

Hybridity and Mimicry: The Location of Culture and Identity in V.S. Naipaul's 'A House for Mr. Biswas and The Mimic Men'

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Abstract:

Being an Indian Brahmin, uprooted from the land of his ancestors, Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul has a complex personality. His grandfather was migrated to Trinidad from India as an indentured labourer. The huge Diaspora from China, India and other countries as indenture labourer, raises the obvious question of their national and political identity in the Caribbean island when they achieve independence. This paper deals with the cultural dislocation and identity crisis of these diasporic people, and identifies the primordial historical background of the Caribbean people, the wave of modern western culture and the imbalance hybridization of cultures that make them 'mimic' men and alienates them from their origins. This paper also locates the ambivalent position of Naipaul regarding 'mimicry'. He believes in the hollowness of 'mimic man' who lost their originality, creativity and thinking ability by imitating the colonial authority, again he believes that the mimicry of the colonial language by the postcolonial writers is a way of resistance to colonial authority. This paper is a brief endeavor to articulate all these issues based on Naipaul's two novels- *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1969) and *The Mimic Men* (1967).

Keywords: Hybridity, Mimicry, Culture and Identity

Introduction:

In an interview given to Ronald Bryden on 22 March 1973, Naipaul remarked:

All of my work is really one. I am really writing one big book. I come to the conclusion that, considering the nature of society I come from, considering the nature of the world I have stepped into and the world I have to look at I could not be a professional novelist in the old sense...(quoted in Ray 2002:(V))

V.S. Naipaul is a natural novelist. He had decided quite early in his life to take the vocation of a writer as his religion like Stephen Dedalus (see Joyce, *A Portrait*). For this, most of his books reflect his very authentic personal experience of an uprooted Caribbean adrift in the waves of multiculturalism. He grasps for identity, a cultural home, a place of his own; but stoops to the status of 'mimic man'. The pain and displacement of his own history enables him to treat his own alienation as an instance of the question for identity and location of culture of the colonial Caribbean as well as the post-colonial society.

Naipaul focuses on the disorientation of 'culture' and 'identity' of the Caribbean people. The present day population of that area consists of many racial groups who came to the island as immigrants. In the world of cultural confusions, colonial Caribbean people without any roots in the island are more vulnerable to exploitation than those colonial societies who have their own 'stable' indigenous culture. In this area, the hybridization of different cultures often results in the mimicry of the colonial power.

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