CHAPTER II

MIGUEL STREET
Miguel Street is the first fictional work to have been written by V.S. Naipaul. It was published in 1959. The book consists of seventeen short stories narrated by an unnamed, precocious boy, who is keen and acutely observant of his colonial society. The fictional work of Miguel Street helps in testing the fictional possibilities of events, places, incidents, and characters and master the art of giving them an imaginative extension and reinforcement. The child narrator narrates in an open-eyed innocence accepting the values of the street. The seventeen stories depict the instability of the West Indian society in which, forced by eccentricity, ambition or sheer romanticism, the individuals try to get away from reality and escape into fantasy.

In Miguel Street (1959) the authorial voice implies a tone of sympathy for the derelict and victimized characters. The strictly measured sequence of narratives centre around the outcasts, eccentrics, mavericks, and tricksters of the West Indian community, all bound together by a common feeling of abandonment. The editorial voice of the narrator in order to transform the Miguel Street from a transcript into a myth of locality or into a 'sthala – purana,' holds the
centripetal attractions of the place and the centrifugal distractions of time in an exquisite balance, and also succeeding in presenting a fairly objective view of life. In *Miguel Street* Naipaul attempts to write something more than what he saw as his father did through the act of writing, he makes an adjustment with what he saw. He is not only interested in life but also the pattern that controls them and the creative perception that transforms what is seen and felt.

In *Miguel Street*, a precocious boy - narrator rejects the Trinidadian society as a 'rubbish heap'. Naipaul seemed to have expressed the same opinion when he described Trinidad as a 'terrible place' in his interview with Suresh Menon. ('Indian Express' on 25th June, 1989.)

Taken as a whole work, the unity of *Miguel Street* is derived from the spatial metaphor of the street itself as well as from a time - structure implicit but undeclared till the very end. The temporal pattern of *Miguel Street* is made explicit in the last happening, 'How I left Miguel Street.' The unnamed narrator of the stories makes the only
successful escape recorded in the work. He leaves his native scene for his education abroad. He recaptures the strange trysts of his boyhood days from the vantage point of reminiscence. The stories are a clear identity of the past left behind and overcome. Miguel Street is the gathering place of different people who are chosen by the place of living rather than the people choosing it themselves. It depicts the instability of the West Indian society in which impelled by eccentricity, ambition or sheer romanticism, the individuals are always trying to get away. The instability comes from the very stability of the different subcultures that constitute the strange soup – mix recipe of this society. Everyone is forced to rebel against his closed society by aligning himself with other subcultures. Frequent disappearances are counter – pointed by the same strange reappearances. The physical lay out of the Miguel Street establishes it as a perfect ecological metaphor of the human situation.

Naipaul, as the neighbourhood boy, describes the stories recapturing his childhood days of the colonial society. The seventeen sketches of Miguel Street are named after the inhabitants of the street.
Each character is interrelated with the remaining characters. As Francis Wyndham says:

Unity of theme, mood, manners and background binds the stories in V.S. Naipaul’s *Miguel Street* so tightly together that the collection is almost a novel. The street is in Port of Spain, and Mr. Naipaul takes us from house to house connecting on a character here, a situation there, before moving on to the next: a major figure in one episode may fill a subsidiary role in another.¹

Living in the street each resident projects his own image which he has chosen as an eccentric individual, a mask and fantasy, to assert himself. What is required of an individual is his integrated personality approved by a ‘code of conduct’ of his society. But *Miguel Street* has no such ‘code’ to follow. As Patrick Swidene says, “In fact almost all the inhabitants of Miguel Street are hopeless failures. But most of them fail with style and in their terms that is to succeed.”² *Miguel Street*
becomes traditionless and valueless in which imitation becomes the order of the society and individuals give themselves to fantasies of other places, cultures, and colours which are shown in films and advertisements.

The book speaks of a society, which has never assumed any particular noble aspect, and of a society without any glorious past or remarkable future. Its people are gullible – in strikingly innocent ways. It is a society based upon

the degrading fact of the colonial society; it never required efficiency, it never required quality, and these things, because unrequired, become undesirable. This is the world without scientists, engineers, explorers, soldiers or poets, without tradition or standard which shapes the people of Miguel Street..." ³

Landeg White attributes this apparent lack of standards to lack of real concern on part of the inhabitants:
Miguel Street is not a community without standards but the standards are not the sort that can promote achievement by giving shape to ambition, and in the end they amount to little more than a good natured tolerance of eccentricity and failure. The lack of sanctimoniousness is superficially attractive, but even this is basically no more than lack of real concern.  

The people of Miguel Street are neither model nor ideal, mere fantasists, they know very well of their own helplessness in the society. The narrator feels that "I used to wonder whether they knew how much worry they caused, and how uncertain their own position was." They try to substitute what is missing in that place, which, however, always remains only in their dreams. They are without any social or moral background. They have neither rich inheritance to dream about nor remarkable history to boast of "This is the life without natural graces, heroes, saints, without a national identity of a social purpose, inherited by the people of Miguel Street...."
Bogart and his living surround mystery. He pretends to be making a living by tailoring, but he never stitches any thing. He is like Popo, the Carpenter who lives next door. The residents of the Miguel Street are neither clever nor foolish. Uncertainty haunts every character, and every one pretends to be working on something and producing the result, but never succeeds in doing so. It is very ironical that no one starves there even though they earn no money for their living. Miguel Street looks like a slum area for strangers, but to its inhabitants it is a world by itself. There are many important men in the street, even though each is different from the other. "Man – man was mad; George was stupid; Big Foot was a bully; Hat was an adventurer; Popo was a philosopher; and Morgan was our comedian." (p. 61)

The residents of the Miguel Street are neither ideal nor idle. It is a wonder how they got money and it is an equal wonder as to how they make friends, for they were the most popular figures in the street.

Bogart models himself on the star of the film 'Casablanca' and when he explains his long absence in
terms of smuggling and brothel keeping in British Guiana, he becomes the 'most feared man in the street.' Eventually, he is jailed for bigamy and it turns out, his absences have no more melodramatic an explanation than that he has been trying to produce a child. But the men of the street do not laugh; they understand his desire to be a man, among we men.7

Popo, a carpenter, pretends to be making a thing without name. But, never completes making even a stick of furniture. "And yet Popo was never idle. He was always busy hammering and sawing and planning" (p. 8) The street despises Popo and his wife too ignores his poetic sensibility, as sensibility has no place in Miguel Street. When Popo drinks heavily, beats his wife's lover and goes to the Court of law for trial only then is he accepted as the inhabitant of Miguel Street. A prison sentence for robbery gets him the necessary recognition as a man and the views of the inhabitants of Miguel Street also change gradually. Notoriety – recognition for the wrong reasons – brought popularity to people in Miguel Street.
Man – man contests in every election and every time he gets only three votes, one of the votes being that of his own. He never works, but he is never idle. "He never worked, but he was never idle. He was hypnotized by the word; particularly the written word and he would spend a whole day writing a single word." (p. 34) With the Bible in his hand he goes to the extent of announcing that he is the new Messiah, which puts him in calamities. Madness is tolerated by the street, but not fanaticism or pretentious self-righteousness, for that tempts the evil eye. He tries to crucify himself on the cross and compels the people to stone him. "Father, forgive them. They aren't know what they doing." Then he screamed out, 'stone me brethren! " (p.39) People really begin to fling stones at Man – man, aiming his face and chest. Man – man shouts loudly to stop the stupidness. " He shouted, what the hell is this? What the hell you people think you doing? Look, get me down from this quick, let me down quick and I go settle the son of bitch who pelt a stone at me." (p. 140)

George is an alcoholic, he is rude, always creates nuisance in the street with his rude behaviour. He beats his wife, son, and daughter
too badly. He kills his own wife and marries again. He never tries to become friendly with people. He allows stray women in his Pink house. His own son, Elias and daughter, Dolly just ignores him even when he dies. The residents of the street collect money to bury him after his death.

B. Wordsworth claims to be the greatest poet in the world, but he never completes a poem. The narrator asks him to recite a poem, but B. Wordsworth had never written a poem. So, he escapes from the scene without uttering a single line. "But he never told me any other line. He merely said, 'oh, it comes, you know. It comes.'" (p. 47) Big Foot is a terror in the colony, but he is afraid of even a dog, he works as a postman, driver, carpenter, and mason, but proves to be good for nothing. Big Foot acts as a boxer, but when the R.A.F. man cruelly defeats him, he becomes a big joke in the street. Finally, he settles down as a labourer in a quarry in Laventille. "Big Foot left Miguel Street, and the last I heard of him was that he was a labourer in a quarry in Laventille." (p. 59) Morgan is a pyrotechnicist, but he never succeeded in his profession. He is a comedian in the street. He always quarreled
with Mr. and Mrs. Bhakcu and he beat his children very badly. He too leaves the street for some time. Rumours float that he has gone to Venezuela or he might have become a jockey in Columbia. Everyone seems to have indeed outgrown the necessity for belonging by mastering the route of evanescence. Mr. Bhakcu treats himself as a mechanical genius but he never repairs even his own car. He buys a car, a Bedford lorry, and two taxies, but he fails to earn money. At the end he settles as a Pundit.

The Character of Laura in the street is quite in line with the culture. She lives next door to the narrator. While Bogart was the most boring person in the street Laura was the most vivacious. Laura was not beautiful, but she had seven husbands. Changing husbands was very common in the Miguel Street. The narrator observed certain regular happenings such as her belly raising for months and then becoming quite flat again in a few months. Men usually cycled around Laura's house in the evening, whistling for Laura. She fought everyday with Nathaniel and her children screamed all over the place: “She knocked him about a lot, and did so quite openly now. Sometimes she
locked him out, and then we would hear Nathaniel crying and coaxing from the pavement." (p. 89)

Eddoes is one of the aristocrats of the street. He works only in the morning, maneuvering his scavenging – cart. He is the 'sweet – man', a man of leisure, well dressed, and keen on women. Every year Eddoes wins the city council’s award for the cleanest scavenging – cart.

Bolo, ‘Missing Ball’, is a tall man, not thin, with a face that is a caricature of sadness, the eyebrows curving downwards, the eyes big and empty of expression. He has no commitment in his business. He sells flour or sugar keeping the box on two wheels and he pushed it himself for six days and he becomes a barber on Sundays. He boasts of himself: “I. I teach Samuel, He couldn’t even shave his self when he start barbering. He came crying and begging, “Mr. Bolo, Mr, Bolo, teach me how to cut people hair, I be you.” (p. 135)

‘Finding the missing ball’ is Bolo’s passion. He purchases twenty copies of the Trinidad Guardian for finding the missing ball in the
‘missing ball’ contest. All that Bolo has to do to win a lot of money is to mark the position of the ball with an ‘X’, but he never wins a penny. Sometimes he becomes angry for not finding the missing ball and for not earning money in an easy way. Bolo buys hundred and fifty Guardians every week to fulfill his ambition in vain. No wonder, Bolo is called as the ‘missing ball’ in the Miguel Street. “People began calling Bolo ‘Missing ball’. Hat used to say, ‘Look the man with the missing ball.” (p. 137)

Hat is a well-known figure of the Miguel Street. The narrator gives him much importance. Hat is much respected by the residents of the street. Each and every character is linked with the character of Hat. Boyee and Errol are Hat’s nephews. Hat always gets involved in troubles with the police. He resembled Rex Harrison with his dark-brown complexion, medium height. He had a slightly bow-legged walk and flat feet. Being kind hearted, he responds to every problem in the street and he is at the same time a little bit ironical. When George dies, he collects money to bury him. Hat brings Dolly home as his wife and later kills her for which he is prisoned for four years. The narrator
betrays deep love towards Hat in his account of Hat. He says, “When Hat went to jail, part of me had died.” (p. 172)

In the last story, the narrator rejects Miguel Street and escapes to London through a scholarship sponsored by Mr. Ganesh Ramsumair. This reminds of V.S. Naipaul’s own escape from the Trinidadian society, which, to him was something of a nightmare. Naipaul sustains irony through the fallible narrator, a related device, Abrams explains, “for sustaining ironic qualification, in which, the narrator of the story is himself a participant in it but, although he may be neither foolish nor demented, nevertheless manifests a failure of insight, viewing and appraising his own motives and actions of other characters through the distorting perspective of his prejudices and private interests.” The characters in Miguel Street, as Naipaul feels, form the ‘rubbish heap’ of the West Indian society. There is a contrast set in all the stories between the superior western cultures taken as a standard culture and the set of values represented by the Miguel Street. Naipaul seems to have denounced the West Indian culture, habits, and values by labeling them as primitive and barbarious, in a satiric tone in all the stories.
One can describe the situation as an inverted civil condition. "Civil men", as Cudjoe observes, "in contradiction to savages, lived an ordered and disciplined life characterized by political authority, a system of law and the presence of religious morality." All colonized people were classified as primitives, i.e. savages, without political, legal, and social system and communal life, and religion, spiritually speaking, unlike Europe. The colonizer tries to ennoble the savages and civilize them for better living.

As the savage is perceived always as having no history or culture, when he does, it is always perceived to be meaningless. Because he lacks letters, the savage cannot enjoy intellectual life, and thinking leads invariably to unhappiness. The savage state required no system of law, no social organizations, and no political order and people lived without the benefit of kings.
In Miguel Street there are few social conventions. There are no laws of the land, no moral, ethical standards to order the lives of the people. Precisely, in Miguel Street the conventions are imposed from outside in the form of law. Mere anarchy ruled the street. Living in the street means no other man to be himself. There is no culture to bind them, no political authority, no ambitions or goals to achieve, and no facilities to set up. All the people in Miguel Street are outcastes, prostitutes, and knaves. They never hesitate to lie or steal, for in their proneness to fantasy everything passes for propriety. "These Trinidad people does only lie, lie. Lie is all they know." (p. 143) They allow themselves to drift along with the current and prepare to face only the unavoidable or the inevitable. All the people begin and end up as failures. Bogart never succeeds in tailoring, Popo never succeeds in making the thing without name, George fails to succeed as a good father and husband, and subsequently looses his wife. Elias, the son of George fails in his examinations, and he appears in the Cambridge Senior School Certificate exam many times. "So I think I was a little glad when Elias sat the examination for the third time, and failed." (p. 30) Elias works as a teacher in Titu Hoyt School and again works as a
Sanitary Inspector. He leaves British Guiana to succeed in the sanitary Inspector's examination but fails the exam. Later, he tries at Barbados but in vain. Man – man never succeeds as a man, he is called a lunatic for doing senseless things such as claiming to be the Messiah. Man-man contests many times in the elections to the City Council or Legislative Council, but he gets only three votes every time. “At every election he got exactly three votes. That I couldn’t understand. Man-man voted for himself, but who were the other two?” (p. 33). He never works, but he is never idle. Man-man is a total failure and ironical too.

B. Wordsworth claims to be a great poet and always pretends to be writing good poetry. Whenever the narrator pressurizes him to show his poetry, he escapes from the scene. Finally, he confesses his failure: “That story I told you about the boy poet and the girl poet, do you remember that? That wasn’t true. It was something I just made up. All this talk about poetry and the greatest poem in the world, that wasn’t true, either.” (p. 48)

The people of the street treat Big Foot as a terrifying personality, but in actuality he is a coward. He is even afraid of a dog.
He frequently changes his designation from one to another, as a postman, a driver, a carpenter, a mason, a boxer, a labourer in the quarry. At first he is treated as terror, in the end he is treated as a joker. "Trinidad thought it was Big Foot, the comedian, doing something funny again." (p. 59) Mr. Morgan fails in his fire works. Laura begets eight children by seven men. Laura's daughter Lorna also follows the same path and begets a child without getting married.

Eddoes is one of the aristocrats in the street. Due to his extramarital affairs, he begets a child 'Pleasure' which brings to light the fact that even the aristocrats of the street had extramarital affairs with the common people. Under the influence of these low-class people the aristocrats also tended to behave like the commoners in the street. Edward kills his wife and he is jailed. Tony and Mrs. Hereina never lived like a perfect couple. Though Mrs. Christiani elopes with Tony and settles down as Mrs. Hereina there was always a quarrel between Tony and Mrs. Hereina. Finally, she rejects Tony as her husband.
Mr. Bhakcu acts as a mechanical genius, but he never repairs any vehicle. He conceals his failure as a mechanic and boasts of himself as a mechanical genius. Whenever his vehicle needs repairs, a mechanic has to come to repair the vehicle. We always find him under the tally of a Tractor pretending to be repairing the engine of the Tractor just to avoid the money lenders. "Bhakcu remaining under the lorry all the time, refusing to reply. The money - lenders grew angry, and some of the women among them began to cry." (p. 127) He fails as a mechanic as well as a good husband.

Bolo is well known as 'missing ball'. He always strives to earn money by luck. He believes in luck more than in his ability. He fails as a seller of sugar, as a barber and unable to earn money through luck. "And all during those years Bolo bought sweepstake tickets, and never won." (p. 142)

The last story 'How I left Miguel Street' reveals the narrator's failure. He is in the habit of taking rum, smoking cigarettes, getting involved in extramarital affairs. The mother of the narrator compels him
to leave the Miguel Street for his own sake. Finally, the narrator rejects the Miguel Street and escapes to London through a scholarship provided by Mr. Ganesh Ramsumair. Symbolically the narrator escapes from a life which was a nightmare to him. As Keith Garebian observes: "Young Nathaneil, the person of Miguel Street (1959), matures and discovers that life on the street is a microcosm of dispiriting failure, so he leaves it all in a mood of exultant relief." The reader is made to apprehend the raw realities of life, which he attempts to escape from.

The Miguel Street has seventeen stories of inhabitants, each different in his own way of living. The characters are interconnected and unified by the sense of place. Each character involves in the lives of other characters. All the stories are different and at the same time the stories are interconnected, no character is isolated. We find all the characters in each and every story. Bogart, Hat, Errol, Boyee, Edward, and Eddoes are seen in each and every story. The narrator narrates each story by involving the characters of the Bogart, Hat, Errol, Boyee, Edward, and Eddoes.
The colonial people of the Miguel Street have a common oddity – frequent and unnecessary appearances and disappearances which does not require explanation. Dereliction is taken for granted as a way of life

They appear and disappear like fish or bird. Suddenly they are here, suddenly gone. People come and go, they are dramatically present, but there are long intervals of silence and absence. 12

Bogart lives in the street for four years and all of a sudden he disappears only to reappear for three more times with long intervals in between. “The third time he went away and came back he gave a great party in his room for all the children or kids, as he called them.”(p. 6)

Popo disappears in the street for few days. He goes on searching for his wife who eloped with the gardener. Elias frequently fails in Cambridge Senior School Certificate examinations. He frequently changes places in British Guiana in order to pass the
Cambridge Senior School Certificate exam. Later, he moves to Barbados to pass the Sanitary Inspector Examination. Big Foot disappears in the street for many times. Big Foot leaves the street. Mr. Morgan leaves the street to become a jockey. In all, the people of Miguel Street were all romancers, wanderers, and more appropriately, Picares.

The home of Laura becomes the home of strangers. Many unknown people appear in the street and they disappear. George's Pink house is full of strangers. They appear in regular intervals. They appear only to disappear. The inhabitants develop a style of living in which surprise and panic are both subsumed into common place acceptance and the dramatic is absorbed into the quotidian. They take eccentricity in a natural way as if it were a common occurrence. A sort of uncertainty haunts almost every character. But it is unaccompanied by a sense of existential ambiguity. Uncertainties and instability of events were too common to be taken seriously by these people.
Miguel Street's lay out looked like a slum for the fresher, but to the residents of the street it was a world in itself. It is really remarkable that the people there developed a style of life, which assured the means for existence for all. Every one was brilliantly accommodated in the street. There was no feeling of claustrophobia whatsoever. Edward, one of the residents of the street, says: "Look at Miguel Street. In America you think they have streets so narrow? In America this street could pass for a sidewalk" (p.50) On another occasion the narrator expresses his view; "A STRANGER could drive through Miguel Street and just say 'Slum!' because he could see no more. But we, who lived there, saw our street as a world, where everybody was quite different from everybody else."(p. 61)

The inhabitants of the street are always 'romancers' and their sorrows are cushioned by fantasies. Bogart finds work on a ship and goes to British Guiana. Morgan is charged with arson and leaves the place. Some people say that he went to Venezuela and some others say that he became a jockey in Columbia. Black Wordsworth always claimed to be a famous poet in the world and that he was writing the
greatest poem in the world, which is totally untrue. Big Foot is treated as terror in the street, but he himself was scared of dogs.

"The inhabitants of the street have neither respect nor grace for decent living", says the narrator, implying that in their roles as happy hypocrites they had brought life under their jurisdiction.

In Miguel Street it is the place, public graceless, huddled with human oddity which is both the ground and the background of the people.¹³

This street is an essentially neutral, amoral society. Bogart is a smuggler and leads an illegal and immoral life. When he leaves the house, licentious people who entertain "stray women" occupy his house, drink and smoke. Bogart runs a brothel house in George Town. Extramarital affairs were common. Eddoes who is well known as the aristocrat of the street is also found with stray women in the house of Bogart. Popo's wife elopes with a gardener. The 'Pink house' George is full of noisy, stray women, whenever the American soldiers arrived
there. The narrator says, "And whenever I passed the Pink house, these women shouted abusive remarks at me: and some of them did things with their mouths, inviting me to 'come to mooma'." (p. 21) Popo, like Mr. Morgan quarreled with his wife suspecting the paternity of his ten children. When Edward asks, "How you sure is your children? Morgan laughed, and said, 'I have my doubts.'" (p. 64) Mrs. Hereina or Mrs. Christiani elopes with Toni. She leaves her first husband and then the second also. Edward's wife elopes with an American soldier. Hat's wife also elopes with another man. "Dolly had run away from Hat, taking all his gifts of course. Hat had chased her and found her with another man." (p. 169) Treachery marked all marital relationships in the Miguel Street reflecting the lack of values among its residents. Laura holds a 'world record' in the street: "I SUPPOSE LAURA holds a world record, Laura had eight children. There is nothing surprising in that. These eight children had seven fathers." (p. 84) The narrator himself is not an exception. At the age of 18 years he picks up affairs with stray women. The narrator says about himself in the last story, "How I left Miguel Street". "We made wild parties and took rum and women to Maracas Bay for all-night sessions." (p. 174) Husbands beating wives and wives
beating husbands was a common as well as a tolerable feature among the inhabitants of the street without any cutting-edge of sensation. As William Walsh observes: "If it is, even brutality, even the beating of wives and children, is tolerable." It has long ceased to have the exhilaration of scandal. George beats his children and wife. Morgan beats his children mercilessly. When Mrs. Morgan holds up Mr. Morgan by his waist all Miguel Street laughs at him. It seemed that Nathaniel often beat his wife, Laura. When questioned, he said that he is just "beating some sense into that woman." (p. 87) But it was not Nathaniel who beat Laura, but Laura who beat Nathaniel. The narrator says, "All the time he had the story, he hated his wife, and he beats her regularly with the cricket bat. But she was beating him too, with her tongue." (p. 128) Tony beats his wife, Mrs. Hereina and threatens to kill her. Mr. Morgan and Mrs. Bhakcu quarrel even for the smallest cause. Perhaps they are too conscious of man's helplessness in the face of life. His attitude is best summed up in what Hat says at the time of Laura's death: "You can see trouble coming and you can't do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just go to sit and watch and wait." (P.p. 91-92)
One of the peculiarities of the Miguel Street was that the dogs resembled their masters. Men and animals lived in harmony. "George has a mean mongrel. Toni's dog is a terrible savage. Hat's dog is an Alsatian with a sense of humour." (p. 163) Hat had an Alsatian dog which resembled him. George had two Alsatian dogs, which resembled their master. George abused anybody and in the same way the two dogs of him were ready to bark at anytime. Man - man also had a dog, which behaved, like his master:

The dog was like Man-man in a way; too, it was a curious dog. It never barked, never looked at you, and if you looked at it, it looked away. It never made friends with any other dog, and if some dog tried either to get friendly or aggressive, Man-man's dog gave it a brief look of disdain and ambled away, without looking back.

(p. 35-36)
Tony also had a dog which he neglected and the dog also neglected him. The narrator clearly asserts, "One of the things I noticed in Miguel Street was the way dogs resembled their owners." (p. 163)

In Miguel Street, "Even God seems to have been comfortably domesticated." Man-man says that he has seen God. There is no need to wonder, because seeing God has become quite common in Port of Spain with the mystic, Ganesh Pundit, setting the trend. Everybody in the street thinks that Man-man is mad and so they leave him at that. Originally, he is not mad except for some curious habits, "I have been talking to God these few days, and what he tell me about you people wasn't really nice to hear."(p. 37) All this throws light on the attitude of the people towards life. They accepted every change very calmly, if nothing extraordinary has happened. This might be due to their helplessness. They tended to welcome every thing, as they could do nothing to prevent it. They lived in a world that has perpetuated a magical order by ruling the miraculous as something exceptional or adventitious.
There was glamour for driving blue carts in the Miguel Street. Men carried the garbage away in scavenging carts in the morning and had the rest of the day free. Elias drives a cart. Eddoes is one of the aristocrats of the street. He is a "sweet-man, a man of leisure, well dressed, and keen on women." (p. 93) Every year he wins the City Council’s award for the cleanest scavenging cart. A subtle sense of hierarchy, no matter how inverted, and a professional sense of *noblesse oblige*, no matter how low the profession, are a part of life in Miguel Street. One of the surprising oddities in the Miguel Street is that no one starves. Moreover, the residents of the street spend money on alcohol, on extramarital affairs. But how they earned money was a million dollar question. As the narrator expresses: "I lived in Miguel Street, and can assure you that no one starved. Perhaps they did go hungry but you never heard about it." (p. 90)

The women are ill treated in the Miguel Street. The male are always found dominating the female. They appeared to prove their manliness only by ill-treating women and through hooliganism on the streets. The narrator, the boy, realizes in the final stories that the street
consists only of illusory triumphs and achievements. The male are proved beyond doubt to be good for nothing. The death of George's wife and her postmortem clearly reveal that 'female were brutally humiliated by the male'. "But I telling you," Edward said. 'It really true. Boyee wouldn't lie about a thing like that. The woman dead from blows. I telling you. London can take it; but not George wife." (p. 19)

The residents of the street, Bogart, George, Popo, Man-man, Mr. Morgan, B. Wordsworth, Big Foot, Tony, Bolo, Hat, Mr. Bhakcu, Elias, Errol, and Boyee never settle in a single job and never earn a single penny. The women strive hard to look after the family. Everyone is found beating their wives; moreover they try to kill their wives despite being idle. George kills his wife, Tony tries to kill his wife, and Edward kills his wife. Mr. Morgan and Mr. Bhakcu always beat their wives for the smallest reason. The ill treatment of the husbands towards their wives paves a way for eloping with others. Popo has a meager opinion on women, and he says: "Women and them like work, Man not make for work." (p. 10) Hat, the clever man in the street, also opines "Well, boy, women these days funny like hell. They go run after a dwarf if he got
money." (p. 94) Thus, female in the street were terribly humiliated by the male.

The people of Miguel Street are transients in middle passage. They do not have to be fettered by permanent attachments. When Edward leaves the island for good Hat is greatly disappointed. Although he is anxious: "Everybody growing up or they leaving." ($67) He is sorry for himself for having no drive for going himself. He says, "I think I was damn fool not to go and work with the Americans, like Edward and so much other people." (p. 167) People seem to have indeed outgrown the necessity for belonging by mastering the route of evanescence. Everyone longs to escape and no one bothers to belong and be responsible.

Naipaul presents an ironical view of life in Miguel Street. The street is an amalgamation of different religions and races, which is the fundamental basis of the West Indian life. Mystery haunts the life of everyone in the street. Every particularity in life is accommodated and everyone is free to have his own style of being or doing. The inhabitants
are governed by certain inexplicable moods and impulses matched by the unpredictable turn things take in life. So they get the best of their having to live with them. Nor do they seriously try to overcome their own shortcomings by growing out of their innocence. They allow themselves to drift along with the current and prepare themselves to face the unavoidable or the inevitable. Their melancholy attitude proceeds from a ritualized acceptance of reality. As William Walsh observes:

There is a kind of sadness folded into the quick lines of sketches in Miguel Street: It is unemphatic and never despairing because neither author nor character take up any indignant stance about what happens to them. They accept it. And they do so because of a conviction, or if that is too explicit and articulate, because of profound attitude or a posture in the bones and nerves, that one part of being human is simply hopelessness and another part is practicing a ritual to make that tolerable. 16
Miguel Street emerges, in the final analysis, as a symbol of the tragicomic situation of men in the new world environment. The drives and aspirations of the inhabitants of the slum like landscape mingle with their own desires and fantasies and denominate a world that is different from other possible worlds only in degree and not quality. For the narrator, it furnishes the story that unifies all these stories. Not only does it provide a frame of reality but also a point of self-reference. The hyphenated memories of his boyhood experiences are woven around the lusts and greeds, the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies. Miguel Street is the home every young boy must escape from, and return to in the wake of his achieved education and maturity. It stands for the recognition in one's own experience as memory flashes back to the past clarifying the traumatic moments when the quest for identity and self-differentiation had begun. The narrator in recording the concluding incident and the impression it makes on him dramatizes the contradictory but transforming power of Miguel Street as a spatial myth.

Naipaul draws the contrast between the affirming and alienating qualities of Miguel Street with a characteristic economy of the observed
life, "I said to Bhakcu, 'Uncle Bhak', I didn’t want to tell you before, but I think I hear your tappet knocking." (p. 179)

In a transplanted colonial society sentimentality is considered as comic and ridiculous, if not altogether offensive and vulgar. The artist overcomes the difficulty by entering into the gap in manners and offers a moral gesture in which the formal civility is joined to a sense of human concern. The reciprocity of feeling establishes a sense of human solidarity too and the scene fixes for all time an aspect of experience, which must ever remain fresh in the boy's mind. The narrator, who leaves as a green boy, returns as an adult who can imaginatively repossess the experience as well as articulate the meaning of his Miguel Street past. The creative process with its strict demands of objectivity and empathy entails nothing less than a dwarfing of the individual personality. "To master life by art, one must acquire the virtue of negative capacity, the capacity to achieve self - diminution so as to extend the margins of human awareness." The young man as an artist certainly learns the worth of this when he sees himself as "a dancing dwarf on the tarmac." (p. 179) In spite of narrow range and
limited local perspective, *Miguel Street* has a quality of suppressed mellowness; a precious moral refinement held in abeyance, *Miguel Street* is Naipaul's first serious work, the book in which discovered the trick of writing with care and objectivity.
REFERENCES:


10. Ibid – p. 122


13. O.P. Cit, p. 6.6


