodated by the other members of the street when he transcends the established pattern of his actions and starts working. The narrator changes his outlook to life and leaves the street.

The conservative characters in Naipaul's fiction do not alter the material and social conditions of their own lives. Progress remains, within the texts considered, a mirage for them. Mr Harbans, in *The Suffrage of Elvira*, as mediocre a leader as he is, wins the elections, not because he possesses a commendable political agenda, but because Elvira residents, in need of keeping within the established order, are not ready to fulfill the demands made upon them by the changing society. The Universal adult franchise in Elvira demands a positive participation from the people in the political system. This is bound to make them masters of their own destiny other than shadows of their own selves. Conservatism, in a nutshell, the author implies, numbs the progressive instincts of individuals, obliterates their innovativeness and therefore condemns them into states of perpetual backwardness.

This chapter has demonstrated how Naipaul is a social reformer. It has shown how he condemns individual human limitations he considers impediments to human progress. It

was also shown how he treats escape as a multi-faceted phenomenon both as a promoter and an obstacle to progress. The chapter has also demonstrated how he sees conservatism as not only an impediment to individual progress but also that of the entire society. The researcher argues in this chapter that Naipaul's early works have a social relevance as he is clearly concerned with human development.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 NAIPAUL'S PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN CHARACTERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to evaluate the gender responsiveness of Naipaul's selected works. It analyses his presentation of women characters alongside the males and their varying responses to social issues. At the end of this chapter the researcher intends to answer the following questions: Are women depicted as more escapist and conservative than their male counterparts? If so, whose point of view is this? Are there stereotypical images of women within the texts? Does the author implicitly subscribe to a phallogocentric ideology? Does he, as a male focalizer direct the reader's sympathies towards certain characters and dislike to others through his intrusions into his narratives? Do the texts contain role models?

4.2. NAIPAUL'S REPRESENTATION OF GENDER ROLES AND IMAGES

In order for literary research today to retain an element of authenticity, it must take cognizance of the gender roles and images that inhere within literary texts. Literature, being a tool for social change, must come to the centre of the struggle to free women from male dominance. First an understanding must be gained about the nature of present and past societies. Literature as a mirror of reality can be used for this vital understanding. It is in this context that Naipaul's fiction is analyzed from a gender perspective. This study seeks to detect the presence of patriarchy or lack of it in the society that created Naipaul as a writer. It aims at discovering the underlying principles that guided Naipaul in his delineation of gender roles and images. This inquiry is based on the premise that literary texts are socialisation agents and that the nature of female experience which inhabits Naipaul's fictional world should be elucidated and its capability in conditioning readers' attitudes pointed out. The author reflects, in the works selected, his impression about the society of his childhood of the 1930's and 40's in rural Trinidad and Port of Spain. He mirrors in his fiction, for instance in *A House for Mr Biswas*, a degenerating Hindu culture which apparently it appears treated women peripherally. Naipaul, it should be noted, is

part and parcel of this culture and therefore his representation of women in his works is largely a product of social conditioning. Indeed, it is on the basis of this that this chapter attempts to investigate the sex that is portrayed as more escapist and conservative than the other.

Naipaul, incidentally, seems aware of the women's liberation movement in *A House for Mr Biswas*. The text reveals that Naipaul is conscious of the debate within the society about the plight and the position of women. He draws the reader's attention to the "progressive ideas" advanced by a protestant missionary group of Hindus from India in his fictional world. This group that coalesces itself into the "Arwacas Aryan Association" (AAA) preach against the old order: Hindu caste system, idol worship and the discrimination of women. Mr Biswas, Naipaul's hero, joins this association. The pretensions of this group, it must be noted, are at the centre of the author's satire. Mr Biswas apparently throws his lot with this association as a pretext to hit back at the conservative Tulsi family. The author has a negative attitude to Misir whom he labels as the "idle journalist."

However, the reader is made to appreciate the superficiality of these characters who lack convictions in the progressive ideas they profess to stand for. Whereas Misir attends the meetings of the association because he is "idle", Mr Biswas uses it to express his rebellion against the Tulsi householders. Pankaj Rai is said to have an affair with Nath's daughter-in-law, even though he agitates for the visibility and proper treatment of women (119). Misir appears a confused character in the text. He has embraced progressive ideas but he expresses great shock when he realizes that Mr Biswas' marriage was not conducted according to the Hindu custom. When he finds out that Mr Biswas was allowed to see Shama before the consummation of their marriage, he is clearly outraged. Misir's thinking, like that of the other members of the association, is narrow. The association's charter, though commendable from the narrator's point of view, exists only in its members' imagination.

The images of women that inhere in the texts are multi-various. It is therefore difficult to

pigeon-hole Naipaul as a gender sensitive or insensitive writer. The texts contain positive and negative images of women. It should however be noted that there is a patriarchal attitude that undercuts his presentation of gender roles and images. When measured against the males, women characters in *A House for Mr Biswas* are more conservative and escapist. Mrs Tulsi is the epitome of conservatism in the text. She is perpetually thrilled by unproductive activities; marriage ceremonies for her daughters and the religious rituals performed by Hari. She is uneasy about those characters who harbour a feeling of dissent for her conservative and escapist ways. She is more conservative than her compatriot Seth who, with time, explores the possibilities that crop up within the Tulsi household. Seth is more calculative and wise and uses Mrs Tulsi's conservative nature for his personal enrichment. A closer scrutiny of the power relations within this family illustrate that behind the leadership of Mrs Tulsi, looms the domineering image of Seth. Mrs Tulsi superintends over the household chores and maintains the family's integrity while Seth coordinates the economic and productive enterprises of the Tulsis. In addition, Seth has encroached onto the domestic circle as he seems to have made a decision to marry Shama off to Mr Biswas long before Mrs Tulsi has.

When Mr Biswas attempts to attack the Tulsi cosmos, Mrs Tulsi is presented as powerless before him. While she faints and retires to the "Long room", it is Seth and Govind who bring the situation back to normal by aggressively dealing with Mr Biswas. Seth himself destroys the illusion built by the other characters about Mrs Tulsi's economic might when he hints that not everything in the Tulsi family belongs to the Tulsis in Port of Spain (*A House* 387).

In terms of conservatism, Naipaul, tips the scale in favour of Ajodha when weighed against Tara, his wife. Tara preoccupies herself with what Kabira and Masheti in the ABC of Gender Analysis call reproductive activities(13). These basically are those of the domestic sphere. Ajodha takes part in productive enterprise. He is concerned with taking care of his estates and his companies while Tara is thrilled by religious rites as she celebrates the "merits" of the old order. She does not appreciate the changed values of her

society and sticks to the traditional order desperately. She has a low opinion of formal education for boys and girls. As a result she feels Dehuti should be a housewife while Mr Biswas should become a Pundit. She terminates the latter's education when apparently he is at the foot of a promising preoccupation.

Bipti, Mr Biswas' mother, is portrayed as powerless before Dhari. She is weak and does not put up a fight against him when he intrudes into their home at night to look for the money allegedly hidden by Raghu. She succumbs to male tyranny and sells the land to him. Her, "fight" is juxtaposed by the author to the little boys', especially Pratap, who emerges the stronger of the two. She thoughtlessly gives in to Dhari's feeble threats and ironically denies the family wealth from the oil that is later discovered on the land.

There is a patriarchal attitude that undercuts the infrastructure of Naipaul's narratives. Interestingly, all the Hindu ceremonies in *A House for Mr Biswas* are performed for the selfish gratification of the female characters. It is the male characters who perform them for the women. The text reveals that Ajodha, for instance, holds religious ceremonies when prompted by Tara(49). Mrs Tulsi has them performed by Hari for her selfish aggrandizement. In addition, Mr Biswas is forced by Shama to allow Hari to "bless" his house at The Chase and at Green Vale.

It is again the women characters who indulge their every whim during the marriage ceremonies performed in Short hills. Most of the family's economic energies are spent here which could otherwise have been used to rehabilitate the estate. The author draws the reader's attention to the wastefulness of these ceremonies with his authorial critical intrusion. He states:

Action was swift and sudden. Details-the bridegrooms and dowries-had been easily settled, and now the puzzling estate was forgotten and all energy went to preparing for the weddings. (403)

The squalor and continuing deterioration of the estate is attributed by the author to the conservatism and the escapism of the women characters, especially Mrs Tulsi and the

sisters who were at the forefront of the ceremonies.

On an economic plane, measured against men, women characters are presented as being of no consequence and only serve to retard the progress of the society. Whereas Ajodha is a genius for sound economic plans, Tara's preoccupations of a life time are mediocre. Men are depicted as more development conscious. The economic mainstays of the windows are presented by the author as quite impractical and creations of short-sighted people. Perhaps the author, by implication, being a product of a male constructed culture, subscribes to the view that women are not suited for productive enterprise. While the locus of activity of the women characters in the text is the house, the male characters' is in the estate, away from the house. The sons-in-law work in the estates away from Hunuman house apart from Hari who apparently is an object of the author's satire. The Tulsi sisters stay indoors and participate in household chores, sometimes engaging in frivolities and petty family gossips and rivalries. Similarly, Mrs Baksh, Mrs Chittaranjan, Dhaniram's wife and daughter-in-law stick most of the time to the household in *The Suffrage of Elvira*. In this text, the men "go out to campaign".

The windows' economic projects in Shorthills in *A House for Mr Biswas* are presented as absolutely unviable. They are portrayed as a people who lack foresight. They are seen implementing their economic plans at the spur of the moment instead of taking some time to conduct meaningful feasibility studies. They have no "business minds" from the author's point of view. The author informs the reader that with the settlement of Americans in the mountains in Shorthills and their subsequent movement through the village, the windows consequently "built a shack at the corner of the lane and stocked it with Coca cola, cakes, oranges and avocado pears." The American lorries do not stop at their shack and therefore this project fails. Their narrow-mindedness makes them feel that the Americans desire other goods and this prompts them to spend "some money on liquor license and , with great trepidation" .spend "more money on cases of rum"(407). They do not take time to evaluate accurately the needs of the Americans. As a result, the rum business further fails. Interestingly, at exactly the same period, the author makes Mr.W.C Tuttle attain an

economic breakthrough by hiring out the lorry he had bought from the money earned from the illegal sale of the Tulsi cedar planks to the Americans. Possessing a “business mind”, he is clever enough to gauge the needs of the Americans and therefore supplies them with what they desire much.

Govind, on the other hand, buys a taxi that does very well in Port of Spain. W.C. Tuttle further opens up a quarry on the estate which also succeeds. These individual economic enterprises are portrayed as more viable than those of the widows combined. All the economic enterprises conceived thereafter by the widows fail: the chicken farm started after “much whispered discussion and ostentatious silence when other sisters, husbands or their children were near”; the mill described by the author as “two circular slabs of toothed stones resting one on the other”; the cloth making business which makes them join sewing classes at the Royal Victorian Institute where after a short while “one of the widows despairing of any long-term returns from the cloth making scheme had started selling oranges on the pavement through one of her sons...”. In a word, the widows are later unable to stand on their own feet and would rather be considered by Mr Biswas as “Deserving Destitutes”. With their efforts being self frustrating, they, in the end “gave up the cloth making scheme and all other schemes” (495).

The widows' failure is juxtaposed by Naipaul to the sons-in-law's successes. Govind and W.C. Tuttle succeed to a considerable extent though the author does not approve of their acquired moral values. The text seems to subscribe to a phallogocentric ideology and therefore depicts women as unable to thrive in the business world.

Again, it appears in this text that women have reconciled themselves to the myth of gender inequality. The Tulsi sisters belittle themselves in the eyes of their smaller brothers. They express their shallowness to Owad and Shekhar. Though they are definitely older than the brothers, they have relinquished the leadership of the Tulsi family to their brothers, precisely to Owad after his return from London. Shekhar has a mind of his own and finds himself a suitor, Dorothy. He in this respect transcends the culture of the

sanctioned arranged marriages. Owad has become a doctor. The sisters are little perturbed about their static lives. They express their naivete by assuming unquestionably Owad's attitude to issues because he has come from London. Everything Owad, their smaller brother says, is an aphorism to them. As a result they become overtly disturbed when Mr. Biswas challenges him. They, in essence, affirm their inferior position and by extension that of the entire female sex. Naipaul sums up their escapism and their mediocre preoccupations thus:

They cooked below the house and sang and were gay....
They were even anxious to exaggerate the difference between their brothers and themselves. It was as if by doing so they paid their brothers a correct reverence, a reverence which comforted and protected the sisters by assigning them a place again. (548)

Their affirmation of the subordinate position of women helps to legitimize male dominance. Owad himself has a domineering attitude towards his elder sisters and accepts the leadership position offered to him as the norm.

The image of Anand in the text looms large over Savi's. He is portrayed as being more enthusiastic in school than Savi. He is given more narrative space than his sister. He is shown to respond more positively to the novels read to them by Mr Biswas than Savi. Savi, who is older, is overshadowed by Anand. His life at school is more at the centre of the narrative as is opposed to Savi's. He is considered by the parents to be destined for college education unlike his elder sister. (485). The girls are apathetic to their situation. Savi, it appears does not feel insulted when it is only Anand who is provided with private lessons. She is portrayed as completely reconciled to it as she holds that she was glad "God did not give" her "a brain" (369). Obviously Mr Biswas posits his hopes for the future on Anand. His attitude, the reader is shown, is misguided as Savi, even though treated peripherally emerges as more helpful and the prudent of the two.

Shama, who is one of the principle characters in *A House for Mr Biswas*, is treated both positively and negatively. She exhibits, at various stages of the narrative, positive traits and an image of a strong woman who does not succumb completely to masculine invasion.

At other times, she is the conservative, thoughtless woman who obstructs her husband's progress. She is more conservative and escapist than her husband, Mr Biswas. She performs stereotypical gender roles and therefore confines herself to reproductive activities while Mr Biswas is concerned with productive enterprise. She is a strong woman in the domestic sphere and confronts Mr Biswas with condescending words just like Mrs Baksh in *The Suffrage of Elvira*. She does not see the importance of escaping the limiting Tulsis cosmos as a means of creating the necessary atmosphere for her family's economic take off. She does not appreciate the need for economic independence which is key to economic development. She rebels against Mr Biswas' attempts to break free of the Tulsis. She is a non-progressive when viewed alongside her husband.

Shama, being an escapist character, indulges in wasteful spending that slows down the pace of Mr Biswas' progress. She uses money for unproductive enterprises and therefore depletes Mr Biswas' profits. She is seen to buy a glass cabinet to express her "economic abilities" to the Tuttles who had bought a statue of a naked woman that clearly tampered with her pride. The glass cabinet is bought for showing-off and the author draws the reader's attention to this:

She spread out the Japanese coffee set on one shelf. The other shelves remained empty, and the glass cabinet for which she had committed herself to many months of debt, became another of her possessions which were regarded as jokes. (435)

The author's patriarchal attitude is kept in the background of the narrative. He implicitly attributes the squalid circumstances at The Chase, for instance to Shama and not to Mr Biswas as he states that "she had never urged him to make improvements and was always interested when something was done at Hanuman House... The Chase was a place where Shama only spent time; she had always called Hanuman House home..."(191). This is presented as Mr. Biswas' stream of consciousness but the reader knows by implication the views are those of the author.

It is noteworthy to point out that when Mr Biswas conceives of building his own house at Green Vale, he hesitates telling her of his plans as he knows she would not give him the

moral support he needs. She later considers Mr Biswas' effort of erecting this house as a waste of money ironically forgetting the amount she has spent on the house blessing ceremony performed by Hari. She drags Mr Biswas down just like Tinka drags Wamala down in John Ruganda's *The Burdens*.

At other times, however, Shama is a “helper” and she can be seen filing the stories Mr Biswas wrote when he worked for the Sentinel in Port of Spain. She also keeps the family accounts though she is caricatured in this preoccupation. She is made an object of Naipaul's satire as her task is portrayed as futile because it could not improve the economic condition of the family. Naipaul says that she kept these accounts “partly as a reproach to Mr Biswas and partly because she enjoyed it.” Her accounts are further described by the author as always wrong (339).

Shama, again looks down upon Mr Biswas' attempts to further his journalistic career by using his salary increment to finance his lessons. She is evidently not concerned with the family's progress. Her response to Mr Biswas' decision to buy his own house is appalling. She remains sceptical. When she gets wind of his intentions, she breaks into tears (567). Mr Biswas buys a house in Sikkim street from a clerk whom he meets in the city. Later, Mr Biswas and Shama realize that the clerk had conned them as the house is in a very bad condition. Naipaul, at this juncture, enters the narrative and shows Shama as the cause of this predicament. He stresses that Shama did not have a keen look at the house before it was bought. Unconcerned, she only looked at it from:

The moving prefect. She saw concrete walls softly coloured in the light of the street lamp, with romantic shadows thrown by the tree next door. And she who might have noticed the grossness of the staircase, the dangerous carve of the beams... she who might have noticed the absence of a back door, the absence of a hundred small but important touches, sat in the car overcome by anger and dread. (570)

The implication in this is that Mr Biswas could not notice such details as he was blinded by an urgent desire of a life time to own his own house. Though this accentuates Shama's escapist nature, one wonders why Naipaul considers her as the only person who would

have noticed these small details. Perhaps Naipaul subscribes to the conventional thought that it is only women who have a thorough understanding of the household as it is basically the locus of their activity. Though Shama is later reconciled to the house, the author's implication is that the damage has already been done.

Naipaul's patriarchal attitude in his character presentation is also evident in his treatment of Savi. As was noted earlier, Savi emerges as a positive character, though she is marginalized in terms of narrative space. She is taken to school but portrayed as less enthusiastic in her studies than Anand. The reader is not told about her life in school as is the case with Anand's. Naipaul literally rushes her through school and takes her abroad. Interestingly, the author does not show where she goes to pursue her studies. He does so with regard to Anand. The other people's reaction to her homecoming is treated differently from Owad's. The reader is further not made aware of the nature of her job unlike in Owad's case whom it is said becomes a doctor. The image of Savi is positive as it shows women as being helpful. She, at the end of the text, becomes the breadwinner of her father's family. This destroys the myth that women are dependants in society. As a positive character who takes up the responsibility of taking care of her father's family after her return, the reader expected a lot from the author. Operating from a phallogocentric ideology, Naipaul does not see the need to give the reader more details about her.

Similarly, the same manner of presentation of women characters is evident in *The Suffrage of Elvira*. Women players in the text have been pushed to the fringe of the narrative. They are portrayed as more escapist and conservative than their male counterparts. Most of them take a negligible role in the electioneering process which is the event around which the narrative revolves. The two women characters the reader confronts at the outset signify religious fanaticism and the subsequent withdrawal from reality. Women, in this case therefore, are used as symbols of religious dogmatism and fanaticism which, incidentally, are negative qualities.

Like Shama in *A House for Mr Biswas*, Mrs Baksh, emerges a strong woman only in the

domestic sphere. She uses stern words unsparingly against her husband in the household. She is more escapist than her husband as she chooses to stay away from the mainstream of the campaign. She indulges in superstitious activities that cannot contribute to the betterment of the Elviran society. The author bestows upon her false power within the household. Outside, in the political and economic life of Elvira, she is driven into insignificance. She has, from the narrator's point of view, a childlike mentality as she cannot comprehend the seriousness of the electioneering process. She is the most conservative and escapist character in the text. Her fear of "Obeah" rises to a peak and becomes almost a neurosis.

Mrs Baksh is caricatured by the author. Her conservatism is humorously blown to wild proportions. About the campaign, she says, "Every body just washing their foot and jumping in this democracy business. But I am promising you, for all the sweet it begin sweet, it going to end damn sour" (The suffrage 43). The text also reveals that it is Mrs Baksh who facilitates her husband's indulgence into superstition. The reader knows, however, that Mr Baksh does not believe in "obeah" but takes this as an opportunity to demonstrate his wit. His fear of "obeah" is overdone and the reader knows that this escapade is a device to draw attention to himself.

The two white women Mr Harbans nearly kills at the beginning of the text are overtly escapist. The philosophy they are propagating is fatalistic. According to them engaging oneself in politics is a pervasion as politics itself is an undivine institution. The narrator's low opinion of these women is exemplified by the names he gives them. In essence, the narrator chooses to give them labels but not names. He uses adjectives: Tall and Short as if his objective is to describe them and not to name them as definite personalities.

Nelly Chittaranjan is reduced, in the text, to the level of a pawn in a chess game so to speak. She is used by others as a tool for the campaign. Chittaranjan hopes to get her married to Mr Harban's son as the latter's reciprocation for the help he gets from him. She is a lesser being when juxtaposed to her agemates Foam and Lorkhoor who are given

“noble” functions according to Elviran standards. While the two participate in the campaign, Nelly does not. The implication is that politics is less suited for women. She has, against her will, reconciled herself to the supposed impending marriage with Mr Harban's son and therefore succumbs to the values of a male constructed culture. She sees no alternatives even though she knows the marriage would contravene her dream of going to the ‘Poly’. The narrator tells the reader that “she knew she was being married off quickly only because she hadn't been bright enough to get into one of the girl's high schools...If she had to marry him, she had to; it was her own fault...(95).

Naipaul's patriarchal attitudes are again evident in his treatment of Nelly Chittaranjan. He proceeds to clarify Nelly's major interest in going to the ‘Poly’ in London. The narrator holds that her major concern with the ‘Poly’ was the “dances”. The author's critical and mocking tone is elucidated by his foregrounding of “dances” which is in italics thus making it to stick out. The reader's attention is consequently drawn to Nelly's “great” dream. This is followed by an exclamation mark which is a manipulative device used by the author to condition the reader's attitude. Her reason for going to the ‘Poly’, from the narrator's point of view, mitigates the father's decision to marry her off without her consent.

Nelly Chittaranjan is regarded with more animosity than Foam when it is supposed that they had transgressed against social norms. Her name is more soiled than Foam's when it was held by Elvira residents that they had a sexual affair. She is considered as a social deviant while nothing is said about Foam. She is treated unfairly as the reader knows that the allegations made against her by Haq are false. As a result, her studies are prematurely terminated by her father. Foam is not even reprimanded by his father. This is an exemplification of gender bias inherent in the text.

Women in this text, it can therefore be noted, are portrayed negatively as epitomes of conservatism and escapism. However in the domestic sphere, they dominate, though not in terms of decision making but in terms of verbal rhetorics. Further, their locus of activity is

the house where they engage like those of *A House for Mr Biswas* in reproductive activities. Dhaniram's wife is kept at the periphery of the narrative and the reader knows very little about her. Her daughter-in-law is relegated to the kitchen and she performs stereotypical women's roles, cooking for the campaign team made up of men. The power women seem to have in this text is only verbal as vital decisions affecting the society are made by men.

However, Naipaul's presentation of women characters in *Miguel Street* is more favourable. Popo's wife is depicted as a hardworking woman and she is at first the breadwinner of the family. While she worked to sustain the family, Popo, her husband "made the thing without a name." He is little perturbed by this kind of set-up and justifies his idleness by holding that, "women and them like work. Man not made for work" (19). Evidently, the reader commiserates with the wife and not the husband. On the same footing, George's wife works in the house and the yard while he "sat on the front concrete step outside the open door of his house" (27). The reader's sympathy for George's wife is solicited by the text when she dies as a result of her husband's brutality. Dolly, the daughter, is portrayed as a shallow character who suffers at the tyranny of her father. She is more escapist than her brother Elias and succumbs to her father's brutality unquestionably. She also marries Razor without raising any eyebrows. She is passive and fits in with stereotypical images of women.

Mrs Morgan towers over her husband and reduces him to his level when she finds him with another woman. She stands her ground as a strong woman and does not retreat when confronted with masculine violence. Whereas most of the women characters in this text exhibit positive characteristics, Laura remains an escapist character throughout the story. She is in the direction of the author's satirical barbs. The reader sees in Laura, a woman who has turned her back to the harsh reality of her life. She does not do anything to prevent herself from falling into a moral and economic abyss. She rejoices in child bearing and interprets her entanglements with different men as a sign of strength. Her life remains a mystery to the little narrator. The author's position, it appears, is that Laura is a woman

crippled by her own escapism and therefore succumbs to the deceptive skills of men to gain her sustenance. She escapes from her own reality instead of doing something to arrest her fall. However, the author in a way sympathies with Laura as he asks: "But who could Laura look to for money to keep her children?"

Apparently, Naipaul's treatment of Laura's case seems to limit the possibilities for women to attain economic breakthroughs. Implicit in this portrayal is the patriarchal feeling that a woman does not have other alternatives when pushed to the fringe of society. Lorna, commits suicide when she falls into the same trap. Laura does not reconcile herself to her daughter's predicament and drives Lorna to her death. While men who reach a dead end in their lives within the text have many options, for instance, leaving the street, Lorna does not have. She is excommunicated by the mother. Men have resources to escape to more enabling environments, while women in this text do not have. Because of the way she was socialized within the society, Lorna could not see escape to other lands as a solution like Morgan, Big Foot, Edward and the narrator.

Mrs Hereira adopts at first the stereotypical image of women. She has reconciled herself in the beginning to masculine invasion as she felt this was what was expected of her by the society. She, however, undergoes character transformation as the narrative progresses. The narrator's mother, on the other hand, is a positive image of women. She stands on her two feet for her son. She envisages a better life for him and therefore she is not an escapist. She is conscious of the culture of escapism flooding Miguel street and its dangers in arresting her son's progressive instincts. Though the narrator felt disgusted by the escapism of the street, it is his mother who suggests that he escape to London. He had awoken to the escapist mentality of Miguel street residents as he says he "looked critically at the people around him". It is his mother though who gets him a scholarship to study "drugs" in London.

Despite this positive presentation, the image of women as sex objects still looms large in the text. A number of women, presumably prostitutes, occupy George's house with the

Americans after his wife's exit. Eddoes brings in a stray woman to Bogart's house in the latter's absence. Laura is a sex symbol. Mrs Hereira, Mrs Popo, Edward's woman, Eddoes' and Hat's are portrayed as having loose moral values and therefore run away from their husbands. These women are presented as emotionally unstable people whose lives are directionless within the text.

Mrs Bhakcu lives in reverence of her husband. She is seen sometimes to engage in a war of words with Mrs Morgan. She has willingly receded to her subordinate position and has reconciled herself to masculine violence. She seems to have subscribed to the assumptions of a male-dominated culture that sanctions wife beating. She is seen to keep the cricket bat Bhakcu usually beats her with "clean and well-oiled" and cannot lend it to Boyee (154). Like the Tulsi sisters in *A House for Mr Biswas*, she engages in petty family rivalries with Mrs Morgan instead of embarking on regenerative enterprise.

Women in *Miguel Street* are portrayed as lacking "business minds" just like those in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Mrs Bhakcu's idea of the lorry which she "made the husband to buy" (157) does not bear any fruit. The taxis she consequently buys do not have any economic returns. Her other business ventures also fail: rearing of hens, selling of bananas and oranges. The narrating voice reveals that she embarked on these business projects "for her own enjoyment than for the little money it brought in" (163).

Arguably, Naipaul in *Miguel Street* seeks to destroy the myth of male superiority. He makes fun of male chauvinists like Popo, Morgan, Nathaniel and Eddoes. He portrays male hollowness and therefore draws women's attention to male weakness. Hat's male chauvinism is mocked and condemned. Commenting on the beatings Mrs Hereira received from Tony, Hat holds: "...is a good thing for a man to beat his woman every now and then but this man does it like exercise, man" (136). Hat's feeble and irrational thinking is cleverly elucidated by the author by making his assertion self-contradictory. Beating women now and then, which he believes as necessary, is the same thing ironically practiced by Tony whom he obviously sets out to disparage.

Naipaul confines his women characters, though, to a large extent strong, to reproductive duties. Popo's wife works in a house. Though she is a redeemable image of a woman, she is later portrayed as a morally loose woman who elopes with the gardener of the "big house". She is shown to put material considerations before love and thus returns to Popo when he appears to be doing well economically. The text also promotes the traditional stereotypical view that women are their worst enemies. Women in *Miguel Street*, to a large extent dislike each other. All the women in the text take an immediate dislike to the women brought to the street by Hat and Edward. Mrs Morgan and Mrs Bhakcu considered Dolly, Hat's wife "a lazy good-for nothing" (209). Most men in the text are presented as being weaker than their wives. The text invites the reader to laugh at such men who reduce themselves to such levels. The author, it appears, evinces a patriarchal attitude as he seems to subscribe to the view that men who reduce themselves to the level of women should be ridiculed and made fun of.

In conclusion, it can be noted that Naipaul presents women characters in his first work, *Miguel Street*, more positively than in his later works, *The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. In *Miguel Street*, women characters generally stand above men and at times play stereotypical men's roles. Though a patriarchal attitude looms large in the background of the text, Naipaul laughs at the escapism of men and therefore destroys the myth of their superiority status over women. Though both sexes are seen to be conservative and escapist, he is more on the side of women than that of men. He, however operates from a patriarchal orientation as he depicts women whose locus of activity is the home.

In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, Naipaul's women characters recede into insignificance. They are portrayed as more escapist and conservative than men. He has changed sides. Men are at the centre of action while women are treated peripherally. They contribute a lot in slowing down the pace of Elvira's progress. They have also withdrawn from the political system. In *A House for Mr Biswas*, the author's negative portrayal of women reaches its peak. Only

Savi in the text emerges as a positive character though she is marginalised in terms of narrative space.

The writer, it is arguable, raises the consciousness of women to the vulnerability of men in *Miguel Street*. However, in the second two texts considered, the images of women are largely negative and therefore damaging. Such negative images and stereotypical gender roles in a way help affirm female inferiority and in another level legitimize male dominance. It is also noted that the texts generally do not have role models that can be emulated by female readers. This manner of portrayal of gender images and roles has the danger of condemning women into a state of perpetual complacency in the face of a male constructed culture that treats them unfairly. This study, it should however be noted, seeks in no way to condemn the author for his portrayals. On the contrary, it helps to show the inherent gender bias in the existing literature. In addition, it argues for a revisionist mentality in creativity as it aptly recognizes that negative women images in literary phenomenon legitimize and consequently perpetuate male dominance.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 NAIPAUL'S USE OF SATIRE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at Naipaul's exploitation of the possibilities within satire in order to expose the individual human limitations mentioned earlier. It does not only seek to discuss the use of this narrative technique in his works but also to elucidate his satirical attitude to social life. The chapter will demonstrate how the writer has gone beyond some of the traditional elements of satire and improvised a variety of narrative strategies which have given him an authentic personal style.

5.2 SATIRE: A FORMAL EXPRESSION OF NAIPAUL'S ATTITUDE TO LIFE

Satire is the most central aspect of style Naipaul utilizes to ridicule the escapist and conservative characters in the texts considered in this study. The preponderance of this device in Naipaul's works is not accidental. His satirical eye is a function of the society that created him as a writer. His satire arises out of his indignation at the people in his society who seemed to fall below his standards and left the destiny of their lives to chance.

Satirists, it should be noted, are at work not only in their artistic exploits but also have habitual intolerance of the imperfections of human kind. Such a condescending attitude to life is usually a consequence of more subtle social and historical circumstances that impinge on their own persons. A closer examination of Naipaul's life and his artistic creations point to a repeated focus on the underside of life. This is interpretable as the writer's idiosyncratic way of coming to terms with a world that is fundamentally at odds with his moral and intellectual sensibilities. Arguably, Naipaul's satirical tone is accentuated by his brahminical ancestry and his acute sense of rootlessness that has made him hypersensitive to his surroundings. Indeed, this sensitivity can perhaps be seen as the writer's unconscious effort to define his identity in a world that is alien to him. Interestingly, some critics have viewed the author as "the most observant and the least metaphysical of West Indian writers..."(Ramchand 8).

As his biographical data reveals, Naipaul began to be sensitive to the insipidity of the Hindu way of life at an early age (*An Area* 35). His rage is directed at the Trinidad Indians who were not reconciled to their presence in Trinidad but focused their thoughts on the lost glory of India, their ancestral home (*An Area* 30). Naipaul's perceptive abilities intensify as he matures with age and embarks on his explorative missions. In his non-fictional works, which are narratives based on his travels, Naipaul's eyes are seen targeted on the little absurdities and inconsistencies that surround the human race. The details he exposes about the societies that he visited: Trinidad, British Guyana, Surinam, Martinique and Jamaica in *The Middle Passage*, are disheartening. He is seen denouncing the Trinidadians who believed that "to be modern" was "to ignore local products and to use those advertised in American magazines"(46). Similarly, the Jamaicans are in the direction of the author's sharp criticism in the same non-fictional book for their complacency in the face of deteriorating and dehumanizing conditions. The "Rastafarians", for instance, are condemned as "they will vote for no party because Jamaica is not their country and the Jamaican government not one they recognize..."(217).

Naipaul does not give his satiric pen a rest till the end of *An Area of Darkness*. He is seen shocked by what he terms as "the Indian" sense of "withdrawal and denial". His sense of cleanliness makes him frown at "defecating Indians beside the railway tracks" whom he says are:

never spoken of ;... are never written about... are not
mentioned in novels or stories...But the truth is that
Indians do not see these squatters...(76-77)

The tone is basically the same in *Among the Believers*, *India: A wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. There is thus an explicit thematic and formal unity in all Naipaul's works, whether fiction or non-fiction: he preoccupies himself with exposing the physical and moral disorder that has contributed to the detriment of society. He is concerned with the imperfections of mankind that seemingly obstruct their own progress. However, this has earmarked him as a target for criticism by third world writers and critics.

Naipaul nonetheless zeroes in on the underside of life, the incongruities of vice rather than the congruities of virtue. Such an attitude to reality is usually prompted by a love of the right and hatred for the ugly and beastly. As Sutherland rightly holds, the satirist is nearly always:

... a man who is abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is... Much of the world's satire is undoubtedly the spontaneous, or self-induced, overflow of powerful indignation, and acts as a catharsis for such emotions...(4 -5)

Naipaul's satirical spirit should be viewed in this context. As a result of their style of writing, satirists have been targets of much prejudice since literary history. They are from time to time, viewed as "destructive". The satirist is said to "destroy what is there (and what to many appear to be functioning quite satisfactorily) and he does not necessarily offer to fill the vacuum that he has created..."(Sutherland 1).

Arguably, Naipaul's satire is reformatory and its sharpness springs from his indignation at a people that were overtly escapist and conservative. He was impelled to write and urge his people to consider where they were heedlessly drifting and therefore take charge of their own destinies. He is concerned with regenerating his society, a characteristic feature of satirists, who Wolfe argues are inspired by their "incorrigible love of the right and just" and whose task therefore is "ascetic... not to give life, but rather to kill the causes of spiritual death" (7-8).

5.3.0 THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES USED IN THE REALIZATION OF SATIRE IN NAIPAUL'S SELECTED WORKS

Naipaul has adopted an admirable formula for exposing the social vices of humankind without making the objects feel unnecessarily uncomfortable. By use of his satirical barbs, he attempts to unveil ugly facts about his West Indian society. These truths are masked under the guise of humour that pervades the overall infrastructure of his narratives. In consequence, there is a communion between Naipaul and his readers which enables them to decode the latent truth that lies underneath the current of his stories.

The author has transcended the limitations imposed by the traditional definition of satire whose laid down elements were: invective, lampoon, burlesque and irony. Naipaul, like other modern writers, feels that some of the traditional elements of satire cannot suit his "ascetic" intentions in a society that is changing at a rapid rate. He has replaced invective and lampoon, for instance, with more subtle and often elusive elements which are to be found in the subtexts of his narratives. These elements are mainly products of linguistic patterning designed to evoke humour or bewilderment as they puncture the imperfections of their objects. Evidently, satire has, to use Worcester's words, "followed the usual zigzag course of human progress..."(147). The narrative strategies that Naipaul has adopted are: witty compression and expansion of meaning, low level diction, authorial voice and intrusions, irony and hyperbolic discourse, and techniques of absurdity and creation of caricatures. In every respect, these techniques, which broadly fall on description, diction, grammatical patterns and the narrator's voice, embody Naipaul's satiric and comic goals and are geared towards societal regeneration.

5.3.1 NAIPAUL'S WITTY COMPRESSION AND EXPANSION OF MEANING

Compression of meaning to create a cutting humour is a satiric design that Naipaul has adopted to puncture the conservative and the escapist of his characters. He has not manipulated the resource of language to create humour as an end in itself. Naipaul's humour is essentially functional in the larger framework of his narratives as it serves the purpose of exposure. Compelled by his dislike of those who fall below his standards, he seeks the service of humour as he is too civilized to get into invective. Humour, even Freud noted, indicates, a suppression of the dislike one has for those who stray from the right path (102-103).

Naipaul's humour is polemical. He provokes readers to laugh at the imperfections of his characters. It does not take long for their laughter to be cut short after appreciating the alarming implications that the author's hostile humour is also directed at them. Using the Mayor's words in Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, the readers realize with shock that they are laughing at their own selves. Humour not only serves this pedagogical

mission but also makes Naipaul's texts readable. To harness this hostile humour, the author has embarked on a unique linguistic organizational process which entails contracting of semantic units of a paragraph or a whole set of events into a punch-line that is foregrounded in the texts. As Walter puts it, such a compression of meaning "is a classic element in the technique of humour" and the punch-lines or the dry aphorisms so created are irresistible as "they imply so much"(13). Walter's assertion echoes Jean Paul Richter, a German novelist, who once held that "brevity is the body and soul of wit, it is its very self"(qtd. in Freud 13).

The punch-line created by Naipaul's compression of the semantic content of a paragraph or a series of events consists of short, simple and sensational sentences that are given prominence in the texts. These are made to stick out as if they were paragraphs by themselves. They have a definite verb, subject and in some cases a direct object. These sentences are essentially the locus of Naipaul's hostile humour. He has positioned them at various strategic locations in the mainstream of his narratives and therefore made them aesthetically appealing to the reader. Because they occur at the beginning of chapters or paragraphs and at other times at their end, they serve anticipatory and summative roles respectively.

Mr Harbans' superstitious nature in *The Suffrage of Elvira* is exposed to the reader's ridicule by such a brief sentence. His conservatism is concretized by the statement: "It was clearly a sign" (11). The reader is invited to laugh at Mr Harbans who sees everything as a sign of doom. He/she is kept aware by the author that Mr Harbans' fear is without foundation as it is based on very flimsy grounds. Readers laugh at his unquestionable belief in the occult. Further, his blind trust of the egoistic Baksh and his son, Foam is epitomized by another of the author's short and witty sentences. After his arrival at the Baksh's home and his encounter with their egoism, the author states "Harbans suffered." (15). This sentence draws its power from its brevity and consequently forces the reader to erupt uproariously. The reader sees how mistaken and short-sighted Mr Harbans is to assume that Mr Baksh and his son owe him total allegiance. As readers laugh, they are at the same

time jolted into alertness by Mr Baksh and his son's egoistic tendencies which later rob Elvira of its progress.

Realizing that there was not any other way out than engaging Foam as his campaign manager on a fee of 75 dollars, the reader is told: "Harbans hung his head" (21). The imagery inherent in this semantically compressed sentence and its own brevity acts as the energy of the humour. The reader laughs at Mr Harbans' discomfiting situation and is again reminded of the egoistic motives that inspire Foam and his father to help him in his campaign. In addition, when he is treated with biscuits and aerated water by the Bakshes after formal "negotiations" are over, the reader is told: "The little Bakshes concentrated". In as much as this statement elicits the reader's mirth, it also underlines the superficialities of the hosts whose pretensions of goodwill and generosity are juxtaposed to their heavy handedness when dealing with their own children. Moreover, the situation amplifies the acute sense of egoism peculiar to the Bakshes. The reader knows that Mr Harbans is entertained, not as a sign of courteousness, but as a way of reciprocating the favours he is to do the family later.

Naipaul again says "Chittaranjan called" when the latter is notified about Foam's supposed flirtation with his daughter. This concise sentence which is loaded with suspense serves an anticipatory function. Readers know the motive behind Chittaranjan's urgent call. Mr Baksh is not privy to this knowledge. They are therefore emotionally prepared to enjoy the terrible encounter between Mr Baksh and Chittaranjan. The latter's accusation, readers know, is untrue and so they are invited to laugh at his mediocrity as clearly he acts on impulse. He does not take time to verify the truth value of Haq's allegation which, incidentally, he gets from a third party, Ramlogan. Naipaul, in essence, is exposing the shallowness of the so-called opinion figures in Elvira and makes the reader wonder how such people can be trusted with the destiny of others.

The author's incessant comic butt on his characters is again demonstrated at the time Cuffy dies shortly before the elections. When this tragedy is interpreted by his campaign team as

an opportune moment for him to pay the “negroes” their “entrance fee” the reader is told: “Harbans was very stupefied by his good fortune to react” (194). This not only evokes the reader's laughter but also causes bewilderment. Mr Harbans takes up the cue and capitalizes on Cuffy's death to gain total support from Elvira residents. As the reader laughs, he/she is also made to appreciate Mr Harbans as the rogue he is. This incidence also foregrounds the people's escapist tendencies. They are seen getting satisfied with short-term immediate gains at the expense of the long term welfare of Elvira.

The readers are in the final analysis compelled to have their last laugh when Naipaul compresses the political showdown in Elvira into yet another of his witty sentences. The events they have witnessed in the text are summed up by the line: “And so democracy took root in Elvira”(223). Readers have seen how Elvira residents have “sold” their political destiny for a few tokens. They share with the author the knowledge that Mr Harbans has no obligation to better Elvira society as he has “paid the entrance fee”. They laugh at Elvira residents and anticipate the worst for them as they are made to harvest the fruits of their escapist tendencies. As Naipaul gives his pen a rest, readers are prompted to blame these people for condemning their society into a state of perpetual backwardness.

The eccentricity and escapism of Miguel street residents in *Miguel Street* is exposed by the same short but semantically laden sentences. The writer's indefatigable desire to evoke hostile humour is evident in his description of Bogart. He holds: “He was the most bored man I ever knew (10). This line elucidates Bogart's withdrawal from an active participation in social life. It seems to imply a lot by saying very little. Further, as Bogart comes to the street and starts “playing patience” the author draws the reader's attention to Hat's escapism when he says that: “This impressed Hat”(12). This witty semantic unit is foregrounded and therefore draws attention to itself. The reader is forced to laugh at Hat who clearly approves of Bogart's withdrawal from the reality around him. This draws readers' attention to Hat's own escapism.

Naipaul again makes the reader laugh and frown at Miguel Street residents' definition of

greatness. When Popo's misdemeanours are used to provide a backdrop for a calypso, the narrator holds: "It was a great thing for the street"(22). The locus of the humour is hinged on the irony that is packed within the statement. The writer gives these people's hollowness prominence. The reader is invited to rebuke the characters whose achievements are not real but figments of their own imaginations.

Dolly's withdrawal from the reality of her life as she is married off to Razor is concretized by the punch-line: "But Dolly still giggled"(34). Her naivete and escapism is an object of Naipaul's satirical barbs. The sentence makes the reader laugh with a critical apprehension. Dolly is not concerned with her own welfare. Readers are made to withhold their sympathies for her.

A further demonstration of Naipaul's satirical and comic power is embodied in Manman. Revealing to the reader the other character's response to Manman's subversive and morally deprived activities, the narrator states: "We in Miguel Street became a little proud of him" (50). The humorous impact of this sentence depends on the locative strength of the words "a little." The use of the diminutive expression of quantity attests to the fact that the narrator is aware of the other characters' escapism and consequently draws readers' attention to it. It is outrageous that Manman's notoriety is applauded and tolerated. Similarly, Laura's escape from the grave reality of her life is captured lucidly through the author's manipulation of the language for comic effects. The short but semantically loaded sentence is again made use of to suit the author's critical motives. Many short and catchy sentences are employed to capture to the minutest detail the adversity of Laura's life:

I suppose Laura holds a world record
 Laura had eight children.
 There is nothing surprising in that.
 These eight children had seven fathers.
 Beat that! (107)

The fast narrative tempo of these sentences, and their rhythm, coupled with their graphological and semantic impact, helps to foreground Laura's escapist mode of existence. The reader reads with amusement and at a first rate Laura's procreative abilities

and at the same time is compelled to distance himself/herself from the repugnancy of her distorted moral sense

Naipaul's inimical humour is further evident in his treatment of Bhakcu's hollow existence. His irrevocable faith in his mechanical ingenuity lies in the direction of the author's satire. At the end of his story the reader is told: "So Bhakcu became a pundit"(164). Such a conclusive statement coming in the wake of his failure as a mechanic indicates the character's overestimation of his abilities. When the narrator taunts Bhakcu and therefore alludes to his continued fantastical mode of living, as he is leaving the street, Naipaul holds: "His eyes shone" (222). The foregrounding of this remark elicits the reader's mirth as again it punctures Bhakcu's imaginary way of life. This short sentence, in essence affirms the continued perpetuation of the philosophy of escapism in *Miguel Street*.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, the compression of meaning to evoke hostile humour is rarefied and sometimes imperceptible. However, a few of these sentences are interspersed within the fabric of the narrative, with long sentences which also serve the same pedagogical purposes. The conservatism of Mrs Tulsi, for instance, is captured by another of Naipaul's subtle and witty sentences. Mr Biswas' declaration of love for Shama and her right, from his view, to have a say in the marriage arrangement is met with a despicable indifference from Mrs Tulsi. In response, the reader is told: "Mrs Tulsi chewed and said nothing"(90). Apparently, love is a pervasion for Mrs Tulsi and cannot play any role in marriage considerations. Her love of the old ways is exposed to the reader's ridicule through the humour that inheres within the short and witty sentence.

Shama is an object of Naipaul's satirical onslaught when she applauds Anand's agitation for the brahminical initiation ceremony. She clearly misunderstands his motives, which incidentally are purely egoistic. The author states: "Shama was thrilled" to underscore her conservative thinking. The reader laughs at her little misunderstanding which is necessitated by her love of ritual, a trait she shares with the other Tulsi sisters. This habitual practice, which is a unifying feature of the Tulsi householders is exposed to

ridicule.

Naipaul's debunking objective is still alive in his narrative when Mr Biswas and his family are momentarily ejected from the house in Port of Spain for its renovation. When Mrs Tulsi wonders whether they would return afterwards, the narrating consciousness asserts: "Shama was elated at the news" (528). This sentence, which compresses a lot of meaning, is made to stick out to underscore Shama's non-progressive mentality. She seems oblivious of the fact that engulfed within the Tulsi cosmos, her personal progress would always remain an illusion. Similarly, her sisters' narrow mindedness is brought to the reader's notice through still another of Naipaul's short, lucid sentences. When Owad is put to task by Mr Biswas after his return from abroad, the sisters' mediocrity is unveiled to the reader. Owad's counter assertion that the Russian name Joseph Dugashvili is pretty calms the sisters as they are clearly outraged by Mr Biswas' attempt to challenge his views which they consider as absolute truths. Naipaul elicits the reader's laughter when he says: "The sisters smiled" (541). The reader is made to laugh at their folly.

As Mr Biswas' age old dreams come to fruition the reader is shocked by Shama's escapism. She does not see the need for the family to break free of the Tulsi cosmos. Naipaul concretizes Shama's shallowness after Mr Biswas makes a payment for the house using a short and witty sentence that tickles the reader. He holds: "when Shama heard she burst into tears" (567). Evidently, Mr Biswas' attempt to own his house from which he can assert his individuality infuriates and saddens her. As readers laugh, they also condemn her as clearly she is an obstacle to Mr Biswas' progress.

Apart from compressing meaning to create hostile humour, Naipaul also demonstrates his craftsmanship in creating long syntactic structures which serve him well in his satirical missions. These sentences are very much pronounced in *A House for Mr Biswas*. They are characterized by elaborative instances tied to the main frame by semantic associations. While no attempt is made here to look at all such individual sentences making up the text, a few are focused on to help demonstrate this linguistic patterning that serves the author's

pedagogical intentions.

Mr Biswas' humiliating experiences in pundit Jairam's residence is exposed by such an expansive sentence which elicits the reader's laughter and criticism. The narrator asserts that after the ceremonies they performed together "And the feeding of Brahmins began, he was seated next to Pundit Jairam; and when Jairam had eaten and belched and asked for more and eaten again, it was Mr Biswas who mixed the bicarbonate for him"(51). This sentence captures, to the minutest detail, Mr Biswas' suffering and the inappropriateness of the training he was undergoing through. The author gives the reader his own perspectives in the trailing elaborative instances. He/she is thus persuaded to laugh and see through Jairam's oppressive manners. His pretensions at religion are consequently exposed to ridicule.

Naipaul underscores again the escapism of the drinkers at Ajodha's rum-shop through another of his rich long sentences. He holds: "At any time of the day there were people who had collapsed on the wet floor, men who looked older than they were, women too; useless people crying in corners, their anguish lost in the din"(59). His attitude to these characters is embodied in the elaborative instances. This sentence is very persuasive and the reader is compelled to see these characters through the author's eyes. Sushila's celebration of the old order is brought to the surface through this linguistic technique. The author tells readers that she regarded wife beating as a "necessary part of her training and often attributed the decay of Hindu society in Trinidad to the rise of the timorous, weak non-beating class of husband"(148). The reader is made to laugh at her antiquated ideas as what she says ironically legitimizes the suffering of women in this society.

It is therefore evident from the above that Naipaul's technique of compressing and expanding meaning has been adopted to good effect. The syntactic structures so created help reveal the author's attitude to characters and situations. The short sentences which are given prominence act as cohesive devices as they are positioned at various key points in the narratives. They link up the many structural parts of the novels into a concrete

thematic and formal unit.

5.3.2 NAIPAUL'S ADOPTION OF LOW LEVEL DICTION

The word, it can be asserted, is the simplest semantic phenomena which is mostly exploited by writers of prose fiction. The choice of the words to be used is therefore a rigorous exercise in creativity. As the focal point of the semantic content of the text, words connote the intentions of the writer.

Naipaul's assembling of words to realize his artistic goals in different contexts is appropriate for his story's varying purposes. His choice of words from the total lexicon of the English language is informed by his satirical motives. His choice of lexical material is not homogeneous in the entire works and there are occasional shifts: the words he uses for character speech are not the ones he uses for his descriptive and narratorial purposes. Low level diction is privileged for character speech while a combination of high level and middle level diction is chosen for his authorial voice. High level diction, according to Roberts Edgar V. and Henry E. Jacobs, consists of standard and elegant words which in most cases are polysyllabic. It is also characterized by the retention of correct word order and absence of contractions. Middle level diction refers to ordinary, everyday but still standard vocabulary, with a shunning of longer words but with the use of contractions where necessary. Low level diction, which is at the center of focus as a satirical barb in this study, refers to non-standard language, often colloquial, or slang expression (266-267). Low-level diction is what elsewhere is referred to as "grammatically fractured language" (Ruganda 9).

Naipaul explores the low-level diction for his character speech as an occasional device of hostile humour and also as an element in the fabric of the narratives expressing character, relationships and situations. The extreme low level diction is favoured for his most escapist and conservative characters. These characters' speeches are characterized by defective grammar and pronunciation. In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, for instance, Mr. Harbans is given defective English that helps to shed more light on his personality. When

he almost knocks down the white evangelist women he says: "Fust time it happen" (8). The reader is invited to laugh at his mispronunciation of the word "first". In addition, his omission of the definite article is evidently telling: it perhaps attests to his incompetence as a prospective leader in the society.

Again Mr Harbans' pretensions of goodwill are captured by his grammatically infractioned speech when he is coaxing Mr Baksh and his son to support him. Mr Harbans states:

Is that self I come to talk to you about. The modern world
Baksh. In this modern world everybody is one. Don't make
no difference who you is. You is a Muslim, I is a Hindu.
Tell me, that matter? (17)

The above speech defies the rules of English grammar as it clearly breaks the subject-verb agreement rule. Mr Harbans uses the wrong copulative verbs in most of his sentences. His speech elicits the reader's amusement. It is also a rhetorical strategy used by the author to influence readers' attitude to him. His adulterated English is symptomatic of his shallowness of personality.

Baksh's low level diction evokes the reader's mirth. The reader is made to laugh at his foolishness and mediocrity. He/she smiles at Baksh's admission that he is goaded by self-interest in the campaign when he says:

To be frank, boss, I ain't want it so much for the elections as
for afterwards. Announcing at all sort of things. It have a lot
of money in that....(21)

His linguistic handicap helps to concretize his escape from a positive participation in the electioneering process. He breaks the subject-verb agreement, just as Mr Harbans does, by using the copulative verb "have" instead of "has". The truth of Mr Baksh's escapism is told laughingly here. He puts his personal interests before the political welfare of Elvira society.

The reader is further on invited to laugh at Mr Chittaranjan's poor linguistic skills. When Mr Harbans and Foam come to his house, he evokes the reader's laughter by asking:

"What Baksh son want with me? He want to see me in any pussonal?"(30). The word "pussonal" which is a corruption of "personal" is the locus of the hostile humour inherent in the sentence. Chittaranjan's linguistic incapability obliterates the illusions the reader had built about him before he/she meets him as the society's opinion figure. The reader is prompted to have a low opinion of him. Mrs Baksh's superstitious sentiments are made more visible by her corrupted speech. The reader laughs at her when she says: "It aint gas. Is just the sort of gratitude I getting from my children..."(64). She omits the copulative verb "am" before the gerund "getting". In addition, she is also heard to use the wrong interrogative pronoun when she asks Baksh: "who fault it is that this whole thing happen?"(92). The reader's wrath against her is solicited by the author when he invests her with defective English. Her conservatism is thus bound to appall the reader to a great degree.

Like in *The Suffrage of Elvira*, character speech in *Miguel Street* is characterized by such linguistic peculiarities like omitting the copula before the gerund. This can be demonstrated in Bogart and Hat's morning salutation: "What happening there..." This faulty speech that comes at the beginning of the text prepares the reader for the warped personalities of the characters who inhabit it. Popo, in response to the narrator's question about the thing he was making says: "I making the thing without a name..."(17). He leaves the verb "am" before the gerund "making". This statement which Popo assumes to be a clever remark is hilarious. As the reader laughs at Popo's grammatical flaws, he/she is at the same time drawn to his escapism. George's naive preoccupations are targets of Naipaul's satire. Using defective English, he is made to say to the narrator: "But how it have people so short arse in the world"(29).

Manman's fantastical life is also an object of Naipaul's satirical barbs. His imaginative journey into a world of make-believe is the butt of the author's cutting humour. His escapism is made concrete by the grammatically fractured speech that he uses to end his little escapade which he realizes is going too far. He exclaims: "cut this stupidity out. Cut it out, I tell you. I finish with this arseness, you hear"(55).

Similarly, defective English is used as a device of humour and criticism in *A House for Mr Biswas*. Lal, Mr Biswas' teacher in Pagotes, is invested with a low level diction. His speech, as laughable as it is, provides an instance of comic relief from the grave story of Mr Biswas who is the nerve centre of the text. He makes the reader laugh when he asks Mr Biswas: "How old you is, boy?"(41). Lal's linguistic innovativeness is so impressive that it hooks the reader completely. When in another instance, he realizes that Mr Biswas does not have a birth certificate he asserts: "You people don't even know how to born, it look like"(42). Such instances of comic relief add flavour to the text as they whet the appetite of the reader urging him/her to read on and on. Alec, Mr Biswas' one time school friend, is also seen to use low level diction in his speech. When he learns of Mr Biswas' encounter with Shama he asks: "How the girl man?". He, like most of Naipaul's characters invested with defective English, omits the verb "to be". This is again a light moment for the reader as it provides an interlude for the tension introduced thereafter at Hanuman house.

Shama principally makes use of low level diction and therefore becomes an object of ridicule for the reader. When Mr Biswas rebels against the Tulsi world and starts to call her family names she tells him: "Well, nobody didn't ask you to get married into the family you know"(105). Her speech is characterized by such a semantic redundancy that the reader cannot avoid to have an instant dislike of her. Sometimes she makes apparently conflicting statements. Like others before her, she leaves the verb "to be" in most of her speech. The reader frowns at her grammatical mistakes which, in essence, heighten her conservative thinking. Shama's defective speech is used by the author to define her relationship with the reader. He/she is made not only to castigate Shama's speech but also what she stands for in the text.

The Tulsi sisters' narrow lives are made more manifest by their use of grammatically infractioned language. The reader listens to their dreary small talk and their mutual animosities in Hanuman house with instant disapproval. He/she is made to laugh at their

linguistic incapability inherent in their conversations. Their dialogue evidently is without substance:

'He got one backache these days'. 'You must use hartshorn. He did have backache too. He try Dodd's kidney pills and Beecham's and Carter's little liver pills and a hundred and one other pills. But hartshorn did cure him'. 'He don't like hartshorn. He prefer Sloan's liniment and Canadian Healing oil'. 'And *he* don't like Sloan's liniment'. (105).

The sisters' grammatical deficiencies range from a break of the subject-verb agreement rule to a shift of tenses. Their naive preoccupations are made more visible through the use of low level diction. Indeed, it can be argued, Naipaul uses this technique to distance the sisters from the reader.

Some of the sons-in-law are not spared the author's comic barbs. Govind, Seth, Hari and W.C. Tuttle are made to use defective English which again is symptomatic of their inner selves. The humour that their speech generates not only serves as aspects of comic relief in the text but also helps to expose their little absurdities. Mr Biswas towers above the other characters and lays a greater claim to the reader's attention in the text as a comic character both in speech and mannerisms. He is a constant source of light moments in the text which chiefly mitigates the depressing mood that pervades the whole narrative: a story of an individual's ceaseless struggle to overcome the limitations imposed by a way of life that tends to slow down the pace of his own progress. There is an aspect of buffoonery in Naipaul's hero that echoes Greek comedy. Mr Biswas' grammatically fractured language is a source of amusement to the reader. He is a lovable character and the author prompts the reader to take pleasure in his pleasure. The reader cannot, in effect, detach himself from him even when he is involved in ludicrous activities. The reader laughs at the names he coins for Shekhar, Owad, Seth and Mrs Tulsi. Using defective English he, for example, at one time asks Shama: "How the little gods getting on today, eh?" Interestingly, though readers laugh at his linguistic innovations, they somehow feel that what Mr Biswas says about the Tulsi family is true.

It is evident that Naipaul uses Mr Biswas to make profound statements about other

characters and by extension the society he writes about. At every stage of the narrative, the reader can detect Naipaul's encouragement to Mr Biswas to indulge his every whim and thereby reveal relationships that would otherwise have remained obscure. Naipaul launches his indirect attack on other characters through Mr Biswas' adulterated English. Readers are drawn to the truthfulness of his assertions and give little thought to his grammatical flaws.

In a nut-shell, the author's adoption of low-level diction has served his satirical concerns well. The defective English he uses for most of his characters' speech is symbolic of their warped personalities. It is also an intrinsic expression of their individual character limitations: their escapism and deep seated conservatism. It is a rhetorical strategy employed not only to generate humour but also to shape the reader's attitude towards characters and their social relationships.

5.3.3 AUTHORIAL VOICE AND INTRUSIONS

Each literary text implies the presence of a narrating voice. In some cases this narrating consciousness remains subterranean in the text and in others it is overtly felt. Most often, creative writers who assume pedagogical motives in their creativity compel the reader to take a certain attitude to the reality they portray in their texts. They not only present the crux of matters in their artistic works but also direct the reader's judgement. This is basically accomplished by having the authorial voice undercut the overall infrastructure of the narrative and at other times making overt intrusions which are unmistakable.

While on a small scale this art of persuasion serves an ascetic role, when it is too pronounced the work tends towards propaganda to its own detriment. An author intrudes into his or her own narratives in order to guide the readers towards definite set of norms and values which he/she subscribes to. Because their task is to condemn under the guise of humour, satirists do make their narrating presence felt in their works. As Sutherland rightly argues: "the satirist is very much dependent on the approval of his readers... He must therefore compel his readers to agree with him: he must persuade them to accept his

judgement of good and bad..."(5). This is again echoed by Worcester who aptly holds that for satire to succeed it "must practice the art of persuasion"(9).

Naipaul has the attention of his readers throughout his texts. His narrating presence can be detected at the fringe of his narratives. He is also occasionally not involved in the plots and is free to demonstrate to his readers the repulsive elements of the events around which his works revolve. He can be seen supplying his own perspectives from time to time in *A House for Mr Biswas*. These perspectives cannot naturally emerge from the psychology of his characters. The reader, in this text, is invited to share in his fastidious disapproval of certain habitual practices of the Tulsi householders. The reader's hatred for Dhari and Lakhan is solicited by the author's intrusion into the story when standing above the narrative he holds:

In the end Bipti sold the hut and the land to Dhari and she and Mr Biswas moved to Pagotes... And so Mr Biswas came to leave the only house to which he had some right. For the next thirty-five years he was to be a wanderer with no place he could call his own... (40)

Naipaul, through his narrating voice makes the reader sympathize with his hero and see him as a victim of circumstances. Mr Biswas finds himself in very uncomfortable situations due to other characters' escapism and egocentrism.

The reader is again prompted to condemn Tara with an objective detachment when she removes Mr Biswas from school. The author makes the reader see the interest even the conservative Bipti has on Mr Biswas' education. She sees her son's education as "provision and protection enough". The reader has no other option but to disapprove of Tara's callous act when the authorial voice states: "Tara thought otherwise. And just when Mr Biswas was beginning to do stocks and shares... he was taken out of School by Tara and told that he was going to be made a pundit" (50). Naipaul's persuasive tone is evident in his use of the conjunction "And" at the beginning of the information sentence and the adverb of degree "just" which adds more power to the assertion. In addition, emphasis is put on Tara's love for the traditional order by the phrase: "he was going to be made a pundit" which incidentally, is the nucleus of the tone unit. The length of time Mr Biswas

was involved in this unproductive enterprise is again foregrounded to echo Tara's conservatism. The phrase "For eight months" is given prominence as it is part of the topical sentence of the next paragraph (A House 50).

The negative images adopted in the description of Hanuman house can be interpreted as Naipaul's unique way of conditioning the reader's attitudes towards its inhabitants. The authorial voice states that: "It stood like an alien white fortress...The side walls were windowless, and on the upper two floors the windows were mere slits in the façade"(80). This description signifies the disorder that is to be witnessed within the house. It also puts readers on their guard to expect the worst from the house.

The adjectives privileged by the author while describing Hari are very instructive. They clearly show the writer's inclination to direct the reader's judgement. Hari is described as "a tall, pale, quiet man who spent much time at the long table, working through mounds of rice... He was obsessed with his illness, his food and his religious books..."(114-115). The adjectives "tall, pale, quiet" which have negative connotations instantly define the reader's relationship with Hari. The writer's exaggeration of detail when he talks of "mounds of rice" and the imagery that is inherent in the phrase makes Hari an object of criticism. Readers are manipulated to objectively appreciate Hari's escapist tendencies. Their attention is drawn to his unproductive preoccupation.

Naipaul sums up his attitude to the conservatism of the Tulsi householders by yet another of his authorial intrusions into the narrative. In this instance, his voice remains subterranean as his argument is hidden by a remarkable weaving of the fabric of the story. His statement against conservatism is launched by his protagonist who, incidentally, is made to quote a third party. Pankaj Rai. Mr Biswas says that: "Idols are stepping-stones to the worship of the real thing... necessary only in a spiritually backward society"(130). Though ordinarily there is no society that can be said to be spiritually superior to others, such an assertion shows the extent at which Naipaul was far removed from Hindu cultural and religious life.

He further challenges the Tulsis to tell him whether Owad knew what he was doing when he performed the "Puja" that morning, being a little boy. Readers know the owner of this statement. Naipaul presents his literary material in such a way that the reader can only seem to be a fool not to agree with him. Obviously, the Hindu religious rites held at Hanuman house are not based on any religious convictions. The reader is thus made to frown at them.

The author also uses his narrating voice to draw readers' attention to the wastefulness of the Tulsis. His attitude to the ceremonies that were performed at Shorthills is brought into focus when he asserts:

Action was swift and sudden. Details-the Bridegroom and dowries-had been settled. And now the puzzling estate was forgotten and all energy went to preparing for the weddings. (403).

Readers are made to condemn the Tulsis' interest in the marriage ceremonies at the expense of the estate's welfare. The author's critical tone is unmistakable in his juxtaposition of the positive adverbs "swift" and "sudden" with a negative adjective "puzzling" that modifies the noun, estate. Such a narrative craft underlies the author's heuristic purposes as readers are made to see the practical implication of the Tulsis' conservatism.

On the same footing, the reader's disapproval of Mr Harbans in *The Suffrage of Elvira* is initiated by Naipaul's manner of describing him. He says that Mr Harbans:

Wasn't a tall man but looked taller than he was because he was so thin. He walked with a clockwise jerkiness, seeming to move only from the knees down... The only rakish touch in his dress was the tie he used as a trouser-belt... (50).

His style of dressing and manner of walking indicate a kind of disorder that by extension is symptomatic of his incompetence as a prospective leader in Elvira society. Naipaul also intrudes into this narrative to add new perspectives that would have remained obscure to the reader. For instance, he states categorically the real motives behind Foam's involvement with the campaign. The reader is made aware that Foam's interest has nothing

to do with the progress of Elvira society. He/she further learns of the religious quagmire in the society through the author's voice. It is revealed that Elvira residents do not have absolute faith in the religions they profess to belong to. Consequently, the reader is prompted by the narrating consciousness to laugh down those characters who attempt at any religion.

Like in *A House for Mr Biswas*, the reader's attitude to characters and situations is manipulated by the author's manner of description which is laden with negative images. The tone again used in this text leaves the reader with no doubt about his intended meaning. Readers' overall judgement of the text is further influenced when Naipaul intricately draws their attention to the petty individual successes of the characters in the epilogue juxtaposed to the backwardness of Elvira society. They are forced to condemn enmasse the escapism and the conservatism of the characters.

In *Miguel Street*, the author has adopted a first person narrative point of view which makes him an active participant in the life of the text. He is also a commentator, and executes such duties through the small narrator who is his mouthpiece. This narrative point of view is very persuasive as it makes the reader a part of the writer's creative process. This strategy introduces an element of conspiracy between the reader and the writer. The direct address by the writer to the reader as "you" brings into the narrative familiarity that serves well Naipaul's satirical motives. This makes the story more believable. Through the narrator, Naipaul has a generic reference and assumes the reader is acquainted with some hard social facts about his characters. In essence, this assumption of a shared knowledge manipulates readers to assume the author's attitude to Miguel Street residents.

The reader is, for instance, lifted on to Naipaul's plane of sensibility in the story of Bogart. The narrator, who is the author's mouthpiece, addresses readers directly: "I don't know if you remember the year the film *Casablanca* was made"(9). So invited in Naipaul's creative process, readers have no choice but to adopt his own attitude to the escapism of Bogart.

Again in the attempt at heuristic discourse, the narrating consciousness juxtaposes the other characters' lives with the little narrator's. The story of his educational exploits, for example, is used to expose Elias' wild ambitions and overestimation of his abilities. In *Miguel Street*, Naipaul is the reader's friend and ceaselessly shapes his/her critical faculties to adopt his own perspectives to characters and situations.

Naipaul thus influences the readers' attitudes to the reality he portrays in his narratives. He shapes their criticism and affects the way they see his art. He successfully does this by lifting them onto his plane of omniscience and humorous creativeness and making them see characters and situations the way he sees them.

5.3.4 NAIPAUL'S USE OF IRONY AND HYPERBOLIC DISCOURSE

Irony is a literary technique that comes in handy in Naipaul's reformatory goals. It is a vital resource for him as it enables him to expose untruths, to contradict whatever appears to be the truth or to invalidate superficialities in his characters. Irony is subsumed in the class of satire. This view is also shared by Worcester who holds that irony falls within the orbit of satire (75). According to Walter, the ironist "insincerely states something he does not mean, but through the manner of his statement... is able to encode a counter-proposition, his 'real meaning' which may be interpreted by the attentive listener or reader" (152). To decode an ironic utterance, there must therefore be a shared knowledge between the author and the reader.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, for instance, Naipaul presents situations that seem incongruous to the reader's expectations. This irony that stems from the incongruity of situations is hereby referred to as situational irony. Mrs Tulsi is a target of Naipaul's ironic onslaught. She is portrayed initially as a supporter of the old order. She has faith in the tenets of Hinduism. This situation is sharply contrasted by the author to her egoistic tendencies. Readers frown at her pretensions at Hindu religion. She does not give Mr Biswas the dowry he deserved which was sanctioned by the religion she professed to belong to. She even has the audacity to say that "it was a love match", a thing she herself does not believe

in. She exploits her sons-in-law economically by keeping them within the Tulsi cosmos, which is again contrary to Hindu custom. Her fake religiosity is thus exposed to ridicule. In addition, though she is a Hindu and openly proclaims that she can have nothing to do with Christianity, she sends Owad and Shekhar to a Catholic college.

Tara's attempt at religion is also an object of Naipaul's satire. She is presented as an old-fashioned character who ceaselessly celebrates the Hindu religious ceremonies. Her faith is tainted, as she does not care much about Mr. Biswas and other "Brahmins" whom she forgets immediately after the ceremonies (A House 40). Obviously, Tara's attitude to Mr. Biswas and the other "Brahmins" in this case is contrary to religious principles. Misir and the other members of the "Arwacas Aryan Association" are targets of Naipaul's ironic barbs. They profess to champion for the rights of all human beings and agitate for modern values. However, they have not transcended traditional ways of thinking themselves. Their denunciation of the Hindu custom of arranged marriages is explicit yet Misir is enraged to hear that Mr Biswas was made to see Shama before their marriage took place (121). Mr Biswas and Misir argue for "Conversion by sword" as the best method to preach the new order forgetting that it would still impinge on individual human rights which they profess to fight for.

Ironically, Savi who is kept at the periphery by Mr Biswas emerges the most responsible of his children. Unlike Anand, she is not put on a special diet yet she passes her examinations and goes abroad having won herself a scholarship. She comes back to help the family when Mr. Biswas is bed-ridden. Anand, who is Mr Biswas' favoured child, neglects the family and does not return from abroad. Cosmic irony which can be said to be subsumed in situational irony is embodied in Mr Biswas' life story. There is a tragic trait in Mr Biswas though this is covertly suppressed in the architectural design of the narrative to suit Naipaul's satirical intentions. Contrary to the basic principles of tragedy, Mr Biswas fails to attain complete success, not due to a tragic flaw in his character, but due to other circumstances that help to keep him down: the escapism and the conservatism of other characters. His success is partial as he buys and lives in a house which is heavily

mortgaged. He is a victim of Shama's escapism and the clerk's egoistic tendencies.

In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, Naipaul's tone is explicitly ironic. The choosing of Mr Baksh by the other characters as the Muslim leader is for instance ironic. The author prompts the reader to smile when he holds that Mr Baksh was made the Muslim leader perhaps because "he mixed with everybody, drank and quarreled with everybody"(12). The situational irony employed here helps to concretize the thoughtlessness of the Elviran people who see a person's eccentricity as a sign of strength.

After the negotiations between Mr Harbans and Baksh are over, the author makes use of irony to underscore the former's worthlessness as a leader. The statement he makes about him and Foam as they move over to Mr Chittaranjan's house tells it all: "Candidate and campaign manager got into the Dodge and drove to see Chittaranjan"(24). Hidden beneath this assertion is an innuendo of mockery on Foam and Mr Harbans. Their names are substituted with titles that go beyond their real worth. Mr. Chittaranjan's argument that everything he did for Mr. Harbans was only "out of the goodness" of his heart raises the reader's eyebrows as it is inherently ironic. The reader is invited to laugh at his hypocrisy as it is clear that he hopes to have his daughter married off to Mr Harban's son.

The name of the magazine carried by the two white women evangelists is the direct opposite to the effect their philosophy has on Elvira residents. The reader would expect the contents of the magazine AWAKE! in normal circumstances to raise the consciousness of the people and make them participate positively in the major event in their midst. On the contrary, the philosophy pronounced by the magazine is a fatalistic one as it denounces the electioneering event as an undivine preoccupation. It is ironic that their charter impacts negatively on the destiny of Elvira. The effect it has on the people is a negation of what the title stands for.

The sub-title of the last episode in the text: "DEMOCRACY TAKES ROOT IN ELVIRA" has far reaching ironic implications. This sub-title mocks at Elvira residents'

interpretation of what constitutes democracy. The author reinforces its ironic impact with yet another ironical sentence at the end of the text: "And so democracy took root in Elvira"(223). As this sentence is the nucleus of the semantic content of the entire text, it carries the most vital information. The author invites the reader to laugh and condemn Elvira residents for forsaking their political destiny to crooks like Mr Harbans. As the residents have not participated positively in the electoral process, the last thing readers expect in this society is democracy. On the contrary, they anticipate the worst and the last thing they expect from Mr Harbans is to see him following democratic principles in the execution of his duties.

Naipaul also utilizes dramatic irony in his attempt to woo his readers and direct their sympathies. The author shares with his readers knowledge that he withholds from some characters. The element of conspiracy that stems from this relationship impacts positively on the author's satirical missions. In *A House for Mr Biswas*, the conservatism of Raghu, Bipti and Dhari is brought to the surface through dramatic irony. When Mr Biswas supposedly gets lost, the author invites readers to share with him the knowledge of his safety. Obeying their superstitious instincts, the people's search is confined to the pond. This incidentally, leads to Raghu's death. In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, readers are also made to laugh at Mr. Harbans' superstitious nature because they know that his fears are without base. They know clearly that the dog he almost kills and the white women he almost knocks down have no ill effect on his well being.

The author makes the reader his conspirator against certain characters whose practices he has set out to condemn. He/she is distanced from Mrs Baksh through dramatic irony. The reader is quite aware that Mrs Baksh has no reason to fear the little dog brought to the household by Foam and Herbert. She makes only a fool of herself to the reader. He/she laughs and sees through Mrs Baksh's shallowness when she takes Herbert for "spiritual fumigation". The reader takes an instant disapproval of her extreme conservatism and sees her preoccupation with "obeah" in the text as quite naive.

Naipaul further, through dramatic irony, invites the reader to join him in his big laugh at the conservatism inherent in Elvira society. The knowledge that "Tiger" is harmless is only limited to the author, the reader, Foam and Herbert. All the other characters see the dog as a symbol of magic. Readers are prompted to laugh surreptitiously at the people's mediocre preoccupations with the fear of "obeah" at the expense of participating positively in the political system.

The preponderance of hyperbolic discourse cannot be underestimated in Naipaul's literary phenomenon as an aid to his satirical goals. In *Miguel Street*, for instance, the author's humorous disposition is over stretched to its limit. His hyperbolic discourse takes the form of a deliberate presentation of incongruous situations by way of exaggerating details. He condemns Miguel Street residents by making them profess to be what they actually are not. The ironic undercurrent in the titles they choose for themselves is so persistent that it is impossible to remain unaware of it. Naipaul's hyperbolic discourse, in this case, presents him with additional means of presenting the ironic contradictions and emptiness inherent in the characters he wishes to disparage. Because the character labels are information centres in the narratives, they are foregrounded to catch the reader's eye. Bogart sees himself as "TAILOR AND CUTTER"(10) though he does not make any suit. Popo refers to himself as "BUILDER AND CONTRACTOR, carpenter and cabinet maker"(18). He makes "the thing without a name" before jail wisens him. The reader is made to ridicule his narrow-mindedness as he seems to profess a difference between carpentry and cabinet making. The idea that Popo wanted to announce himself as an architect makes the reader to break into laughter.

Morgan considers himself the street's clown. His jokes, as over-stretched as they are, destroy him. Elias professes to hold supernatural intellectual abilities but when measured against the narrator he recedes into insignificance. It is interesting that unlike him, the narrator does not announce himself as a genius. Manman's crucifixion is another of Naipaul's hyperbolic discourse. He calls himself Christ but cannot accomplish what Christ accomplished. B. Wordsworth views himself as the greatest poet not only in the street but

also in the world. He compares himself with white-Wordsworth. His creative abilities are deflated by the author when he is made to confide to the narrator that his life was a total lie. Big Foot sees himself as the fiercest fighter in Miguel street but his courage is found wanting when viewed alongside the narrator's. Titus Hoyt thinks of himself as the street's elite and calls himself "TITUS HOYT I.A. (LONDON, EXTERNAL)" and also an headmaster (105). His intellectual abilities, it is revealed in the text, are a figment of his imagination. Mrs Hereira's love for Tony is blown to wild proportions much to the delight of the reader. She leaves him later and rejoins her husband. Bhakcu sees himself as "The mechanical genius" but his ingenuity falls below the reader's expectations. He is obviously as good a mechanic as the little narrator. Hat carries himself with an aura of vitality as the street's moral and intellectual conscience. However, his life is a direct contrast to his proclamations.

Mr Baksh in *The Suffrage of Elvira* draws attention to his shop thus: "Mr Baksh. London Tailoring Est. Tailoring and Cutting. Suits made and repair at city price"(14). The title is overtly hyperbolic and draws the reader's attention to his fantastical mode of existence. The label itself is a source of hostile humour, and it introduces Mr Baksh's escapist mentality. The writer again consciously makes an overstatement when he calls Mr Harbans and Foam, candidate and campaign manager respectively. There is a sarcastic innuendo implicit in these labels as they are not fitting. Foam's slogans for the candidates are hyperbolic in their entirety: "HITCH YOUR WAGON TO THE STAR VOTE SURUJPAT ('PAT') HARBANS. CHOOSE THE BEST AND LEAVE THE REST"(59). Mr Harban's vitality is exaggerated. Readers are made to laugh as at this point of the narrative, they are well acquainted with Mr Harbans' personality. Foam's slogan "VOTE HARBANS OR DIE" is again symptomatic of the moral principles subscribed to by the campaign team and, by symbolic associations, foreshadow Mr Harbans' insolence after he wins the elections.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, F.Z. Ghany's sign showed him as a "solicitor, conveyancer and a commissioner of oaths"(42). His competence as he attempts to register Mr Biswas' birth

and the state of his paraphernalia is repulsive and laughable to the reader. In the same level, Hari's title as a pundit is over-inclusive as his perfunctory dispensation of the duties of his office is exposed to the reader's ridicule. Mr. Biswas' store at The Chase is labelled: "THE BONNE EXPERANCE GROCERY, M. BISWAS PROP. Goods at city prices." This sign elicits the reader's laughter. The reader knows the store is given to him by the Tulsis but his assertion that it is his property, laughable as it is, concretizes his quest to break free of the Tulsi family. This label at another level adds to the humour generated by Mr Biswas in the text which serves the purpose of stemming down its tragic mood.

In a word, irony and hyperbolic discourse in their entirety helps the writer to invite the reader in his creative process. These narrative devices again enable the author to reveal meanings that lie underneath the currents of the narratives and therefore prompt the reader to make artistic judgements that are in consonance with his actual concerns.

5.3.5. TECHNIQUES OF ABSURDITY AND THE CREATION OF CARICATURES

In their moralistic goals, satirists at certain points of their creative process, do transcend the likelihood factor and write as if anything can happen. The ugly, or the underside of life, which is the meat of satirists, is presented in a laughable way in all its manifestations. Freud once argued that "what is ugly is concealed and when it is uncovered" it is "brought forward and made obvious so that it is made clear and open to the light of day" (10).

Naipaul is notable for presenting the reader, at various points of his works, with absurd propositions and situations which to a small extent, defy realistic definitions. He throws "dust into the reader's eyes" so to speak and bewilders him/her with his brand of verisimilitude. He exaggerates situations and relationships in an attempt to make them laughable and therefore contemptible. This technique of creating absurd situations and moulding caricatures can be seen as his attempt to reform his targets without involving them emotionally. This strategy is similar to the alienation principle in Brechtian theatre. It is based on the principle that art cannot reform when the reader or viewer is emotionally

involved in the creative task. Naipaul has, in line with this view, exaggerated details and made his readers stand above the narratives with him and thus be objective in their judgements. He constantly dissociates his readers from the text by way of exaggeration and his authorial intrusions which frustrates their emotional inclinations. This dissociation, as Walter rightly puts it, is so crucial in mitigating the facts so displayed which would otherwise make the reader feel shocked and at the same time emotionally involved (4).

Naipaul makes the reader stand on a pedestal and laugh at his characters' habitual practices which he sees as their major hurdle to their progress and that of their society. *Miguel Street* can be seen as a fine efflorescence of the absurd as realistic details are exaggerated into alarming pictures that draw attention to themselves. Manman's subversive deeds are blown to extreme proportions. His attempts to perfect his writing skills for a whole day on the ground while the narrator utilizes his time properly in school is too grotesque. The reader can stand aloof and join in the writer's reproach of Manman as it is hard for him/her to get emotionally involved in his ludicrous activities.

The facts that surround Laura's life are disquieting and unbelievable. Her grave situation is made lighter by the amusing way in which it is treated. Her celebrations in childbirth and the eccentricity of having a different father for each child borders on the absurd. The reader is conscious of the negative implications of such a mode of existence but her carefree attitude to her dehumanizing situation alienates the reader from the emotive element of her story. The reader so lifted above the narrative can afford to objectively judge her for what she is: an escapist. The picture of Big Foot that is got in the text is a caricature. His fear is Naipaul's element of comic exaggeration. Readers laugh at his fear as it destroys the myth of his own bravery. The readers' mirth is again over-stretched to its limit when Morgan is caught by his wife with another woman and is displayed naked for public viewing. Mrs Hereira's romantic love for Tony, who does not reciprocate it, is a further demonstration of the absurd. Mrs Hereira has reconciled herself to Tony's tyrannical behaviour. Obviously, the details are exaggerated to suit Naipaul's satiric goals. She brushes off the advice she is given by the narrator's mother and ironically comes to

Tony's defensive. She is caricatured and in this way the reader is made to distance himself/herself from her. Bhakcu cuts the figure of a caricature as a mechanic and the reader is prompted to frown at his emptiness.

The incongruity of situations in *A House for Mr Biswas* in the same thread, elicits the readers' laughter and forces them to be objective in their judgement. Raghu and Bipti are caricatured and in consequence their conservatism underlined. Their unwavering faith in pundit Sitaram's warning that Mr Biswas should never be let near water lead ironically to Raghu's death. Readers are made to laugh at their superstitious natures which are blown to extreme proportions. They laugh at Raghu's frenzied search for Mr Biswas in the pond as they know where he is. The hollow existence of the Tulsi sisters in Hanuman house is also caricatured by the author. Their frivolous rivalries, their tete-a-tete is laughable and blown to wild proportion. The child beating they indulge in to draw admiration from each other is again absurd and it nourishes the reader's budding dislike of them.

Similarly, the widows' attempt at business in Shorthills and Port of Spain is caricatured. Their imprudence in making viable business plans is extended to an absurd degree and the reader is forced to stand above the narrative and instantly disapprove of them. Again the sisters' attitude to Owad after his return from abroad is yet another indicator of Naipaul's inclination to expose their hollowness by exaggeration of detail. They are seen as the most ignoramus of the writer's characters. Their folly is insupportable as readers see them taking everything Owad says as an aphorism and therefore incontestable.

The reader's definite knowledge of the normal expectations of given situations is contravened in *The Suffrage of Elvira*. Mr Harban's fear of failure is caricatured in the text. His fear becomes almost a neurosis just like that of Mahadeo. He breaks down at Chittaranjan's house when the people's support for him appear diminished (38). Readers laugh at his interpretation of everything around him as a "sign" of his doom. Mrs Baksh's fear is also absurd. She feels "obeah" is perpetually being worked against her. The impending election and the campaign to her, portends disaster. Consequently, she will

have nothing to do with it. When Mr Baksh brings the van home, she does not rejoice but "was frightened by the very size of her fortune. She was tempting fate, inviting the evil eye"(44). She reaches her greatest height of absurdity when she takes Herbert for "spiritual fumigation" though readers know nothing is threatening his life.

Indeed, it is absurd for the campaign team to capitalize on others' misfortunes to gain support for their candidate. The sickness of Hindus and 'Negroes' is seen as a blessing in disguise. It would give Mr Harbans an opportunity to help them and thus boost his popularity. It is due to the poor state of Sebastian's health that he catches the attention of the campaign team. His death, ironically, is being awaited by Mahadeo as it is bound to give Mr Harbans again an opportunity to demonstrate his magnanimity. Mahadeo himself is preoccupied with a petty issue that appalls the reader. His fear of Preacher is absurd. It is again out of the ordinary that his first priority in the text later becomes the good health of the same Sebastian whose death he had sought before he meets Preacher. He even goes to the extent of offering money to Sebastian to deter him from any activity that might put his life at risk. This obviously strikes the reader as odd.

The text reaches its apex of absurdity with the death of Mr Cuffy. This death is welcomed by Mr Harbans' campaign team as again a blessing in disguise. Mr Harbans wins total support of Elvira residents by taking care of the burial expenses. His death is turned into an occasion to celebrate Mr Harbans' near victory. Lifted from the narrative by such absurd situations, the reader can be objective and judge Elvira residents for what they are: an escapist people who do not give thought to their own welfare.

It can therefore, in a nut-shell, be pointed out that the foregoing narrative strategies adopted as vehicles of satire have enabled the author to tell the truth laughingly. The hostile humour that undercuts the currents of the narratives has aided Naipaul's heuristic purposes to a considerable degree. The comic properties of the texts again lift readers onto the author's plane of creativity and make them laugh and judge the characters with some feeling of immunity and objective detachment. Due to the ugly facts that inhere in

the author's texts, this immunity helps curtail the readers' grave and horrified responses which would otherwise hamper their judgement.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study set out to examine firstly, Naipaul's treatment of escape and conservatism and their relation to social progress. Secondly, his portrayal of women characters alongside men and their varying responses to social issues, and finally his use of satire as a central tool for his reformatory goals.

The study started by an inquiry into the life of the author and his creative output. A relationship has been noted between the author's social life and his literary works. His thematic and formal preoccupations have been informed by his personal experiences and the social relations he has been engaged in. His fictionalization of factual situations and personalities is done with such ingenuity as to overcome the limitations of naturalistic writing. He constantly makes reference to real people, historical and social realities consequently placing his works in a definite time and place. It was found that most characters who inhabit his fictional world are woven around historical and real personalities. The study has shown how the Hindu family set up, typified by his grandmother's extended family, and its conservatism, is the nerve centre of his famous novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Hat and Bogart in *Miguel Street* are portraits of real people who lived in Port of Spain when the author was a young man. Similarly, his later life, which is characterized by numerous travels abroad, has ushered into his literary expression a new form of writing, precisely journalistic. This borrowing from social life illustrates Naipaul's personal perceptive response to the life he atomizes, a quality that gives his literary discourse a social relevance. The study's inquiry into Naipaul's biography was therefore enriching as it has elucidated details in the author's fiction which would otherwise have remained obscure. This study consequently affirms the centrality of a contextual analysis of literary phenomenon as an integral part of literary criticism. Evidently, literary works are a crystallization of writers' perceptive and imaginative responses to socio-historical phenomena.

It is further evident from this study that, unlike most third world writers from societies emerging from colonialism, Naipaul does not explain the backwardness of these societies

solely on the basis of colonial experience. He has his eyes targeted on subtle and often elusive factors which he feels contribute greatly to the continuing deterioration of conditions in his Trinidadian society, and by extension, in other third world societies

According to him, the irreversibility of colonialism should be acknowledged and more energy focused not on decrying the west for post-colonial society's predicaments, but on overcoming individual limitations. The principle of self-examination is of paramount importance as a people's destiny rests wholesale in their own hands. Indeed, according to Naipaul, the individual must do everything within his/her radius to alter the material and spiritual conditions of his/her life. This study has shown how he depicts conservatism as a major obstacle to human progress. Sticking to established patterns of behaviour for its own sake not only obstructs one's own progress but also slows down the pace of others. It was seen how the conservatism of the Tulsi householders largely slow down Mr Biswas's progress in *A House for Mr Biswas* and how most of Miguel street residents remain economically static as they do not transcend their established patterns of behaviour.

Whereas Naipaul views conservatism, in its entirety thus, escape is looked at multi-dimensionally as both a promoter and an impediment to progress. The author depicts positive escape, which entails overcoming the limitations of a disabling society by moving to an enabling one, as a necessary condition for progress. The study has shown how Mr. Biswas' chances of upward mobility are increased by leaving the Tulsi cosmos. It is again after Savi and Owad escape the limitations of their society and go to Britain that they attain economic and intellectual breakthroughs in *A House for Mr Biswas*. The narrator in *Miguel Street* is faced with a world of possibilities as he leaves the street for London. Interestingly however, the author advocates a return to the disabling environment in order to plough back the acquired tools and resources. Savi is made to return to Trinidad where she takes up her father's responsibility of taking care of the family in *A House*. Anand, in the same text, loses the favour of the author when he refuses to come back.

It is equally clear from this study that negative escape, which consists of withdrawing from the reality around one into fantasy, evading duty and responsibility and lacking a positive participation in social life, retards the development of a society and its inhabitants. The escapism of Elvira residents in *The Suffrage of Elvira* contributes largely to the backwardness of their society, the escapism of Miguel street residents in *Miguel Street* lead to their economically and spiritually depraved lives, while that of the Tulsi householders, like the sisters, explain their static lives in *A House for Mr Biswas*. The author shows the need to integrate people's own lives into the social, economic and political life around them. He warns readers against leaving the destiny of their lives to fate or external forces.

It has also been found out from this study that Naipaul presents his female characters generally as more escapist and conservative than their male counterparts. To a large extent, the images which inhere in the texts studied are negative. The escapism of Shama, the Tulsi sisters, Bipti and Dehuti in *A House*., that of Mrs Baksh in *The Suffrage*. and that of Laura and Mrs Bhakcu in *Miguel Street* is insurmountable. Women perform, in the texts studied, stereotypical roles and their locus of activity is the house. Men are portrayed more positively and their locus of activity, unlike that of women, is in the fields, outside the house. Women characters are confined to reproductive activities while men engage themselves in productive enterprise.

Naipaul's portrayal of women worsen chronologically from *Miguel Street* to *A House for Mr Biswas*. Women, in *Miguel Street*, are given comparatively more positive images presumably to underline the escapism of male characters, who according to the author, are supposed to be the pillars of society. Most of Naipaul's women characters are invested with false power in the domestic sphere but real power evidently rests with men. These texts, it appears, can pose the danger of condemning women readers into a state of complacency in the face of a male dominated culture as they do not contain role models. In addition, the gender relations that emerge from Naipaul's fiction are capable of legitimizing male dominance as they are bound to be taken as the norm guiding male-

female relationships.

It is equally clear from this study that Naipaul does not make fun of his society as an end in itself. He displays extraordinarily fine craftsmanship in his use of satire, which serves him well in his regenerative mission. The characters' individual limitations that militate against their progress have been exposed to the reader's ridicule through this narrative device. Humour, which is an essential trademark of satire, it was noted, principally makes the author's works reader-friendly. This humour is basically hostile and biting and assumes a corrective force within the narratives. It is not only a mechanism of exposure but also the author's means of circumventing the tragic potential of the facts he appropriates as his literary material. The study has also found that satire has been realized through unique linguistic organizational strategies which have enabled the author not only to show but to tell the truth without alienating the reader from the mainstream of his narratives. Naipaul possesses an arsenal of rhetorical devices that have enabled him to tell the truth in an amusing manner. These range from witty compression and expansion of meaning, low level diction, authorial voice and intrusions, irony and hyperbolic discourse to techniques of absurdity and the creation of caricatures. The author's thematic mainstays are embodied in the structural pattern, in the minute by minute flow of the narration such that his statements on social life and characters do not degenerate into propaganda. The study's analysis of satire in the texts therefore affirm the view that form and content are inseparable and that they work together to produce meanings, attitudes and revelations of reality. Consequently, this study argues that literary research cannot be conducted comprehensively without adapting a stylistic cum sociological approach.

In a nut-shell therefore, this study is of the view that Naipaul's early works are socially regenerative. He has an affirmative social vision which finds expression in his adoption of satire. His indefatigable use of this device is not an end in itself but is launched against specific individual limitations that obstruct progress. Though his literary output has negative implications for the emancipation of women, he seeks to reform the society through his constructive social criticism. One cannot fail to observe, if one approaches

Naipaul's works without preconceptions, that in almost all his early texts, a penetrating scrutiny is directed against individual character faults. This crystallizes his call for self-examination, a rethinking of one's standing in relation to one's personal and by extension societal progress.

This study, in no way, professes to be the final word on Naipaul. It simply provokes future intellectual inquiry in this field. One may wish to investigate the issues focussed on in this study in the author's texts treated marginally. In addition, the treatment of the communist thought in *A House for Mr Biswas* and *Guerrillas* as well as the narrative techniques of his later works might form the basis of a very enriching study.

7.0. WORKS CITED

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