Techniques
Chapter Four

Techniques

Literary techniques are tools, methods and a part of author's style to express and give more meaning to their writing. Just like character, plot, setting and theme are critical aspects of storytelling or novel writing, these are methods used by writers to give depth, subtlety and express ideas by fabricating them in bunch of words that can convey many things in just few lines. As Premanand Kumar has rightly observed, "Humour and humanity, irony and even satire, the mingling of realism and fantasy, the adroit manipulation of the serious and absurd and the capacity of uncanny observation are among the marks of these novels" of Naipaul (267).

A chronological examination of the stylistic devices of Naipaul's novels is quite instructive. Though Naipaul's novels are remarkable for his personal outlook and experience, their success ultimately lies in Naipaul's authentic knowledge of the region described in them. Apart from the achievements that Naipaul has made in his writings, fiction and non-fiction, he has actually made his mark as a very impressive writer with a beautiful economy and sharpness of perception, chiefly in exploring very successfully the new technique of narration which characterizes the new literary form known as non-fiction. In fact, it is through this new genre that the novelist narrator has been able to adopt altogether a new technique and express his ideas in a startling and arresting method. Naipaul is among the few American and Commonwealth writers who has emerged as one of the most prominent and successful exponents of this new technique of narration. In recording the impression of his travels to various countries he has shown such skill both in his use of language and form that he has come to be known as
a superlative traveller who misses nothing worth the record in a narrative which is beautifully written and almost impossible to put down.

Naipaul overtly resists being labelled a West Indian, Trinidadian, Caribbean or Third World writer. While he does not deny his origins, he objects to being labelled on the basis of geography, ethnicity or race, as this would bind him to something that for him is meaningless. However, his fiction usually has strong social and political implications. Naipaul is a dedicated writer. Though he is a great story teller, novel writing is his main delight. According to Brown, "In the field of fiction he is certainly no innovator. He has mastered the craft of traditional narrative and shows little interesting technical experiment. He is closer to Dickens or Balzac than he to Joyce... His concern is to tell a story also to discuss ideas" (224). He gives the impression that he is not writing under any ethical compulsion. His vision is totally of what he has understood of the world. He is deeply concerned with the Trinidadian life in all its ramification. To him, it is a world where there is no opportunity for growth, no reason for an upbeat mood. He is distinctly different from other Indian writers.

Naipaul examines in his works the different facets of colonialism in the era of political independence. His work ought not to be treated as something spontaneous, immediately accessible, and ready to be received, described or modified by the reader. The reader has to encounter and struggle with the text, as the author himself does. He writes in his fiction about Trinidad. While living away from the Island, the fusion of reality and imagination characterizes him as an artist. Every one of his actions is matched by counteraction. Marriage ends in divorce, riches in poverty, success in failure, power in helplessness, respect in scorn, popularity in isolation and creation in
destruction. Moreover he analyses the psyche of the British colonial minority cultures by tunneling outward from the core.

The language of Naipaul is sly and allusive. It carries with it a curious suggestion of objectivity and passivity. Walsh criticizes:

Naipaul’s prose style lacks any awkwardness, or arbitrary flush; it is wholly free of the gratuitous and the gesturing. It may seem mild and unemphatic. But it is also little, sharp and definitive. Its grace is no black to a questing analytic capacity. It corresponds in its quiet firmness... It is in this medium, which makes it possible for him to fit together a variety of idioms and conversational habits. It corresponds to an unbending honest, moral equivalent or clarity of perception. (243)

Naipaul’s prose is an elegant instrument for ironic dissection. He has given up his mother tongue and has acquired English as his language. He also seems to have adopted to the way of life of the English. Naipaul’s narrative technique is rightly called unique. To Naipaul, novel writing is not merely an enthusiastic portrayal of specific scenes and impressions but also a spontaneous creative activity. As it is well-known, the excellence of a novelist does not depend entirely on the method of narration. Naipaul is not merely an exponent of new forms and new modes of presentation but a discoverer of the reality behind the situation. His techniques are as varied and colourful as his themes.

Naipaul’s narrator draws meaning out of an apparently meaningless situation through a perpetual sense of wonder and a desire to remake the world. The novel becomes the vehicle of a man’s ontological need for personal order. Naipaul’s main aim is to relate literature to life. Within his novels, there is a close resemblance between
his protagonist's personality which is very often shaped by the multi-lateral vision of
the narrator and Naipaul himself. Derrick comments on Naipaul's technique in the
novels as:

Naipaul represents in his novel shoddy and limiting, offering little more
than an absurd or ridiculous existence. Repeatedly he shows the
frustration of energy and ambition. 'Success' is the reward of trickery,
vulgar materialism, self-delusion or values of the colonial monkey
game. (194)

Society is depicted as disobedient, anarchic and fragmented in Naipaul's novels.
Very often are satiric portrayals of individuals and institutions. He rarely allows
himself to be a man of humane understanding of their weaknesses. He tends to set his
people at a distance and usually invites an analytically detached response from the
reader. Most of the characters are depicted as rootless individuals whose feelings of
insignificance expresses a desire to make a mark in the world around them.

The framework of the novel A House for Mr Biswas is significant. The careful
structure of the prologue, the chronological build-up of Biswas, the imagery, symbol
and epilogue all conspire to present an artistic appeal. The structure of the novel
embodies recurring images of darkness, death and decay. The prologue itself
anticipates much of the action that follows in the novel. The very first line of the novel
tells us that Biswas is almost dead, "TEN WEEKS BEFORE he died, Mr. Mohun
Biswas, a journalist of Sikkim Street, … and convalesced at home for even longer" (1).

In A House for Mr Biswas, Naipaul has used the psychological approach in
fiction. It is a device of bringing the reader in touch with the characters and their
thought processes. It offers the novelist an opportunity of practising artistic detachment
and thereby projecting an objective point of view. The third person narrator focuses his vision on the manner in which the protagonist handles his society and comments ironically on it. He shows him as essentially incapable of meeting the demands of his time and their becoming partially responsible for his imprisonment and alienation in his self-centered Universe. According to S.M. Pandeya, in *A House for Mr Biswas*:

> the third person authorial narration is limited to stating a minimum fact and providing necessary links in the narrative – there is free incursion of the characters stream of thought into the authorial narration. This style enables Naipaul from restraining, philosophizing, interpreting events or offering comments on the characters in an unobtrusive way. This is transferred from the author’s to the character’s consciousness, reflections and perceptions as warranted by the situation. (26)

The narration, further, concentrates on his isolation, on the feelings of an aged, weak and powerless person and on the frail fantasies he constructs, being unable to cope with reality. There is no extravagant illusion, but a victory over chaos. The Tulsi family is the microcosm of relationship through which Biswas grapples with in the macrocosmic Universe the world. According to the Hindu custom, the bride should join her husband’s family. On the contrary, Biswas as a reformist gives way to the desires of his wife as she continues to live in her mother’s house in the Tulsi household. He is very passive, never aggressive till the very end of the novel. Even his death causes hardly any flutter. Only the *Sentinel* reports his death in an obscure way. The manner, in which Biswas’ death is recorded by Naipaul, emphasizes the obscurity to which the character is consigned at the end.
Naipaul’s narrative technique in the novel *A House for Mr Biswas* relies heavily on a thematic pattern of imagery and symbol. The suffocating conservation of Hanuman House is suggested by a description, which seems to be equally applicable to a prison. The symbolic implications of this description are obvious. Such a place cannot sustain Mr Biswas’ vague romantic longings. The atmosphere inside Hanuman House has a death like quality quoted in A.C. Derrik:

> Blackness seemed to fill the Kitchen like a solid substance. The heavy braced arms, of Tulsi, which permit hemomone than ‘a clumsy dancer’s gesture’, are suggestive of oppressive restraints placed on individual and spontaneous movement. Any notions of the dance are here made important by the lifeless trappings of a dying culture. (202)

These things suggest the oppressive restraints placed on the individual. The symbols reveal the quality of life. The stifling dictatorship and the extreme conservatism of Hanuman House, for instance, are reminiscent of Dickensian prison houses in *Little Dorrit*:

> AMONG THE TUMBLEDOWN timber-and-corrugated iron building in the High Street at Arwacas, Hanuman House stood like an alien white fortress. The concrete walls looked as thick as they were and when the narrow doors of the Tulsi store on the ground floor were closed the House became bulky, impregnable and blank. (*HMB 81*)

The Tulsi household represents the old Hindu culture in miniature. The family priest, Hari performs the desired rituals and ceremonies on all occasions. The Conservatism of the Tulsi family is evidenced by its opposition to the reformist and progressive views of the Arya Samaj. In short, Hanuman House is a microcosm of the
old Hindu culture. Naipaul expressed the same personal experience through Anand in *A House for Mr Biswas* that “during the long holidays... Anand, shaved and thoroughly Brahmin, but ashamed of showing his bald head, stayed in Port of Spain”, and “no boy with a shaved head could go to a predominantly Christian school” (403-404).

To Mr Biswas, the society in which he finds himself is a limiting one. The environment, in which he lives, does not offer him any possibility of escape. The road from The Chase goes to villages, which are just like the chase; they go to “ramshackle towns where, perhaps, some store or café was decorated by his signs” pointing to his Ramshackle past (*HMB* 145). In the shop at The Chase are the relics of past ownership. They are the pathetic reminders of futile effort. The physical and spiritual deterioration of Biswas is symbolically underlined by the mustiness of his bedroom, the “atmosphere of decay in the house” and the frequent reference to darkness “the shop in darkness”, “the kitchen was always dark” (144-146). The arrest of this deterioration is also symbolically represented, “At the back of the shop there were two rooms with unplastered mud walls and a roof of old, rough thatch that extended over an open gallery at one side”, which is held in The Chase by the unexpected resilience of the crooked and sagging walls of the shop (146). This arrest is further emphasized by imagery and symbolism in the chapter, which follows. Green Vale is damp and close and dark; rotting leaves choke the grass gutters; on the trees half the leaves are dead, the others are a dead green. New leaves appear without any freshness about them “they came into the world old, without a shine, and only grew longer before they too died” (214).
Yet, the leaves on the trees never fall, ‘Death’ was forever held in The Chase. The reference to the new leaves is gloomily predictive. Even, at The Chase, Mr Biswas’ defiance seems to have lost much of its early freshness. His gestures are now often made in a tried manner, and these gestures last only long enough to be frozen in frustration. The notion of death spreading from the roots of the trees suggests that there is some fatal deficiency in Mr Biswas’ creative urge and vague romantic longing. Again and again, Naipaul’s imagery emphasizes the relentlessness of circumstances facing Mr Biswas. To Biswas, the House appears to be a symbol of security and comfort. According to Padhi,

The suggestion is that of failure and defeat implicitly present with in every kind of fulfilment (...). The house in that novel becomes, by implication, a kind of inverted fictional embodiment of Naipaul’s own personal need for a change and escape. But that novel is also a clean and clear statement of Naipaul’s dependent on memory as well as his views regarding how that memory is assimilated and absorbed into art. (461-462)

Mr Biswas proves a failure both as a father and as a husband. His children do not feel any deep or real affection for him. Mr Biswas is both an individual and an archetypal figure. Gordon Rohlehr has rightly described him as an archetypal symbol, a stranger or a man of exile:

He is described as stranger, visitor and wanderer. He is recognized in Hanuman House as a buffoon and the role of fool is one which he at times accepts in humiliation and at others rejects with bitterness. But Biswas the clown is also Biswas the rebel. (187)

160
This becomes clear when to the query of his bewildered son, he replies that “he is just somebody, no one else at all. He is just a man they know well” (HMB 279). The novel marks a significant advance in Naipaul’s intentions as well as organization of his material. Mr Biswas has been depicted throughout as a man who is utterly unimportant except to himself. The action of the novel demonstrates how unimportant Biswas finally is and how futile and petty are his gestures of non-acquiescence. Yet, ironically Naipaul’s portrayal makes him seem an important public personage. It makes failure throughout as the inevitable outcome of Biswas’ struggle. The biographical treatment of Biswas finally becomes a satiric device to mock at the characters drawback and his ultimate compromise with the ideal.

Naipaul has made abundant use of the technique of symbolism in A House for Mr Biswas. It implies an indirect or suggestive method of communicating to the reader some idea or feeling which the author does not wish to express directly in so many words because a direct or explicit statement is likely to be regarded by the reader as a piece of moralizing or as an unwelcome obtrusion of the author’s view upon the reader’s attention. A House for Mr Biswas is a story of a semi-tramp who moves from place to place, from job to job seeking permanence and security. The House is a symbol of the security that Biswas longs for.

“Hanuman House” is not just the abode of the Tulis clan (81). It has certain significance. It is not just a residence. First, it has symbolic name. To Mr Biswas this house seems to be a zoo of monkey business than anything else and Hanuman was the “monkey god” (81). At one point in the course of the novel, Mr Biswas explicitly calls it a monkey house. He also describes it as a symbol of traditionalism, rigidity, culture, perfection, ritual duty, hierarchy and communal life. Describing the organization of this
house, the novelist tells that Mrs Tulsis’ daughters and their children had to sweep the
floors, wash the clothes, cook the food and serve also the counters of the Tulsi store.

Hanuman House symbolizes the encroachment of a foreign culture on the old
Hindu customs and beliefs. Mr Biswas decides “to build his own house” (214). Now,
this house, which he decides to build, would be more than a place where he can live.
The new house symbolizes his private individuality that he must maintain against the
rest of the world.

Possessing a House is rather symbolic of having an identity of one’s own in the
society. His identity with a house of his own is in a crisis as the first house meets with a
fire accident and his endeavour to re-identify himself with a reconstruction of a second
one also makes him a heavy debtor which perhaps has been the cause for his death.
There would have been total annihilation of his identity but for the publishing report of
his death in the Sentinel.

The chosen member of the Hanuman House who is to perform the rites of the
Hindus is likened to the dying embers of a ritual. The demise of Hari, the chosen
member quite unexpectedly is due to constipation and consequently there is a cessation
of the performance of the rituals. The dream of the parents of Mr Biswas of making
him a pundit by sending him to Pundit Jairam’s house ended in fiasco as he was
actually chucked out of the Pundit’s house. The Pundit does not understand that
Mr Biswas had consecrated idols at Jairam’s house and before him “... copied our
Sanskrit verses, which he couldn’t understand, on strips of cardboard” (51). The rituals
are rules of a game that is ‘only occasionally played’. Finally, Hanuman House, the
symbol of the last fortress of orthodox Hinduism, breaks apart as the inhabitants lose
the cohesive force of their religion and try to claim part of the alien land as their own.
Satire is one of the important modes and purpose of Naipaul's writing. As a genre, satire is an artistic or literary expression which generally aims at amusement and instruction. Often it is used primarily to set right individuals or to effect reform on society by means of ridicule. Satire will surely remain a means of human expression as long as there is human folly and wickedness to satirize. But there are periods when satire falls into abeyance, not through lack of follies and wickedness but because things have gone too far for satiric treatment disorder seems to be out of all proportion to any degree of human responsibility. In English literature its advent commences with Chaucer. But it is supposed to have been more caustic in Dryden, Pope, Swift and other satirists of the Augustan age. Dr. Johnson defines it “as a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured” (www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/524958/satire). Swift defines satire as "a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own which is the chief reason for that king of reception it meets in the world and that so very few are offended by it" (144).

A powerful satirist is really a gifted creative artist. A satirist usually claims that he does not attack institutions. He attacks only perversions of institutions. In neoclassic theory the satirist is regarded as a philosopher or moralist and the vices and follies as pulling passions which temporarily divert human reason from, the norm of correct judgement - these passions have to be conquered or brought under control. According to Joseph Addison, “a satire should expose nothing but what is corrigible and make a due discrimination between those who are and those who are not the proper objects of satire” (www.giga_usa.com/quotes/authors/joseph_addison_a002.html). In the modern sense it is a form of writing either in prose or verse holding up an individual or society to ridicule.
Naipaul satirizes the comic absurdity in the lives of the transplanted Indians. His Trinidadian individual is a figure of illusion. It is not fair to satirize lunatics and idiots because they cannot correct their lunacy or idiocy. Naipaul can never be accused of his prejudice in his works, this only shows his impatience with his subjects. It is an innate satiric impulse which urges him to use it effectively as a silent observer with an eye on the absurdities of life. According to Victor Ramraj, "However satire will continue to exist as long as the nakedness and follies exist in the society" (134).

But to a critic like George Lamming, Naipaul's satire is only "castrated" because it lacks any seriousness of purpose, when such a writer is colonial, and is ashamed of his own cultural background (www.rsnitonde.webs.com/postcolonialism.html). It is a small refuge for a writer who wishes to be taken seriously. Satire arises only when we know that the things could have been better. For this reason it is said that Naipaul could not write fiction about Indians but only about Trinidad.

Naipaul is a satirist who could never find a society or a situation that he could accept. He wrote about Trinidad only after he had escaped from it. Naipaul uses gentle satires to portray a picturesque Trinidadian setting with characters, mainly drawn for the East Indian Population. These works show the tinge of anger for the satiric effect. He made use of the elements of satire like caricature, exaggeration, distortion of character to accentuate the shortcomings, requiring censure. It is mainly to reform abuses through the ridicule of those who practice it. It must make the reader feel no dislike for the object of satire. William Walsh writes "Naipaul's comedy is not one of the situation or plot nor are the characters, cartoons or puppets; as if it is satirical that is only so because of the author's sense of the ridiculous and his eye for dishonesty"
Naipaul's satire is in a way totally different from the conventional satires of his times.

Mr Biswas has been depicted throughout as a man who is utterly unimportant except to himself. The action of the novel demonstrates how unimportant Biswas finally is and how futile and petty are his gestures of non-acquiescence. Yet, ironically Naipaul’s portrayal makes him seem an important public personage. It makes failure throughout as the inevitable outcome of Biswas’ struggle. The biographical treatment of Biswas finally becomes a satiric device to mock at the characters drawback and his ultimate compromise with the ideal.

In most cases, Naipaul’s description of those rituals is satirical in a way that they seem to lack spiritual meaning. Anand told his father that “he was unable to offer up the usual prayers with sincerity, since the words had become meaningless” *(HMB* 403). Mr Biswas is sarcastic and ironical that when he was learning to be a pundit, “Mechanically he cleaned the images, the lines and indentations of which were black or cream with old sandalwood paste; it was easier to clean the small smooth pebbles, whose significance had not yet been explained to him” (52). Naipaul’s sarcastic view of Hindu tradition is clearly expressed in *A House for Mr Biswas*, in which Anand’s most “male cousins had undergone the Brahminical initiation, and though Anand shared Mr Biswas’ distaste for religious ritual, was immediately attracted by this ceremony” (403). In this connection, Naipaul’s “depictions of casual, almost ritualistic violence in his writings grew not on his own behavior, but on what he had observed during his childhood” (French 17).
Naipaul is a product of society. He seems to struggle hard to find a meaning in life after the bloody legacy of defeat and enslavement. He is not writing about the societies in transition but he wants a transformation in the lives of men in society. He is confronting the real picture of man. Naipaul, from laughing with his people, shifts to laughing at his people and positions himself above his society in both intelligence and responsiveness to culture which he believes, is absent in the colonial society. His aversion towards Trinidad is well evident in his statement. In the interview of George Wood Cock with Naipaul, the latter has vividly stated:

I had never wanted to stay in Trinidad.... knew, Trinidad to be unimportant, uncreative, cynical power was recognized but dignity was allowed to no one. Every person of eminence was held to be crooked and contemptible; we lived in a society which denied itself heroes. (4)

In *A House for Mr Biswas* Naipaul mocks at the Tulsis and the unsavory aspects of Tulsi clan as pointed out below:

The Organisation of Tulsi house was simple, Mrs. Tulsi had only one servant, a negro woman The daughters and their children swept and washed and cooked and served in the store. The husband's under Seth's supervision, worked on the Tulsi land, looked after the Tulsi animals and served in the store. In return, they were given food, shelter, and little money; their children were looked after; and they were treated with respect by people outside Their names were forgotten, they became Tulsi, there were daughters who had, in the Tulsi marriage lottery, drawn husbands with money and position. He has expected to become a Tulsi. (97)
Naipaul is sardonic and conscious of his eroding individuality, where he is irrelevant and unaccommodated from birth. It is expected in the visitors' prediction, Victor Ramraj explains it is "Like Noah's anger with his Jewish family, his resentment is more the animadversion of a frustrated man" (272). The novel is a satire on religious superstitions. It is denoted as:

He is born in the wrong way with six fingers and with unfavourable horoscope signs. It is expected in the visitors' prediction, Go ahead, God has paid you back you your boasting and your meanness. Go in and see your son. He will eat you up. Six fingered, born in the wrong way, Go and see him. He has an unlucky sneeze as well (HMB 12).

The midwife warns at his birth that he would "eat up his father and mother" (HMB 12). His father is not even allowed to see his son for twenty one days. The rituals are practiced till now but the meaning has been lost or has not been properly understood. They find the only meaningful identity as Hindu, they find in performing rituals and by staying under a single roof.

Naipaul is not irreligious but non-religious. Hinduism is ritualistic. He attacks now religious leaders like Ganesh in The Mystic Masseur, Gurudeva in The Mimic Men and Pundits in A House for Mr Biswas. He attacks fanaticism. Naipaul says "orthodox Hindus condemn me, the modern one commends me" (29). In A House for Mr Biswas his birth is associated with magic. He is born in the wrong way with six fingers at the most "inauspicious hour" of midnight (12). The Pundit who comes the next day predicts that the boy will have spaces between teeth which means that "he will be lecher and spend thrift. Probably a liar as well" (12). He even advises "to keep him away from trees and water. Particularly water" (13).
Even the naming is done with the approval of the pundit as Mohun. It means "the beloved and was the name given by the milk maids to Lord Krishna" (HMB 14). Here Biswas is not going to be the beloved one of his acquaintances. Tulsi family members live in a house called "Hanuman House, which stood like an alien white fortress" (81). In India, Hanuman is regarded divine and largely work slipped. He is renowned for his great learning and immense strength. But Naipaul depicts him as a symbol of traditionalism, rigidity, ritual duty, hierarchy and communal life. Tulsis' son's Shekhar and Owad are called the "elder god" and the "younger god" respectively. Seth is the "big boss" and Mrs Tulsi the "old she-fox" (120).

Biswas' story is allegorical, dramatizing the legacy of colonial paternalism in a postcolonial world. The conclusion is ambivalent at the time of his death due to heart-attack at the age of forty-six. Naipaul explores the struggle of a working class individual to have his own house at least before his death.

In technique and style, the novel seems to conform to the metaphoric structure, though a bit wanting in proper structural unification as we see in James Joyce's masterpiece, The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man. Like any other great novelists he tries his best to weave his material through the colourful threads of art and beauty, symbols and images, irony and pathos. To Naipaul ideas are more important than plot. He admits, "I preferred the natural way of describing how, at different stages as one's life capacities, one looked at one's place in the world. And one does this through the series of narratives and the linking of themes and emotions" (16). Naipaul's fiction, according to Dr. R.A. Singh, acquires "three dimensional structures - historical, social and psychological" (2).
Mr Biswas was trapped in the clutches of Tulsi dome. He had his dream of his own house. The house of his dream is highly symbolic. It is an archetypal symbol, which connotes stability and permanence, something solid in life. *A House for Mr Biswas* has some fine symbolism and images, which weave the theme into the garland of art and beauty. The language comes as naturally as a rivulet comes from mountain.

In Naipaul's body of fictional work *The Mimic Men* he represents a change to a more self-reflexive form of writing as compared to his earlier and more satirical works *The Mystic Masseur, The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. It is also his first novel set partly outside Trinidad. He also uses the first person narrative for the first time, and the structure of the novel is rather complex with its continuous juxtaposition of separate times, events and places. The self-reflexivity of Singh in his rearrangement of past events almost "gains the formal status of a trope", as Fawzia puts it, with the whole memoir appearing as "a carefully constructed paradigm of an empirically determined state of mind" (101). The trope Fawzia refers to is that of distancing self-reflexive irony. Singh continuously objectifies and distances his past self from his present self through the self-conscious examination of his own past deeds. John Thieme has mentioned this change in Naipaul’s writing as corresponding to a shift from Dickens to Conrad, in the sense that *The Mimic Men* represents a more self-reflexive and contemplative writing, a kind of probing of the Conradian darknesses of the mind as opposed to the more satirical and caricature-like creations of *A House for Mr Biswas*. It begins by having identity as a theoretical frame, which formed through a narrative process that unites the levels of personal images and official history, the dimensions of the imaginary and the real, and that of fiction and historiography.
Naipaul constructs the migrant identity in the novel *The Mimic Men*. The Narrator protagonist of the novel, Ralph Singh, has no strong bond to any one discourse or geographical place. He lives amidst, and in between, the often antagonistic cultural discourses that are present in the reality surrounding him. It aims to show how a person who occupies this kind of cultural border area, or liminal space, is capable of creating a new identity for himself or herself through the narrative rearrangement of the past. This narrative construction forms a third dimension, which has its own peculiar temporal and spatial structure and its own logic, which differ considerably from the traditional ideology of linear time and casual relationships.

In the kind of narration used for the purposes of self-definition described by Hall, the aspects of real and imaginary often intermix with each other. Hayden White (1987) has characterized real and imaginary as the referents of historiography and fiction respectively. There is a correspondence between the subjective and the social poles of identity construction, and the imaginary and real referents of narration. The real or historical aspect of a narrative (a novel) can be seen as representing the discourses coming to the subject from the outside (the social pole). The imaginary aspect can be seen as representing the subjects own contribution to the construction of identity (the subjective pole). In this way, narrative is revealed to be a particularly effective system by which individuals can be taught to live a distinctively "imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence" that is to say, an unreal but meaningful relation to the social formations in which they are indentured to live out their lives and realize their destinies as social subjects (102).

In *The Mimic Men* Naipaul presents a small colonial society through the eyes of the narrator. The community is presented almost entirely in tears of the narrator's
evaluation. This novel resembles Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*. Achebe’s narrator shares much of Naipaul’s ambivalence. In *Times Literary Supplement* it is stated as; “Both are intellectuals, both have eccentric fathers, both feel for the common people an indignant sympathy and a suspicious fear. He has been moulded by foreign tradition. It represents security for him” (347).

The form Naipaul has chosen for this novel is that of the fictional autobiography. The putative author is Ranjit Kripalsingh or Ralph Ranjit Kripalsingh as he prefers to be known, the only son of a Hindu family on the fictional Caribbean island of Isabella. He is a man with an uneasy childhood, a disturbed youth, a broken marriage and failed political career behind him. He is now sitting writing his memoirs in a room of a suburban London hotel. He reveals himself as a man with a psychological wound that makes him incapable of love, of intimacy. Completely narcissistic, he is incapable of forming meaningful or lasting relationships. He has, too, a passion for order and coherence which finally defines itself as an interest in history and which impels him to write his own personal history in a search for order and meaning in the apparent chaos and disorder of his life.

The narrative technique is, to quote William Walsh, "dissolving and non-linear, in correspondence with the starts and swerves of the recovering memory, his instrument of self-examination" (62). Consequently, the style is ruminative, exegetical and demonstrative. Ralph Singh throughout seems to make an effort to stand back and look at his own actions in perspective. It is almost made to share in the process as he examines the fragments of his past that memory thrusts before him and as he strives to arrange them in a meaningful pattern. According to M.M. Mahood, the immediacy of the process produces "a free use of exclamations and imperatives; the lecturer taps the
blackboard, the style is academically demonstrative. At the same time it is emotionally undemonstrative .” (145).

In terms of narrative method, The Mimic Men is singularly well-suited for treatment in this chapter. The technique of narrator-persona employed in the novel The Mimic Men with its autobiographical overtones ensures that the fictional veil is never obtrusively disturbed. The narrator's voice and his mood in the story is so consistently in control that unless an attempt is made to read the author's direct statements from other sources into the narrator's point of view, Naipaul's hand never jarringly intrudes. Unfortunately, Naipaul's fiction is particularly susceptible to this type of critical analysis and the result is some rather harsh criticism. Being leveled against Ralph Singh who can too easily be identified with Naipaul himself, "An unlikely colonial" Ralph's egotistical and narrow-minded perspective is reminiscent of Naipaul's own attitudes in the discursive works which were published just before the composition of The Mimic Men (101).

In other words, in narration used for self-definition the subject creates a relationship between him/her and reality, and this relationship represents identity. Since this relationship is created by the subject through narration, it is necessarily partly imaginary, or rather a mixture of the imaginary and the real. As described by White, narration is a process which produces meanings by substituting the extra-discursive entities (real or imaginary) that are its referents with conceptual contents (X). In other words, through narration the subject produces meaning to the surrounding reality.

The expository nature of the novel also weakens characterization. According to the estimate of the narrator, the characters in the novel seldom emerge convincingly as human beings. Naipaul uses the narrator - character mainly for distancing. But he does
it with a sense of humour ranging from irony to farce. He allows Ralph Singh to speak for himself, when he fails to identify himself with the world he lives in. He is philosophical but he arrives at the serene state only after exasperating years of meaningless involvement in fruitless activities. It is more a memoir than a novel. The pattern of the novel is a marginally well-proportioned remembrance involving skillful repetition and review. To Ralph Singh it is a technique, through which one's mind is liberated. In this novel:

Naipaul employs a technique similar to Prousts' narrator who its outside time and space recalling through involuntary memory, privileged images and moods. Scenes of sexual intimacy, which up to this point Naipaul seems to have avoided with Forsterian strictness, are boldly treated here (127).

It makes possible for him to view his perspectives. Ralph the protagonist's aim was to write a history but he writes about his early life from his school days “MY FIRST INSTINCT was towards the writing of history” (TMM 85). The novel covers thirty years, ranging between 1930 - 60. The narration to Morris K. Robert is:

Move backward before moving forward. ...This convention is a respectable mode of memory narrative. ... Since memory seems to blur as the novel moves clever to the present. Facts become opaque; Haiti appear between large chunks of time unaccounted for. Events become shadowy (60).

The imaginative narration of the novel is very pleasing. The names of places, characters, dates, events and titles of real books make the novel the finest fiction indistinguishable from actuality. Naipaul's narration has no reverence for the past.
Without any compassion or understanding he denigrates the past. Like Joseph Conrad he is a victim of the past. Naipaul uses many motifs to bridge the past and the present, and to sustain the exchanges between time and memory. He uses them like Woolf and Joyce, to give his protagonist a kind of moment - to - moment solidity amidst the flure of word and word and he uses them in a witty and a relevant way, ... as a technique underlining the novels central theme of mimicry (164).

Hayden White proves how a narrative discourse is by itself the functioning of type mind processes that are logically sequenced into a semantic whole. The notion of tropology is introduced for the purpose. The products of the conscious efforts of the protagonist come to terms into problematical areas of his or her experiences.

He argues that narrative discourse is itself a kind of model of the processes of consciousness that the mind functions according to the same kind of logic as that through which the semantic meaning spreads in narrative. To describe the functioning of these figurative moves, he introduces the notion of tropology. Tropology works via the semantic relationships implied by linguistic tropes. Narrative is the product of efforts by the consciousness to come to terms with problematical areas of experience. The four "master tropes" of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony in the realm of language correspond to the successive stages of the consciousness in its effort to produce meaningful relationships between experiences, and consequently a harmonious identity.

The tropological process can be briefly outlined in the novel. At the metaphorical level, ordering of elements (experiences or memories) is not made. There is no meaningful connection between the experiences. The subject is in a state of
bewilderment. The experiences cannot be understood. In the metonymic level, ordering of elements is made. There is some kind of connection between the experiences. The subject begins to discern meaningful relationship between his or her experiences. The experience become understandable and makes sense (that is they are partly understood). In the synecdoche level, re-examining and re-arranging of orderings take place. Wholeness of experience is gained out of the relationship of the part. The subject visualizes clearly what is necessary and what is not. Finally the ironic stage is the stage of self-reflection or self-definition. Ordering reality and experience is the subject's own world. It is illuminating to present the above described development of Ralph Singh through this concept of tropology. Ralph Singh is creating order by producing meaningful relationships between his experiences through narration. It was noted above that the order Ralph Singh creates through this re-arrangement of past experiences is not similar to the logico-developmental order of the Western mode of historical discourse. Rather, his order can be seen as functioning through the logic provided by White's idea of tropology. As this tropological process advances, the subject gradually forms re-arranged "domains of experience" (5).

According to White, no substantial ordering or integrating of experiences in the memory has happened at the metaphorical stage. When Ralph Singh begins his memoir, he is at this stage and continually complains about the arbitrariness of his experiences and the lack of order in the surrounding circumstances. In the course of his writing, he proceeds to the metonymic level. Metonymy by definition refers to a known relationship between entities. Gradually, Ralph Singh learns to discern truth and meaning in his undertakings, for instance in his roles as politician or husband. He has learned to integrate his experiences, to "assign them to different orders, classes, genera, species" (6). It follows that "he begins to question the arbitrariness and whimsicality of
his actions and to question whether his personality is formed through the vision of others" (TMM 183). He realizes that his roles had not been wholly arbitrary, but that there had been a connection, an understandable relationship between himself and them; they presented a part of his identity.

The metonymic stage reduces phenomena so that a part of them stands for the whole. Ralph Singh now discerns relationships between his experiences and roles; he realizes that there is a connection after all. He then moves to the synecdochic level. Synecdoche refers to the relationship of a part to a whole. At this stage the subject begins to examine, to what extent the previous ordering fails to take account of certain features of the experiences thus ordered. Now Ralph Singh once again sees his roles as "fraudulent", because he now understands that they only represented a part of his identity, only a part of the whole, and that the previous metonymic relationship appears imperfect when examined in more detail (251).

His roles represented in the end only a part of his identity, but now he integrates these parts into the whole domain of experience, which is his re-arranged past. At the last stage, the ironic, the subject achieves a certain level of self-reflexivity and becomes capable of discerning to what extent some particular way of ordering experiences is meant to serve his or her own interests and to what extent it differs from some other ways of ordering experience. Ralph Singh does now realize that the order "he imposes on his history will have to be other than that of the traditional Western narrative sequence, which would only produce more disturbance in his life" (243).

Cinematic terminology has also been employed in describing Naipaul's narrative technique. In The Mimic Men, he employs "not only a flashback but a dissolving technique" (TLS 349). A dissolve technique is a gradual transition from one
image to another. The terms “fade-out” and “fade-in” are used to describe a transition to and from a blank image. The life of Ralph Singh starts with the career of writing, turns into a politician and returns to come back again to a writer. Singh's claim that he is no a politician, “I no longer have a political career” points to the fact that Naipaul is no politician either (TMM 6).

The memoirs of Singh are written in flashbacks. The action moves backward and forward. The events are not narrated chronologically. The novel covers a wide range of episodes depicting its protagonist in his childhood fantasies and his relationships with different people. He is depicted as a dandy youth, a lover, a husband, a businessman, a politician and a writer, who finally rejects everything and withdraws to his hotel room. It dissolves different faces of Ralph Singh in his career.

Ralph Singh’s memoir moves from recollections of other days in other parts of London to his difficult marriage and adult life on Isabella. His account of his family life and school days is followed by a self-critical apology for his political career. It is a kind of exposition of the malaise of our times, pointed out and illuminated by personal experience. The narrative asserts that Isabella is a second-hand colony of uncreative men and untalented clerks, where society is fragmented. There is a hardly enough concrete demonstration of such qualities, whereas in other novels they use atleast imagery and symbol to suggest failure and defeat.

So in the process of writing Ralph Singh finds, or creates, meaningful relationships between his memories and experiences. Consequently, he now also sees in his present surroundings an order he had not discerned when he began writing. Karl Miller sees his subject matter as a type of "pre-politics", and indeed the politics is the least impressive part of The Mimic Men (285). Naipaul's genius lies in his ability to
explore and give dramatic expression to the individual dilemma rather than in any polemical attempt, however, the novel is about political action and Ralph Singh constantly makes statements about the political future of other places like Isabella. Deprived of the realm of dignity, precluded from heroism by the very context of his landscape, the colonial politician is seen as a play-actor, a man who can only thrive off the drama of the political situation since he lacks both the power and the ability to become involved in the real dynamic process. Politicians, no less than the average colonial, are mimic men - men who because they lack an authentic identity of their own, are forced to emulate the forms and manners of others.

Cecil’s game, besides being an epitome of an absurd life, has an evident cinematic aspect (he and his black companion see themselves as “acting out a film”). The Theatre of the Absurd and cinema do not exclude each other; in fact, as Martin Esslin points out, “the former has been massively influenced by the latter, in particular by the silent film comedy” (335-336). This may be explained by postmodernist literature’s penchant towards popular culture, whose main representative is cinema; as a writer living in a postmodern age, Naipaul freely mixes “high culture” (theatre) with “low culture” (cinema). Cecil and his black valet effectively try to perform in a film as they climb up on the stage of the cinema bought by Cecil’s father, “They were caught in the line of the projector and threw enormous shadows on the screen. He fired one shot into the floor and one at the ceiling. Get out! Take your money back and get out’’ (TMM 179). The ontological borderline between two different worlds – that of the novel and that of the film – becomes fluid as Cecil becomes an actor himself, indistinguishable from the actors on the screen. At the same time the respective cinema, “Cecil’s toy,” represents a realm of popular culture and economics: “It was “Coca-Cola all over again: unlimited access to a delight for which the rest of the world had
to pay" (179). Therefore, when Cecil throws away the spectators, he challenges his businesslike father. After the death of his parent, Cecil goes unsurprisingly bankrupt. What the quotation also shows is an incipient Americanization of the British colony.

*The Mimic Men* describes Sandra’s departure as follows, “For me it was a moment of another type of drama: the aeroplane the cinematic symbol: Bogart in *Casablanca*, macintoshed, alone on the tarmac, the Dakota taking off into the night” (199). Here, Singh, the narrator, identifies himself with his American model; thus, although a spectator, Singh does not turn the object of his gaze into an exotic product that requires distancing. Consequently, he is in a position of inferiority, a “mimic man”

Ralph is constantly aware of himself as an actor in an absurd drama, his every movement recorded by what he refers to as "the celestial camera" (*TMM* 30). He remains sensitive to a conviction of fraudulence, but fails finally to discover his authentic selfhood. Hamner comments that men like Ralph, “are apparently exhausted by the absurdity that plagued them, like men of ’the lost generation’, their sensibility to man's inability to realize the ideals that loom just beyond reach has made them cynical and self-destructive” (100). Ralph Singh's peculiar interpretation of his past, tempered by his static resignation crescendoes to his final escape into obscurity.

An analysis of cinema’s influence on Naipaul cannot be complete without a discussion of those metaphors and techniques taken from the sphere of motion pictures. Singh from *The Mimic Men* has the impression that “a celestial camera” records all his movements, which gives him the feeling of being “marked” (at this stage Orientalist stereotypes representing Indians as passive fatalist people are detectable) (30). Another interesting image from the same novel is that of the memory film, appearing when Singh recollects his school days, “I hated my secrets. A complying memory has
obliterated many of them and edited my childhood down to a brief cinematic blur. Even this is quite sufficiently painful” (97).

Curiously enough, Singh himself signalizes that he is an unreliable narrator presenting a distorted view of his native island. Memory is not something biological, but cultural; consequently, it is under the spell of colonial discourse. The “jumping” film allows Singh to remember offering his teacher an apple instead of a local orange; after the king’s crown, “the terrors of arithmetic” come to his mind. The film dissolves into a dream of “being carried helplessly down a swiftly flowing river, the Thames”, with Singh symbolically becoming a colonized Ophelia, a marginal creature whose impotence is underlined by the dream’s conclusion; the London Bridge breaks Singh’s legs, leaving him a paralytic for the rest of his life (TMM 97). The next sequence, which shows Singh marching at a new school, suggests that he has overcome the paralysis of his body, but not of his spirit corseted by colonial education.

To sum up, the performative Trinidadian culture appearing in Naipaul’s writings draws on multiple sources such as ritual, exoticism, theatre and last but not least, cinema, a genre belonging to popular culture.

Given his historic situation, the colonial politician is an easy figure of ridicule. As Singh writes his memoirs, he is constantly tormented by his role as imposter and is plagued by:

... an awareness of myself not as an individual but as a performer, in that child's game where every action of the victim is deemed to have been done at the command of his tormentor, and where even refusal is useless, for that too can be deemed to have been commanded, and the only end is tears and walking away. (TMM 81)
The frustration contingent to this conception of role is not unique to the politician. As in the early novels, politics provides yet another ideal dramatic situation by which to explore the goals of individuals and to continue the dialogue on the nature of the human condition.

Though Naipaul has infused certain autobiographical elements into the story, the reader is quite oblivious of the intrusion of the narrator and hence accepts the story part as it exists. The idea of the artist editing himself is one carefully prepared by Naipaul. Singh speaks of himself as "... a man lifted out of himself and separate from his personality which he might acknowledge from time to time"(TMM192). William Walsh phrases the essential method by which the narrative works:

The action swirls backward and forward in a rhythm that follows the starts and turns of memory. But there is one insistent theme, the pursuit of order, and one recurrent image, the image of landscape, both real and ideal, which informs the varied material of Ralph Singh's life with an inward and poetic unity. (54)

A discussion of Naipaul's technique in this novel The Mimic Men is essential to the comprehension of their thematic concern. The very presence of the narrator, his moods and biases, become one of the primary focal points of Naipaul's novels since The Mimic Men onwards. These later novels deal with, among other things, perception of place - highly subjective and imagistic renderings of the psyche's encounter with physical reality. The comprehensive atmosphere of both works is constantly dominated by the narrators' moods. The novels are significantly concerned with the idea of landscape and how it' is perceived. Ralph Singh is convinced that for the colonial there remains "no link between man and the landscape"(206).
Karl Miller considers that Naipaul's fiction in its totality "describes the fortunes of an emergent country" (685). The particular location is West Indian but as Ralph Singh makes clear the same thing has happened in "twenty places, twenty countries, islands, colonies, territories" (TMM 209). The kind of ineptness that Naipaul discerns in colonial politicians was satirized in the early figures of Ganesh and Harbans. These were seen as amateurish imposters playing at grandeur - two portraits in the gallery of mimic men for which Ralph Singh becomes the unrivalled exemplar.

In *The Mimic Men*, the author uses the sexual metaphor to demonstrate the vast gulf that separates individuals and to describe man's essential aloneness as; "We seek sex, and are left with two private bodies on a stained bed. The larger erotic dream, the god, has eluded us. It is so whenever, moving out of ourselves, we look for extensions of ourselves" (17).

The horror of intimacy infects Ralph throughout his student days. Passing sexual encounters with au-pair girls from Europe saves him from the embarrassment of actual emotional contact. Ralph remains emotionally crippled, throughout his marriage with Sandra albeit that they are sexually well-matched, Ralph's emotional incapacity and aristocratic-dismay is complemented by Sandra's own amorality. The marriage is ultimately sterile; the professed emotions, fraudulent. Ralph comes to see his marriage as "which I have described as a period in parenthesis, marriage was an episode" (TMM 42). Sex becomes a form of private rage for both Sandra and Ralph. For the latter, this rage is fed by the restlessness which:

... took me to innumerable tainted rooms with drawn curtains and bedspreads suggesting other warm bodies. And once, more quickening of self-disgust than
any other thing, I had a sight of the prostitute's supper, peasant food, on a bare

table in a back room. (30)

The inner hollowness, the emotional crippling of which this attitude reeks, culminates
in the course of Naipaul's fiction, in the ultimate, sterile figure of the homosexual,
Bobby of In a Free State.

If Ralph is unable to find "an extension of himself" in a sexual partner, he is
equally doomed to failure in his quest for "the god of the city" (TMM 17-18). London
remains for all students charms, an alienating and alienated landscape;

It is with cities as it is with sex. We seek the physical city and find only
a conglomeration of private cells. In the city as nowhere else we are
reminded that we are individuals, units. Yet the idea of the city remains;
it is the god of the city that we pursue, in vain. (17)

By immigrating to London, Ralph merely changes the scene of his existential
struggle. The corruption from which he flees is within. Aligning himself with the
metropolitan, "white" world and its values only intensifies his feeling of inner
hollowness (TMM 135). In The Mimic Men, Naipaul returns to the Caribbean scene and
employs it in a manner that further delineates a sense of the Absurd.

The Mimic Men of whom the narrator is representative live an illusory
existence. Their lives are rooted in fantasy. They resort to the acting out of roles and
even while they are aware of the discrepancy of their act, they endeavour to live as
though reality were what they pretend it is. Ralph seems to be aware of the existentialist
concept of "bad faith" - "We become what we see of ourselves in others" (100). He
enacts the role of dandy, the extravagant colonial, complete with red cummerbund and
indifferent to scholarship, in order to give others and himself the impression of an authentic existence. Ralph comments on his autobiographical attempt:

I find I have indeed been describing the youth and early manhood of a leader of some sort, a politician, or at least a disturber. I have established his isolation, his complex hurt and particular frenzy. And I believe I have also established, perhaps in this proclaimed frivolity, this lack of judgement and balance, the deep feeling of irrelevance and intrusion, his unsuitability for the role into which he was drawn, and his inevitable failure. From playacting to disorder: it is the pattern. (184)

The basic dissatisfaction and alienation that plague Ralph from early childhood result in his final passivity. The mimicry out of which he attempts to fashion an organized and meaningful existence leads to disillusionment. Lacking the ability to impose any controlling direction on his life, Ralph decides to withdraw from it. The Hindu bias of Singh's and Naipaul's sensibilities reveals itself here. The cyclic pattern of the novel is in keeping with essentially Hindu ending. Singh's homelessness is celebrated as a virtue at the end:

It does not worry me now, as it worried me when I began this book, that at the age of forty I should find myself at the end of my active life ...

I feel, instead, I have lived through attachment and freed myself from one cycle of events. It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have also fulfilled the fourfold division of life prescribed by our Aryan ancestors.

I have been student, householder and man of affairs, recluse. (TMM 250)

Naipaul in *The Mimic Men* presents the quandary of Ralph Singh, the protagonist-cum-narrator of the novel, who enacts as a modern man as well was an ex-
colonizer. The novel is in the form of memoirs told by Singh. He is unconditionally criticized by what he actually reveals about himself. The novel begins and ends in the present time with the story shifting back and forth in time between Ralph Singh’s childhood, his student life in London, his return to the island, his political career, and his exile in London. What we actually observe is a series of squashed incidents that help to build a well-versed plot. As Bruce King remarks; “There is an increasing mastery of striking phrases . . . The distillation of a scene to epigram, a striking image or a fragment of conversation allows freedom from filling in narrative details and chronology” (172). And, at the end, it gives an optimistic note. After witnessing so many failures, hindrances, the narrator-protagonist still has hope enough to says, “I have cleared the decks, as it were, and prepared myself for fresh action. It will be the action of a free man” (TMM 235). He begins to write down his experiences with the hope of fashioning an order out of the various unrelated adventures and encounters through which he has been. In the words of N. Ramadevi:

He struggles like an artist to create something to discover some meaning out of the muddled state of affairs, which his life has been. That is why, this act of writing his autobiography turns out to be more than a discovery. It becomes a recovery, a retrieval of a blighted individual as a free person with a clear and purged consciousness. (69)

On the other hand, this political autobiography takes a turn from the level of a personal, confessional report to an existential allegory of the modern man. He has showed some of his illusions. “I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes and no longer wish to know the god of the city” (TMM 273).
*The Mimic Men* is a parable of man's ship-wrecked subsistence. The image of ship-wreck dominates the novel with a sense of abandonment and dereliction. This sense comes in sharp contrast to the desire to succeed and be recognised. Naipaul presents a coherent view of human predicament in its paradoxes and contradictions.

In *The Mimic Men*, the narrator does display a moral significance. William Walsh rightly remarks about this facet of the novel:

*The Mimic Men*, a very much more substantial novel, is the dramatized reminiscences of an exiled politician. The framing effect of the reminiscences, the distancing of exile and the sieve of memory, give form to the novel and enables us to grasp the quality of detachment in the protagonist and the weariness sapping a soul corrupted by power (60).

To Naipaul, this novel is a social inquiry rather than an opportunity for autobiography. It is a creative interpretation of the past and an authentic account of agony and the trials and tribulations of his people. In *The Mimic Men*, according to Peter Nazareth:

he tells his story through the narrator, an alter ego, a person who is both spectator and participant. The participant narrator is like a sensitive photographic plate recording all the confusion and complexity of life around him ... thus the narrator creates a pattern out of apparently confusing events while the author weaves a pattern behind the narrator (139).

The narrator is the product of colonialism.
In the early novels, the colonial politicians are treated as an object of ridicule. The situations turn satire inside out at the point where it borders on pathos, if not on tragedy. In *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh is satirically treated by Naipaul as mimic men. It is well brought out in statement of Ralph Singh as follows:

> We, here on out island, handling books printed in this world, and using its goods had been abandoned and forgotten. We pretended to be real, to be learning to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the new world, in one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came, so quickly to the new. (175)

Ralph Singh fluctuates and oscillates between the obscuring of Isabella and the sterility of London life. He even writes "In London I had no guide. There was no one to link my present with the past, no one to note my consistencies or inconsistencies" (*TMM20*). Ralph Singh's father rises into prominence as a cult leader and the government house reception scenes are enough.

Ralph Singh's father in *The Mimic Men* negates life and becomes a pseudo Sanyasi all of a sudden, calling himself Gurudeva. Naipaul further uses irony in criticisms, creates bad grammar, lack of taste and social grace and the struggle to be matching arena and table manners. He regards these people with more contempt than compassion, and the language used stresses his ironic vision. The society, of which he was a part, "had no mythology or tradition, haphazard, because it had never been written about, no literary model existed for his own society.... but the only subject he could write about the society which seemed small, remote and unimportant" (Paul Theroux 128).
The narrator colours the landscape with his cynical fancy and presents his subjective conceptualization of it. It is as such that Naipaul is able to communicate effectively to the reader his character's utter desperation. Naipaul's cynicism colours the tone of the book. He recounts his story, the story of a man perched in the world. The novel is not just a record of political memoirs. According to Jagdish Chander, it is, "more than autobiographical work, the exposition of the malaise of our times pointed and illuminated by personal experience and that knowledge of the possible which can come only from a closeness of power" (8).

Naipaul seems to have come to the conclusion that there are many more potentially creative but confused people like Ralph Singh, who succumb to their environment, than innocents like Biswas, who survive. Unlike Biswas then, Ralph Singh builds a house which is, like himself, profoundly mimic. How can he, being what he is, do otherwise? "I was looking through a picture book about Pompeii and Herculaneum. I was struck by the simplicity of the Roman house, its outward austerity, its inner, private magnificence; I was struck by its suitability to our climate; I yielded to impulse" (TMM 74). Singh's Roman house, it is told, built itself, as he quickly lost interest in it. The incongruity of a Roman house in a West Indian setting is further emphasized by Singh's fashionable American alterations. "The Roman impluvium" becomes an illuminated swimming-pool (76).

The humorous tone is used in the novel, The Mimic Men, "to be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder" (118). In different words "We pretended to be real, to be learning to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one
unknown corner of it. With at its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to
the new" (175). Naipaul shows his humour in places wherever it is significant.

Naipaul concludes the novel with the positive tone. James Lindroth rightly
comments that Ralph Singh passes from "the mimicry of the fraudulent pretence to the
mimesis of authentic creative performance" (529). The tone throughout the novel The
Mimic Men is grave, it has patches of Naipaul's comic narration as in his reference to
sixty-six pounds of luggage taken on his exile and to a prostitute. The novel is written
with zest. The technique is different from his earlier novels in that it is a kind of novel
biography. Shenkar says:

The people I saw were little people who were mimicking upper class
respectability. They had been slaves; and you can't write about that in
the way that Tolstoy wrote about even his background society, for his
society was whole and the one I knew was not. (22)

*The Mimic Men* sounds like a novel of indomitable darkness at the superficial
level as there is nothing positive like the comforting image of a House in *A House for
Mr Biswas*. The image here is of shipwreck in Ralph Singh's mind. But there seems to
be a kind of hope at a deeper level.

The three stories in *In a Free State* are set in England, Africa and the United
States. Naipaul has created a special world out of Trinidad villages and small towns as
R.K. Narayan has done in giving Malgudi a literary immortality. The themes of all the
three stories are inter-connected, the second one more revealing than the first and the
third uniting all the three. In these stories the past and the future are annihilated, and
freedom in action shatters will and desire. According to Paul Theroux,
In a Free State – are the chronicles of half a dozen self-exiled people who have become lost souls. Like the Greeks Naipaul describes in the prologue, all are casualties of ... freedom ... strange lands for them. They are friendless, they have few loyalties, and they have a feeling - a fear - they are trespassing. (119)

It is a description of the external expatriate reality. The three accounts in the novel are the experiences of the narrator, who visualizes the consciousness of the protagonist as part of his own particular awareness. He highlights Santosh’s loss of complete love and Bobby’s sense of loss of the supporting environment. The narration is restricted only to reality. He is part of the world, he creates, and his main aim is to present an overall vision of the contemporary man, his failures, successes and possibilities. The title In a Free State itself is suggestive of the theme.

In a Free State is Naipaul’s attempt to adapt his fiction to reflect his acceptance that he has become a man of the world without a home, whose subject matter and themes will be concerned with the problems and disorders of the postcolonial world. The writing of a sequence of stories and diary extracts set in different countries and mixing autobiography with fiction shows his awareness that in his exile and travels he has become representative of the postcolonial world and of the modern human condition. This requires finding new literary forms or re-examining the basis of English fiction, especially writing about foreign lands.

Context is everything. The scenes are situated within a carefully constructed line. That is that is based on the conflict play of fragments. So here the addition of one plus one does not lead to two, but to a qualitatively different concept which allows visuals to transform themselves and their objective realities through conflict. In fact In a Free
State makes constant use of montage. The narrator is often like a camera looking in from the outside and occasionally zooming in on incongruous details that take on the significance of defining images:

The new photograph of the president, the man of the forest with his hair now in the English style, stood between colored prints of English scenes. There were old magazines: photographs of parties, dances, country houses, furniture; an England, as it were, for export, carefully photographed, with what was offending left out. (140)

These details add up to an idea that is more than each individual objects to and work in a way that is similar to a collection of shots that take on meaning by their juxtaposition.

Naipaul uses the technique of the first person narrative and the first two stories are in the stream-of-consciousness mode. The third story is a dramatic third person account with emphasis on the chronological detailing of the journey by car, as Bobby and Linda travel through a no-man’s land. The story presents the narrator’s wide and varied experiences of the world. Graphically it covers important places like Bombay, Washington, Trinidad, London and Cairo. The focus is on the most deprived Third World people like Santosh, Dayo’s brother, Arab Urchins, Egyptian soldiers, Greek refugees and Tramps and also on materially sound people. The narrator visualises the contemporary culture, in which power and money are the criteria that matter. For such people the concept of home has no meaning. Washington, London and the South African states become less meaningful when the people face harsh realities. “But what is nationality these days? I myself, I think of myself as a citizen of the world” (IFS 14). They realize security in terms of continual movement by car.
The lives of Santosh, Dayo's brother, Bobby and Linda are extraordinary isolated case histories, which gain clarity through the prologue and epilogue mirroring the experiences of the narrator. After the prologue, the narrator emerges in the epilogue as a man with a developing vision capable of mobilizing his energies and tools to hammer a unique theme out of despair. The state of tramphood and anonymity gets concretized in the novel. In a Free State is just the opposite of entrapment, though each free situation carries its own disillusionment and insecurity. Naipaul's man is seen as one who makes great efforts inspite of handicaps to align himself to an ill-defined present, though his efforts may end in failure. Naipaul's travellers and explorers are tools of analysis to sift man's possibilities in an impossible world. Whatever be the situation and however hopeless it is, none of his protagonists commit suicide. Some of them even stoically face complex problems and their struggles are challenges, symbolic of their will to survive.

In a Free State is notable for Naipaul's ability to work within a variety of English. His control of British tonalities and idioms allows the dialogue between British characters in "In a Free State" to carry most of the weight and fill the space of a long narrative. Each of the three stories is a display of entering other minds, accommodating to other subjectivities and its use of English. "One out of Many" is told directly by a former Bombay servant and part of the comedy is the discrepancy between what he says, which is naive, and what we understand. At first he mistakes American hippies for strange Indians long lost in America. He does not understand the connection between the Indian herb he smokes and why the African-Americans are interested in him. "Tell Me Who to Kill", in its jagged, fragmented, sentences and narrative is the monologue of an emotionally disturbed, uneducated West Indian immigrant in England. Continual rereading does not explain exactly what has happened in different parts of
the story. The references to American movies, part of Naipaul's repertoire of symbol-ism, show how the speaker's thought has been influenced by foreign images. They give him wrong ambitions for his brother excite him to notions of murder and seep into his descriptions of what he has experienced. This is the first time Naipaul has tried to write about near-insanity from the inside. Typical of Naipaul is the social concern, the linking of the psychological to cultural, social and economic causes.

In a Free State is in part a book about the modern Indian diaspora. The Indian servant who comes to America in "One out of Many" becomes an illegal immigrant and, except for some Indians who exploit him, finds no community except among the African-Americans, who his Hindu culture has taught him are unclean and inferior. He has become free but in terms of his inner-self trapped and debased. The story is comic and Naipaul has fun with the cultural and social incongruities that result in the unlikely case of one of India's impoverished servants suddenly being given the opportunity of a life in Washington. If part of the comedy is the humorous reversal of someone usually considered one of the earth's downtrodden being less happy as an American wage-earner, another comedy is the servant's social awareness. In India he avoids riff-raff, judges others socially and has a sense of status and security. In America he has more material comforts and money, but socially, spiritually and emotionally he is uncomfortable; his life is more restricted; and in terms of his own culture he can be said to have fallen among a people considered lower than himself. In America he has become a sole brother to the black Americans. An allusion to fallen Adam in Paradise Lost points to the paradox: "You will be a free man... You will have the whole world before you" (www.sparknotes.com/poetry/paradisest.html).
“Tell Me Who to Kill” concerns the ways ambition, education, illusions and travel fracture family bonds and how personal faults and lack of self-knowledge can be as destructive as the difficulties presented by the world. The speaker, an Indian, brought up among the sugarcane fields of the West Indies, is obsessed with his younger brother whom he decides will not have the ugly, brutal life he himself has known. Like an overly affectionate parent he spoils his brother, who lacks the abilities and will to better himself. The younger brother who blames others for his failures, is lazy, lies and keeps pretending he needs money for further study. The narrator borrows money for his brother’s trip to go and study in England. He eventually follows him there and himself finds a job in a factory. Besides paying for his brother, who long ago has stopped studying. Then he saves up enough money to open a small roti shop which he eventually loses along with his savings. While he has admittedly suffered from racial prejudice at the hands of young British toughs, he seems in any event totally unequipped to operate a shop in England. He has no friends, no society, no one to give him advice or help. The only person he trusts is his younger brother, who refuses to have anything to do with the shop. For decades the speaker has shown bad judgment about his brother and an unwillingness to take advice from others who warned him. Too much pride is involved.

There are suggestions that the elder brother’s love for the younger is tinged with suppressed homosexual urges. The occasion for the story is the marriage of the younger brother to a white English-woman. The speaker sees this as a final betrayal. While he alludes to the breaking of Hindu customs, the story implies that sexual jealousy is also involved in his rage. It is ironic that once the younger brother has no longer yielded to his elder brother’s wish he finds a job and becomes presentable enough to marry an Englishwoman. The elder brother’s continuing support may in fact have held back the
younger brother from becoming independent. This is also ironic as it is the elder brother who had the puritan virtues of hard work, savings, investment, whereas the younger one appeared a spendthrift with utter hopelessness in life. As he is a little educated with a gift of the gab, he would be more assimilable than the speaker with his peasant’s broken English.

This is a complex tale in presentation, insight, psychology and compassion told in fragmented, broken English, using a jagged polyphonic form for its themes. There is a complexity and ambiguity that defies simplistic interpretations. The prologue, “The Tramp at Piraeus”, is an episode from one of the journals Naipaul regularly keeps when travelling. Naipaul is travelling from Greece to Egypt and the ship (as with many ships in literature) is a microcosm of mankind, a ship of fools and an epitome of how the world works.

The main characters in the fiction are mostly outsiders, expatriates or alien minorities - those who have become uprooted from their origins; travellers without homes to which they can return; minorities at the mercy of others; those stranded by the withdrawal of protecting governments, former enemies brought together by the artificial boundaries of the new nations and those who have come to the capitals of the world without the necessary skills and resources to survive. If in the modern world freedom is dangerous, there are also signs of new empires, new orders - the seemingly innocent Americans confidently travelling abroad, the Chinese travelling in tightly controlled groups. Naipaul examines the Europeans who come to former colonies seeking careers or personal salvation, the dangers to the Indian diaspora caused by the withdrawal of the Empire that led them abroad, the effect of metropolitan sentimental
'third-worldism' on new nations along with the tyrannical governments and civil wars that have resulted from the withdrawal of imperial order.

The unnamed Trinidadian protagonist of the story "Tell Me Who to Kill" is an extreme case; a madman, he not only models his life after Hollywood films, but also interprets everything from a cinematic perspective as in the final passage, which blurs the borderline between Trinidad, England and the world of the movies:

I have my own place to go back to. Frank will take me there when this is over. And now that my brother leave me for good I forget his face already, and I only seeing the rain and the house and the mud, the field at the back with the para-grass bending down with the rain, the donkey and the smoke from the kitchen, my father in the gallery and my brother in the room on the floor, and that boy opening his mouth to scream, like in Rope. (IFS 107-108)

Naipaul's techniques include autobiographical flashbacks. The foreboding of death haunts the novel in some form or the other. Though in his novels there are no harrowing death scenes, he indulges in the tragic-comic existence of contemporary men. His characters lack humour but they have dignity. They become victims of the faith in their own struggle.

There are other cinematic techniques that approximate this use of visual play throughout the body of Naipaul's works. These include the use of the close-up as a vehicle of meaning. The close scrutiny of individual details can allow the reader through his appreciation of the visuality in the experience, to respond to complex emotions generated by the text. The figure of the Zulu's cap in the story "In a Free State," for instance, plays with the ways in which what we see may not be what is true.
This kind of play triggers a response that defines the nature of the two men, two worldviews and two social and political problems, "Bobby leaned to touch the plaid cap, and for a while they held the cap together, Bobby fingering the material, the Zulu allowing the cap to be fingered" (114).

In *In a Free State*, Naipaul frees his protagonists from these constraints and transplants them into a larger, more spacious world: a repeated pattern in the book is the emergence from small, self-enclosed places - cupboards, cabins, basements, cars, compounds - into larger spaces. But this expansive movement is largely illusory, since the larger world in which the characters are cast adrift is one that they are not equipped to understand. The subsequently empty freedom, they seem to enjoy while moving in this world is therefore a condemned space, consigning people to loneliness, to confused identities, and to incomprehension of the surroundings from which they are cut off. The protagonists - Santosh in the United States, Dayo's brother in Britain, Bobby in the unnamed African country - have no idea of the state as a polity or organized society in their troubled sojourns; instead they exist in a social vacuum, unmoored and anchorless. Freedom here is destructive, nihilistic and its casualties retreat from it into the safety of their cabins, cupboards and expatriate compounds.

Alternatively, it has been suggested that in his choice of title Naipaul is drawing upon a scientific metaphor - namely, "the idea of the free-floating movement of subatomic particles around a nucleus" - and there is ground for this view in the book's structure (William Walsh 69). *In a Free State* is an assemblage of unblended, discrete elements - two stories and a novella loosely joined by a prologue and an epilogue - which seem not to be formed around any nucleus and therefore fail to cohere as a single work. *In a Free State* is a contradictory work in which the relationship of the two
stories ("One Out of Many" and "Tell Me Who to Kill") to the title novella ("In a Free State") is not very closely linked. It is more a relationship that closely resembles the situation of two opposing elements; contrary gravitational pulls, like the opposing pressures which preserve the book's equilibrium.

Next, there is the notion of freedom as a scientific metaphor. *In a Free State* uses the scientific metaphor of suspended free floating particles that do not settle down. In ironic sense, "free" meaning "independent" or "freedom" and "state" meaning "country" or "condition". The freedom of the nations mentioned in the book are politically independent yet bound to their former colonies in some way or other. The reference here is apparently to the random motion around the atomic nucleus of electrons whose speed and position can be measured, but never at the same time, and which are said to be "In a free state" since their movement is impossible to plot exactly. The occidental, unpredictable travel of particles is comparable to that of the book's characters. Santosh, Dayo's brother, and the tramp in the Prologue seem to move without any clear direction in a space without any gravitational pull or magnetism which would hold them together around a common center. During the long car journey across Central Africa in the title novella, the ill-matched travellers Bobby and Linda do not relate to or attract each other in any way. He is a liberal and a homosexual, she is a racist and a nymphomaniac. They seem to have the unconnectedness of free-floating particles, like the tribes flung randomly together, without any basis for unity. They drive together aimlessly through the recently form postcolonial free state. And what is true of these relationships is, arguably, true of the book's individual sections. These are superficially linked by an abundance of arbitrary plot connections, parallel incidents, and echoing motifs - the characters' American involvements; the motif of the journey which removes people from their normal surroundings; shifting alliances of the
strong against the weak; the scapegoat-victim seeking refuge from freedom in a locked space; personality breakdowns and outbursts of groundless anarchic violence. But none of these amounts to a single unifying framework or principle of organization, and it is finally difficult to say exactly what kind of structure or unity, if any, they constitute, or what kind of logic it is that carries the narrative from the hounding of the old tramp in the Prologue to the beating of the Egyptian boys in the Epilogue. The narrative's movement has a roaming, associative kind of logic that invites any number of possibly spurious correspondences between its episodes and, like the erratic progress of the subatomic particles, is finally unplottable.

Bobby said softly "God." Then, leaning again on the steering wheel, he made himself think of the bar of the New Shropshire. "God. God." He looked up. "God." But now his voice had changed. "God, how beautiful" (IFS 159). He was speaking of the play of sunlight in the green field. The words "God, how beautiful" provide a complex of ideas, here rendered possible through the intercutting of images that we see more frequently in films that use fast cutting techniques of montage. Images of the boy, the Zulu, the bar are made doubly complex and evocative by the narrator's words: "He was speaking of the play of sunlight in the green field" (159). There is in all this something of the power of silent cinema with its play of over tonal lines where conflict marks the leap to a new concept.

The title of Naipaul's In a Free State is a fertile and suggestive one that has set many critical puzzles. Immediately, it seems to refer to a state which is politically free, such as the independent, postcolonial nation-states from which the characters in the stories come and in which the title novella is set: respectively, India and Trinidad, and a conglomerate of African nations. This freedom, however, turns out to be largely
theoretical and ironic since most of the countries featured in the book is perceived, one
or even two decades on from independence, as still being the playthings of colonial
powers. According to John Thieme, “the title has been taken to refer to freedom as a
psychological state, a state of mind and being which causes anguish, abandonment, and
the loss of personal attachments” (58).

As Robert Boyers has observed:

the presentation of political reality in Naipaul's fiction is generally not
very complex, but tends to be sketchy and atmospheric, consisting of a
few striking, powerful symbolic gestures and tableaux: for example, the
mysterious naked men running by the roadside, or the prisoners in the
civil war, roped neck-to-neck and reduced to their ancestral status as
slaves, invite the facile inference that, in Africa, history repeats itself
and nothing changes. The title novella of In A Free State is essentially
the work of an expatriate sensibility which, in spite of its profusion of
political sound effects and atmospheric effusions, contains no political
analysis; such would entail details of the ideologies and strategies of the
rival forces and the relative merits of their policies, this work, however,
the habitual blurring of particulars combines with certain historical
sleights-of-hand and disingenuous shifts of locale to rig the case against
postcolonial Africa, apparently to present it in the worst possible light
(39-41).

In a Free State is a work of unresolved tensions in which the two stories neither
rotate around the nucleus of the title novella nor career randomly in its vicinity; rather,
they act like the opposite poles of a magnet. In both the stories and the novella,
fictional ontology expresses the state of the nation, and there is an implied matching of individuals and countries, but in ways that stress differences more than the similarities. In both stories, the characters are set anarchically adrift from their author, discharged into an unprotected independence that is largely unwanted and unwelcome and to which their countries of origin, by implication, aspire with a corresponding lack of conviction or success. In the title narrative, on the other hand, the characters' autonomy appears to be compromised and curtailed by authorial predispositions, to the extent that the imperial sentiments and prejudices expressed at different times by the expatriate characters - Bobby, Linda, the Colonel - reflect almost identical views stated baldly by the autocratic third-person narrator in the opening paragraphs. While in the stories the viewpoints and psychologies of character, indeterminate narrator, and implied author are often undefined and at odds, they are, pervasively, one and the same in the novella's oppressively monolithic narrative vision; the characters merely turn up evidence to support the narrator's generalizations and to rig the facts in advance for the encroaching author to discover exactly what he set out to find. This peremptory eclipsing of the characters' freedom is then matched, at the national level, by a similarly preemptive treatment of their postcolonial country of residence and its history.

"Tell Me Who to Kill" of In a Free State also merges fantasy with reality in such a way that we are left finally with a radical uncertainty about events; such is the nature of the nightmare that has replaced the possibility of the regenerative powers of the cinema, no matter how whimsical this may seem. The word "regenerative" is used here because Naipaul shares with Derek Walcott and Kamau Braithwaite a profound sense of the power of the moving image or the image aligned to movement, as a formative process that might allow for a truthful representation of the complex web of relations within human persons here and elsewhere and for portraying the rich

201
interconnections that exist within Caribbean societies. Their attention to the visual makes cinema the supreme art for seeing a key strategy in writing about the Caribbean Naipaul’s works retain a defining sense of what it was and still is to be a Caribbean person. His works, however, increasingly rest in the shadow of the light of this world. That regenerative light or way of seeing that had within it laughter, satire, grotesqueness and love, becomes converted to another world and increasingly lingers in the shadows of a half remembered idea that is more fiction than fact and that has become estranged from its origins.

Satire as a mode has been handled effectively by Naipaul invariably in all his fiction. It serves the purpose of the novelist to expose the imperfections of the society. His satiric mode is very mild, gentle and purposeful. In this field he clearly establishes a stance that he is distinctly different from the traditional satirists of English literature. His irony equally enriches his satiric vein. Both the qualities always go together to achieves their end. Satire and Irony are found to be balanced in proportion almost in all his novels.

Naipaul is a conscious craftsman who divides the novel into balanced sections, each section having a house as the central point, thus making all the component parts integral to a central motif. The prologue and the epilogue echo each other. Setting in Naipaul’s novel very often reflects the mental state of the leading characters. The environment plays an indispensable role in highlighting the nuances of his characters. Realism is a major instrument in his hands, mills, coasts, valleys and towns all are realistically presented. His primary interest is not nature or its beauties, but human beings, their concerns, interactions and tragedies. In the Hudson Review it was said:
He has risen to the challenge of a great subject - the wreckage of empire and the emergence of the third world - and out of it he has created a fictional world that is now as much a part of the permanent geography of the imagination as Dicken's London or Faulkner's London or Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha country. (158)

He writes with clarity and distinction in a prose that flows elegantly. He has the gift of making complex ideas simple. To him, no particular style matters. It is the vision that is important. He insists on certainty in writing. As Naipaul grows in experience, his style becomes more serious. His works reveal depth barely visible. At the outset, it may appeal to be a hollow narration but it has a latent truth base.

*A House for Mr Biswas* is a master-piece, the grand and deliberate portraying of a central figure and a multitude of minor characters. His life is allegorically divided into four stages, the journey through wilderness, welcome by the Tulsis of the Hanuman House, the search for spiritual and physical food and his inability to find a safe shelter in an alien land. *The Mimic Men* is concentrated and allusive. The prose does not reveal its meaning at once. The structure is elaborate, moldings nostalgic experience into shape. In *In a Free State*, there are episodes called from a journal, making a novel. These are several first person narrators. Many people, places and things happen against the Indian and American backdrops.

All the titles of the novels chosen for the study are symbolic and symbolism is a major technique in Naipaul. *A House for Mr Biswas* in a story of a semi-tramp who moves from place to place, from job to job seeking permanence and security. The House is a symbol of the security that Biswas longs for.
The Mimic Men is a title suggesting mimicry, to imitate, to act out. The characters are shadows who act without substance. Ralph Singh is a blend of reality and imagination. The sterile marriage between Ralph Singh and Sandra is symbolically brought out by their childless married life which is destined to break up. Their failed marriage is itself a mimiced married.

In the five-part form of In a Free State, with its autobiographical prologue and epilogue sandwiching two distinctly different short stories and a novella, there are not the continuities of place, events, sequence and characters found in volumes of linked short stories. The 'free state' is a matter of structure as well as theme. The text is allowed to speak itself without much authorial intervention, although literary allusions and models have become a rich subtext of echoes counterpointed against the realism of the story. Naipaul's prose is increasingly understated, dry and objective on the surface; its ironies more quiet, the tonal direction and comedy or compassion, although present, less obvious.

Naipaul's powerful and unparalleled mastery over the language enabled him to see and feel the things in their true colour and sense. Therefore, it becomes clear that the writer has made spectacular achievement in this field with his various aesthetic devices of transforming facts into fiction. Naipaul's writing is cryptic and jerky, the comments sarcastic, but his achievements outstrip his inadequacies. Few writers match his literary skill. The simplicity, grace and dignity of his prose, the eye for concrete detail, the humour and charm, the fine sense of irony, the neatness and clarity of his exposition, and above all, his ruthless honesty all taken together have enabled him to achieve great perfection. His narrative skill is spectacular. It is this new narrative technique that distinguishes Naipaul from other writers writing in English today, either
British or non-native writer transforming facts into fiction. Eminent writers before Naipaul have certainly attempted this and have made some achievements; but Naipaul remains a unique artist in the sense that, while remaining close to the art of travel writing, he ultimately emerges a very successful artist of non-fiction.