

Postcolonial Cultural Chaos and Loss of Identity in V.S. Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Suffrage of Elvira*

*Ahmad Naeem.

**Sohail Ahmad Saeed

Abstract

This paper examines postcolonial cultural chaos and loss of identity in V.S. Naipaul's first two published novels *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) and *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958). These works are replete with the theme of loss of identity amidst cultural confusion as the main characters yearn to find a place or profession for themselves in their society to assert their identities. Their minds waver between two clashing cultures prevalent at that time as they lose their sense of authentic selfhood in the postcolonial cultural chaos and social disorder. Moreover, their uncouth attempts to search for their identity ironically aggravate their disorientation and alienation.

Keywords: Culture, Identity, Mimicry, Loss, Society, Postcolonial, Hybridity

Introduction

V.S. Naipaul, one of the leading Trinidadian writers, has produced a noteworthy body of literary works that has captured the attention and interest of literary critics as well as cultural anthropologists and social scientists. Interestingly and paradoxically, Naipaul has written as an utterly dislocated person, yet he is connected by education (with England), birth (with Trinidad) and ancestry (with India) with three different societies. He procured a remarkable scholarly freedom that brought him out of his "colonial shell" (Naipaul, *Finding the Centre* 12). However, Naipaul explores his personal identification with the global perspective of the marginalized, particularly the ex-colonized West Indians looking for their identities. The British colonizers introduced a system of indentured labor after the abolition of slave trade due to which agricultural workers migrated from China and India to West Indian sugarcane plantations. Thus the inherent heterogeneity of this cultural set up intensified by the presence of already otherized native Caribbeans and their colonial masters gave birth to a multicultural society where socio-cultural clash became frequently recurring societal phenomenon. The people of this New World experienced the transformation toward 'transculturation' which according to Mary Louis Pratt features a facet of the 'contact zone', ". . . where disparate cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (137). This intricate social experience is a cultural process of confusion, chaos, instability and disorder.

* Lecturer, Department of English, Gomal University, Pakistan. anaeemk@hotmail.com

**Assistant Professor, Department of English, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. sohail.ahmad@iub.edu.pk

The argument, thus, posed here is that how in postcolonial social instability and cultural confusion the natives lose and then grope for their distinctive identities.

The theme of cultural disintegration and consequent loss of identity appears to be the main underlying issue of both the novels, *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Suffrage of Elvira*. Naipaul's protagonists consistently look for a more respectable life and they become intensely conscious of their helplessness in accomplishing the objective they set for themselves. As a result, they become disoriented, dislocated, unhomed, uprooted and are thus placed on the peripheries of changing identities. Naipaul's appeal as a writer grows from regional to universal. His novels make the readers experience from a narrower local viewpoint to a broader global perspective. In *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Suffrage of Elvira*, Naipaul portrays the social setting of colonial Trinidad, the place of his birth and brought-up. Most of the characters in these novels are Hindu and have an Indian background and origin. They are always in quest of identity in the midst of an alien socio-cultural set up. Through these characters, Naipaul highlights the existential, psychological and postcolonial issues of the people in the modern age of confusion and chaos. Thus, there are issues of identity in V.S. Naipaul's novels in the times of globalization and his ever increasing concern for the problem of modern man in quest of meaning in a meaningless world.

I

V.S. Naipaul's first published novel *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) explores the various social, political and cultural conditions of the ex-colonized East Indian people, their challenges and crisis and their loss and search for distinctive identities. The novel ironically depicts the moral deterioration and cultural chaos in the lives of migrated Hindus living in Trinidad. Naipaul uncovers the ignorance, destitution, superstition and cultural duality in conduct and character of East Indians. He demonstrates comically that regardless of their independence from the foreign rule, the Hindu community is still unable to emerge out of fantasy, slavish mentality and absurdity. Their socio-cultural duality has further lured them to imitate the colonial cultural models. Even after winning independence they still act in servile ways because of the colonial exploitation and oppression for a considerably long period of time. This paper tries to analyze how their awkward manners and methods of self-definition comically aggravate their estrangement caught in labyrinth of identity politics, and furthermore how they secure a consciousness of their syncretic coexistence.

One cannot resist to think whether the follies of the characters in the novel were an outcome of a loss of identity among East Indians of Trinidad whose Indian origin they could merely identify through the words of mouth, and, consequently, could not link with it with a sense of pride. Their lives seemed to circle around a lack of conviction which could have been caused by an absence of history with which they could relate or take pride in. It is as though almost all the characters were unaware of the significance of bigger things in their lives. For

example, Ganesh thinks that he can start any job according to his likes and dislikes without any professional qualifications or experience required for that job. It is as though in Trinidad, anybody can become anything given that they could figure out how to. And, this is the comic feature of the characters in the novel that a critic says, “As Naipaul has said, you don’t need to satirize some aspects of the West Indian scene, and he had to understate the farcical elements rather than exaggerate them” (Ormerod 74).

If anyone wants to know the causes of the triviality of the characters in *The Mystic Masseur*, one should look at the cultural background of the social set up which shaped its behaviours and attitudes. Naipaul tells about Trinidadian Indians in *A Middle Passage* as a community who were “living in a borrowed culture” (64). Naipaul believes that Trinidadian Indians did not have a postcolonial identity. The reason is that they came as indentured laborers from India and decided to remain in Trinidad when the colonizers packed their bags and left. Another reason is that many generations had lost their direct contact with the origin or real India and “lived as people with the idea of acceptance” with their living “being simply one of those things” (Naipaul, *Writer’s People*, 77). The idea of destiny comes into the scene in Naipaul’s experience of the community living with an “idea of acceptance” which Naipaul discerned a negative thing in his tone of writing. At the point when one becomes accustomed to the “idea of acceptance”, it is natural for an immigrant to accept everything and to have lost conviction and confidence in one’s identity and culture. With this outlook, the Indian cultural traditions that they had known so far, intermingled with the values of their new country, and as ages passed, the problem of identity got more entangled.

Ganesh is a representative character of the first East Indian generation who received Western education which was used as a tool of cultural colonization. In fact, Ganesh is brought to the creole world of Port of Spain by the need of education. Ganesh’s father, Mr. Ramsumair prepares well for the day, his son is to be admitted in Queen’s Royal College:

Mr. Ramsumair made a lot of noise about sending his son to the ‘town college’ and the week before the term began he took Ganesh all over the district, showing him off to friends and acquaintances. He had Ganesh dressed in a Khaki suit and a Khaki toupee and many people said the boy looked like a little Sahib. (MM 19)

The first day in college ends up being unpleasant experience for Ganesh when he is criticized by college boys at his queer attire and awkward habits. Ganesh realizes for the first time about his position as a marginalized Indian. He is so embarrassed that he even attempts to conceal his true Indian identity. “He was so ashamed of his Indian name that for a while he spread a story that he was really called Garreth. This did him little good” (MM 16).

The life style of the East Indians including their dress, food habits and language reflects their cultural ambivalence. The cultural confusion is noticed in the opening chapter when the boy, who narrates the story, is taken to Ganesh. The first thing the boy narrator observes in

Ganesh, who is still an amateur masseur, is his outfit: “He was dressed in the ordinary way, trousers and vest, and I didn’t think he looked particularly holy. He wasn’t wearing the dhoti and koortah and turban I had expected” (MM 13). The duality or dichotomy in the character of Ganesh is indicated by the fact that he adopts the conventional profession of a masseur and wears western dress. However, on the suggestions of Suruj Mooma and Beharry, later on, Ganesh starts putting on conventional Indian dresses. The couple persuades Ganesh in the following way: “‘We think that you must stop wearing trousers and a shirt. It don’t suit a mystic’ Beharry said ‘You must wear proper dhoti and koortah. I was talking only last night to Leela about it when she came here to buy cooking oil. She thinks it is good idea too’ ” (MM 124). Although Ganesh starts putting on the conventional clothes, he never gives up wearing Western dresses. He is seen wearing vest and trousers at the oilfields when he meets his friend. Ganesh even feels confident in this dress. “He went to Port of Spain – his courage failed him at the last moment and he wore English clothes – to the Registrar General’s office in the Red House” (MM 158). When Ganesh moves to Port of Spain at the end of the novel, he says good bye and ultimately chooses latest Western dresses. A critic insightfully examines such absurd mimicry and the entire incongruity of overriding one’s indigenous identity by a vainglorious Western behavior. Therefore, he rightly presumes that “the Hindu is comically Indian even while trying to be Western” (Nandy 83).

Naipaul utilizes his peculiar irony to highlight how the completeness of the stereotype is ever determined by a lack. This idea of social hybridity becomes apparent when Ganesh attempts to use the Standard English as against his own creolized version in an effort to become a writer. Naipaul’s purpose here, anyway, rises above the obvious comic artificiality in the style of speech. It is all the more deeply associated with the dialectical hybridity on lingual grounds affected by the assimilation of English vocabulary within the structural design of Hindi language. Bill Ashcroft et al argue emphatically that in this lingual and dialectical relationship, the use of language by the postcolonial text, “. . . incorporates the warning that the site of the shared discourse. . . is not the site of a shared mental experience and should not be seen as such” (59). Thus, Ganesh’s language is the messed up, amusingly ludicrous dialect of a displaced people showing the unavoidable social hybridity of the East Indians. A humorous appeal in this way is maintained by Ganesh’s misuse of words and his peculiarities of language. For example, a word “calendar” is distorted as “Kyalendar” (MM 109), “Feecher” is the misspelt form of “feature” (MM 164) and “sarcastic” is transformed into “Sukastic” (MM 162). The subtlety of this hybrid dialect is further ridiculed in Leela’s competing for “talking good English” (MM 33) and in her mania for punctuation showing the difference between lived experience and language. The ridiculous alternative of ‘standard English’ is a discovery of the metonymic role of language. As indicated by Ashcroft, “it establishes a silence beyond which the cultural Otherness of the text cannot be traversed by the colonial language” (53). Through such inability to assimilate appropriately the foreign dialect, Naipaul implicitly explains how colonialism includes a conscious devaluing of a people’s means of communication. Ganesh is pathetically incapable of using the colonizer’s language and therefore, in these discourses, what is ‘English’, “. . . is determined by its belatedness” (Bhabha 107). In any case, at a more profound level, they imply

the hazard of mimicry in its twofold consciousness that works through a common linguistic vision. Consequently, such linguistic hybridity, although inspires delight, can be the most powerful weapon for the subalterns to create a sense of community through their peculiar English dialect.

The Mystic Masseur illustrates not only the existential crisis in terms of language but also reiterates the loss of religious and political identity of the Trinidadians, represented by the character of Ganesh. With the help of his trickeries and opportunism, Ganesh converts his religious followers into his political supporters. They support and vote for him to contest and win the elections. The air rang with slogans like 'A vote for Ganesh is a vote for God.' Naipaul explores the subject of 'greed for material possessions' among politicians as well as the entire Trinidadian community by introducing the theme of politics in the novel. Ganesh is totally changed individual by the end of the novel. He is a changed person with a changed name which is G.Ramsay Muir who has discarded his previous identity. In fact, he is not better than his defeated political opponent, Narayan, who has likewise rejected his past and his identity. The rejection of their identities by both, Narayan and Ganesh, ironically exposes the reality that for several natives their local identity had become a cause of disgrace and they were eager to accept western identity by discarding their conventional and cultural identity.

Whereas *The Mystic Masseur* gives us a biting criticism of Ganesh's trickeries, it also presents the tormented view of his indistinct identity. This has been flawlessly summarized in the Governor's Dinner party. The party was thrown in the honor of newly elected members of the Legislative Council. In fact, even Ganesh, the biggest impostor of all Naipaul's fictional characters, is compelled to face circumstances to which he must give in. This scene is full of black humour. It has been brutally criticized for its direct condemnation of Caribbean table manners, especially, in the encounter between the unrefined creole people and the ultra-advanced wife of the Governor. This introduction to Western manners for the recently elected M.L.C like Ganesh becomes his first socio-cultural surprise and "only superficially of table manners" (White 66). As R.H. Lee says that the well-known supper scene contains "double-edged satire" that strikes "...the right balance of irony to the ignorance of the members and the absurdity of the colonial dining ritual" (69-70). The members of Legislative Council are portrayed as thoughtless imitators of incompletely understood gentry. However, Naipaul's pointed satire does not miss the snobbery of Governor's wife in managing an event new to everyone but herself: "the Governor's lady moved with assurance and determination among the members and their wives. The more disconcerting the man or woman, the more she was interested, the more she was charming" (MM 195). Naipaul notices the emptiness of this hollow ritual. He uses animal imagery for characters due to their dresses in such comments as "the men looked like penguins" (MM 194). Such clear realization of confusion of cultural traditions stretches out similarly to Ganesh who gets needlessly fidgety about the use of cutlery but then shows his rebel self by donning "dhoti, koortah and turban" (MM 194). Different members with their peculiar ways of dressing just as the blackest Negro Mr. Primrose with "a three-piece blue suit" and ethnically biased about his

monocles, one “in jodhpurs” and another “in short trousers and open shirt” (MM 194), mock the social hybridity that the neocolonial world will ceaselessly be exposed to. The narrator’s mischievous statement proves it: “the meal was torture to Ganesh. He felt alien and uncomfortable. He grew sulkier and sulkier and refused all the courses. He felt as if he were a boy again, going to the Queen’s Royal College for the first time” (MM 197).

In *The Mystic Masseur*, Naipaul has indirectly analyzed the theme of cultural chaos and loss of identity through mimicry, double-consciousness and hybridity of Trinidadians. The dinner episode fully reveals the mimicry in the people of Trinidad. Here they attempt to mimic English values and manners. Champa Rao Mohan says, “The dinner party serves as a commentary on the shortcomings of a society striving to mimic upper class respectability, which at once contradicts their social reality” (31). As a whole, Naipaul has depicted the social disintegration of the Trinidadians. They have lost their underlying foundations, their roots and identity. The novel highlights the fact that Naipaul is focused on reality and he uses novel form as a type of social enquiry which exposes flaws of colonial societies.

II

The Suffrage of Elvira has never won as much popularity as *The Mystic Masseur* potentially because it has no such interesting central character as Ganesh. John Thieme remarks:

It is, however, a richer and more complex treatment of the same theme as that explored in the first novel of V.S. Naipaul, that the environment and history of the West Indies have created standards so far from the norm of Western standards that is ridiculous to expect democracy to work there as it does in Europe. (37)

The Suffrage of Elvira and *The Mystic Masseur*, both the novels document Naipaul’s creative experience with the society and time in which he lived. They manifest his ability to understand the native surrounding and his capability to augment it with irony. Whereas *The Mystic Masseur* shows the corruption of a single person under the burden of the real world, *The Suffrage of Elvira* exposes it at the larger scale of a society by showing deformity of concepts like independence and democracy. This novel is a reflection, to a great extent, of Naipaul’s later literary works. It exhibits Naipaul’s “gift of atomizing the experience of a community into the intransigent particulars of colonial action and finally draws our attention from community to the individual who constitute it” (Rao 15).

While *The Mystic Masseur* concentrates on the rural East Indians, *The Suffrage of Elvira* examines the political side of the community in which democracy is a recently conceived idea. It was composed, as V.S. Naipaul himself describes, “to prove to myself that I could invent a story around a given incident” (*Speaking of Writing* 11). Obviously, Naipaul accepted the challenge given to him by the reviewers of *The Mystic Masseur*.

The general elections in Elvira is the only event around which the story of *The Suffrage of Elvira* is woven. The novel, at the time of the second general elections, examines the society of East Indians in the social background of recently arising colonial-capitalist class during a time of rapidly increasing political awareness. There are clear allusions in *The Suffrage of Elvira* to events and characters which confirm the fact that this novel is an extension and continuation of *The Mystic Masseur*. There is a particular reference to Ganesh in part six. Baksh says, “Ganesh Pundit was really the man for this sort of mystic thing. Pity he had to take up politics. Still that show how good he was. The moment he feel he was losing his hand for that sort of thing, he give up the business” (SoE 80). Ramlogan likewise returns in *The Suffrage of Elvira* as the proprietor of a rumshop. Chittaranjan confirms in the second chapter that he is the same Ramlogan when he says, “For three years now, since the man come to live in Elvira, he only giving me provocations” (SoE 34). Moreover, there is an allusion to the first elections of 1946 which was the significant occasion in the previous novel. *The Suffrage of Elvira* picks up the story at the junction where *The Mystic Masseur* had left.

The Suffrage of Elvira starts from where *The Mystic Masseur* ends. The earlier novel portrays the Trinidadian social history during the decades of 1930s and 1940s till the first general elections of 1946. The first generation of East Indian politicians is represented by Ganesh who lacks political and ideological associations. *The Suffrage of Elvira* pertains to second general elections of 1950 when “people began to see the possibilities.” (SoE 13)

The story of *The Suffrage of Elvira* takes place in a neglected and isolated area with a majority population of Indian, instead of more politically dynamic black people of Port of Spain. Blacks play a side role in the novel, along with the political representatives of Muslim and Hindu communities. There is neither any condemnation of British colonizers by any character or the narrator nor any clear ideological position taken by the author, but there is an implied sense that British process of election is a mockery of conventional practice in this society. The novel demonstrates what V.S. Naipaul tells in *A Middle Passage* as a “picaroon society”, “a society without fixed rules”, a society in which there are no moral principles and crafty and cunning are respected and admired (33-35). In portraying West Indian reliance upon other nations as democratic models, Eric Williams underscores the idea of mimicry that V.S. Naipaul has conceptualized: “Political forms and social institutions were imitated rather than created, borrowed rather than relevant reflecting the forms existing in the particular metropolitan country from which they were derived” (501). Naipaul does not use any indirect language in exposing the conditions of a society from where the long established East Indian traditions have vanished.

Freedom from foreign rule and the arrival of democracy in the village of Elvira is followed by elections. All these events demonstrate not only the unpleasant feature of human instinct and eccentricities firmly fixed in individual conduct at a time of historical change but also the ignorance, mimicry and cultural disintegration of a society simply emerging out of colonial past. What V.S. Naipaul observes and writes about his society, a chaotic and confused

one – confused due to the sudden advent of freedom and non-existence of rules, absence of a system of command and control, and denial to acknowledge obligations – makes this novel a reliable social critique of world wide appeal. In spite of the fact that Naipaul manages these issues in a lightly comic way, he raises these problems seriously and successfully which influence the communities and individuals in the complicated realities of culture in such colonial regions as the Caribbean.

In this story, the comic delineation of a character and the ways he chooses to make progress in life as seen in *The Mystic Masseur* is continued and extended to the level of society. Naipaul's fair and objective analysis of the different shortcomings of his society recently emerging out of colonial past enables the readers to have a look at the corruption, trickery and mimicry common in such a society. The harsh satire and bitter irony behind Naipaul's depiction of realities enables the reader to know the chaotic conditions prevailing over every part of life including culture, tradition, religion and politics.

The Suffrage of Elvira depicts a community that has no interest in ideas. Harbans is informed early in the novel that if he fails to buy a loudspeaker and a van for Baksh, "you ain't got no Muslim vote" (SoE 18). Almost the same feelings are expressed again, "if you want my vote, you want my printery" (SoE 73). We observe a community so ignorant and illiterate that they do not know how to put a cross mark (X) on ballot papers. It is, in fact, the portrayal of individual characters which makes the novel an objective and fair criticism of society. V.S. Naipaul "offers us a mock-biography of his society by exposing its middle-class manners and morals, its philistine coarseness and vulgarity" (Rao 72). All such evils come to surface at the time of elections. Democracy which is expected to herald justice, equality and social order, brings only chaos and confusion. Electoral process causes disagreements or aggravates prevailing conflicts, contentions and confusion among religions, races and individuals. The way these uneducated, ignorant, irresponsible and politically immature people hold ideas or conceive notions about elections or democracy is note-worthy. Harbans believes "this democracy is a strange thing" (SoE 156). Dhaniram thinks, "this democracy is a damn funny thing" (SoE 180). Both these remarks summarize the awareness of Elvirans about the problems created by self-ridicule in Trinidad. This appears to them strange and funny due to the fact that the concept of democracy is deformed and reshaped to the extreme degree in Elvira and in other ex-colonized countries. Chittaranjan's experience that "Everybody want bribe these days" (SoE 180) turns into a satirical remark on the beginnings of the idea of social equality and democracy. In fact, *The Suffrage of Elvira* is a consistent satire on human follies that men commit on the pretext of ideology. Subsequently, corruption and conspiracies become shared factors for everybody.

Naipaul uses the tools of biting irony and brutal mockery to expose the demoralization of his society. The West Indian penchant for mimicry of whatever is foreign is yet another feature of the society and the reason for the loss of social identity. In *An Area of Darkness*, a craze for foreign things is pointed out: "I am craze for foreign, . . . Just craze for foreign" (33). Naipaul

believes this type of mimicry is peculiarly colonial mimicry, “yesterday the mimicry was Moghul; tomorrow it might be Russian or American; today it is English” (*Area of Darkness* 85). It is as though a whole society has been duped by a clever impostor. In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, we observe several characters who are crazy for foreign things. For example, Ramlogan “was lavish with the Canadian Healing oil . . . the only thing Ramlogan didn’t do with Canadian oil was drink it” (SoE 105). Nelly Chittaranjan’s life-long dream came true when “She went to London and joined the Regent Street Polytechnic” (SoE 207). Harichand also “liked sporting the American raincoat . . . which he acquired at enormous costs” (SoE 110). The D.M.O. “hadn’t forgotten his association with England and continued to wear Harris tweed jacket despite the heat” (SoE 171). Above all, we see Trinidad Film Board making a documentary movie for a colonial office, “the script of which was to be written, poetically, in London, by a minor British poet” (SoE 180). Such examples as these indicate the cultural bankruptcy and loss of identity of a nation. Many characters show “a passion for modernity,” (White 79) which is a facet of mimicry too. Chittaranjan’s five-valve radio, his house, splendidly painted with tiled floors and chromium-plated ash tray, Baksh’s wish for constructing a house in Californian style, the death of Cuffy announced over the radio in the midst of ad for Ponds cream are demonstrative of cultural chaos and loss of identity. However, if analyzed magnanimously, this propensity to mimic or imitate is indicative of the lack or desire of a community that is denied any history, culture or identity.

The Suffrage of Elvira is an analysis of the common societal malpractices of the multi-racial and multi-ethnic culture of Trinidad which cause the disintegration of its authentic selfhood. This novel proves Naipaul’s art of “teaching without dogmatizing, portraying characters without damning, and amusing while stirring the reader’s humanity” (Mann 484). The concept of democratic process and elections in a society that lives only in the present driven by vested interests, personal motives immediate needs at the cost of its history, culture and identity appears to be Naipaul’s main theme in this novel. The recently conceived idea, democracy, new and strange to a community propelled by considerations of class and race, gives Naipaul a topic that appropriately shows moral degradation, cultural confusion and loss of identity. In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, according to Anthony Boxill, “Naipaul makes an elaborate attempt to make the disordered past more concrete” (31). The analysis of the cultural, social and political conditions in a rising nation is so unprejudiced, direct and fair that alongside the previous novel, *The Mystic Masseur*, it rises beyond the regional limits and turns out to be a documentary record of postcolonial situations in all developing countries. Therefore, *The Suffrage of Elvira* demonstrates how the distortion of democratic ideals caused the loss of cultural and socio-political identities in the Third-World countries.

Conclusion

Thus, Naipaul's novels, *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Suffrage of Elvira* identify the social disorder and cultural confusion as the causes of loss of identity in the postcolonial context. In the chaotic and disintegrated postcolonial setting of the novels, the characters feel alienated from the surrounding world and experience a loss of identity. Consequently, they are left hollowed and incapable of rediscovering themselves. Therefore, both the novels are critical explorations of different cultural contradictions and social fragmentations ending in a mad pursuit for western fetishes and for the original distinctive identities. Even while offering the humor of their marginalized lives, they bring out a relentless tragedy because for the oppressed colonized native 'mimicry' or 'hybridity' is not presented as a comfort zone of colonial displacement. It is rather a big obstacle in the path to self-discovery. In fact, the dynamics of existence wherein "... the self is regarded as whole, stable and rational" (Mishra 24) has been problematized in Ganesh's position of in-betweenness. He becomes personification of either multi-faceted divergent identity or no identity at all. The only viable plan to resist this fractured sense of identity and socio-cultural estrangement is through a blatant declaration of the irrevocability of his dislocation. Ganesh's change of professions and positions thus becomes an act of searching for the lost self. It is an effort of a blighted soul from the darkness of marginalization, otherization and cultural chaos to the enlightenment of self-realization. If *The Mystic Masseur* is a story of the loss of an individual's identity amidst postcolonial cultural confusion, *The Suffrage of Elvira* is the continuation and extension of the same theme of disintegration and loss at the societal level. Naipaul demonstrates it by exposing the condition of a society from where the established cultural traditions have disappeared, a society where the concepts of freedom and democracy have been distorted, a society where postcolonial political malpractices and moral degradation have caused the loss of its collective identity. However, it is important to note at the end what Meenakshi Mukherjee says: "The novels written in the Third World which will survive are the ones that go beyond mere political protest and racial anger. These would be seen to encompass issues which are complex – not clear-cut, not black-and-white, expressing a truth which while being rooted in history and geography has the power to transcend these forces" (227).

Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffith, Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. London & New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Bhabh, Homi. K. "Sign Taken for Wonders". *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Boxill, Anthony. *V.S. Naipaul's Fiction: In Quest of the Enemy*. New Brunswick: York Press, 1983.
- Lee, R.H. "The Novels of V.S. Naipaul." In Robert Hamner. Ed. *Critical Perspectives on V.S. Naipaul*. London: Heinemann, 1979.
- Mann, Harveen Sachdeva. "Variations on the Theme of Mimicry: Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Suffrage of Elvira*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 30, 3. Autumn, 1984.
- Mishra, Vijay. *Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Literature of the Indian Diaspora*. The Diasporic and Multicultural Approaches to South Asian Studies. Conference, August 7-8, 1995. Humanities Research Centre, Canberra: The Australian National University, 1995.
- Mohan, Champa Rao. *Postcolonial Situations in the Novels of V.S. Naipaul*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) Ltd, 2013.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. "Caliban Growth: Impact of Colonialism on Commonwealth Fiction." *Colonial Consciousness in Commonwealth Literature*. eds. Amur and Desai. Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1984.
- Naipaul, V.S. *A Writer's People: Ways of Looking and Feeling*. Knopf, 2008.
- , *An Area of Darkness*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1964. Penguin, 1970.
- , *Finding the Centre: Prologue to an Autobiography*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.
- , "Speaking of Writing", *Times*, 2 Jan, 1964.
- , *The Middle Passage*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.
- , *The Mystic Masseur*. New York: Penguin Books, 1964.
- , *The Suffrage of Elvira*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1958. Hamondsworth: Penguin, 1969.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Ormerod, David. "In a Derelict Land: The Novels of V.S. Naipaul." *Contemporary Literature*. 9.1, 1968.
- Pratt, Mary Louis. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Rao, Madhusudana K.I. *Contrary Awareness: A Critical Study of V.S. Naipaul's Novels*. Guntur: Sarathi, 1982.
- Thieme, John. *The Web of Tradition: Use of Allusions in V.S. Naipaul's Fiction*. Caribbean: Dangaroo Press, 1987.
- White, Landeg. *V.S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction*. London: Macmillan, 1975.
- Williams, Eric. *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean: 1492-1969*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.