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Abstract

V.S. Naipaul's detached and often disdainful attitude to emergent societies has made him many enemies in the Third World . and his portrayal of the black man is particularly problematic since it involves a level of aloofness and scorn not to be found even in his comments on the 'wounded civilization' of India and the 'overcrowded barracoon' of Mauritius. Black West Indians are largely missing from Naipaul's early fiction and when they do appear, in the form of characters like the black M.L.C. whose monocle falls in his soup at the Governor's dinner in *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) or Miss Blackie, the Tulsis' faithful retainer in *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), they are usually caricatured. In his more recent novels black characters figure more prominently, but are generally held at arm's length.

Calypso Allusions in Naipaul's *Miguel Street*

The lessons and the poems they write and send from England
Impress me they were trying to cultivate comedians.

(The Mighty Sparrow, 'Dan is the Man in the Van')¹

V.S. Naipaul's detached and often disdainful attitude to emergent societies has made him many enemies in the Third World and his portrayal of the black man is particularly problematic since it involves a level of aloofness and scorn not to be found even in his comments on the 'wounded civilization' of India and the 'overcrowded barracoon' of Mauritius. Black West Indians are largely missing from Naipaul's early fiction and when they do appear, in the form of characters like the black M.L.C. whose monocle falls in his soup at the Governor's dinner in *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) or Miss Blackie, the Tulsis' faithful retainer in *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), they are usually caricatured. In his more recent novels black characters figure more prominently, but are generally held at arm's length. In the title-story of *In a Free State* (1971) Africans are repeatedly referred to as inhabitants of the primeval forest and are never individualized; they remain Conradian ciphers (though the novella lacks the symbolic intensity of the Pole's two Congo stories), something which Naipaul implicitly acknowledges through an allusion to *Heart of Darkness*² and by calling them 'emblematic'³ at one point. In *Guerrillas* (1975) his black West Indians are mostly hopelessly lost slum boys who live off self-destructive fantasies. In *A Bend in the River* (1979) his Africans are slightly more sympathetic, but again they remain peripheral as he evinces more interest in the predicament of his East African Asian and European characters.

In Naipaul's non-fiction the picture is worse still. Here, one senses, the gloves are off and he is making little attempt to conceal his deeper feelings through the dramatic strategies which lend an aura of imperson-

ality to his fictions. Most notoriously, in *The Middle Passage* (1962), a work which John Hearne has argued demonstrates its author's negro-phobia,⁴ he has lampooned both Caribbean blacks and Indians by saying that their aspirations towards whiteness make them 'like monkeys pleading for evolution',⁵ but while the Indians are allowed to derive strength through their alienness, he sees the black man's development as stultified by his 'desire to assert himself'.⁶ More recently, in 'A New King for the Congo', he has written of the resentments of a new generation of educated Zairis as 'a wish to wipe out and undo, an African nihilism, the rage of primitive men coming to themselves and finding that they have been fooled and affronted'⁷ and, in a 1979 interview, has expressed the belief that 'Africa has no future'.⁸

In marked contrast, Naipaul's first book⁹ *Miguel Street* (1959), a collection of interlocking short stories about the residents of a street in one of the poorer parts of Port of Spain¹⁰ appears to show genuine concern for the ordinary West Indian. Here the black man is not excluded from the centre of the stage, nor is he allowed only a cipher-like existence. The life of Trinidad's urban black population is portrayed from the inside and with a fair degree of sympathy. Moreover, *Miguel Street* is unique in Naipaul's fiction in that it immerses itself in the culture of the black West Indian. Throughout the work Naipaul employs allusions to calypsoes, particularly of the 1930s and 1940s, which are directly related to the collection's central themes and help to lend unity to what may initially appear to be no more than a number of very loosely related accounts of the lives of the street's inhabitants.

In *The Middle Passage* Naipaul comments on the importance of calypso to the Trinidadian:

It is only in the calypso that the Trinidadian touches reality. The calypso is a purely local form. No song composed outside Trinidad is a calypso. The calypso deals with local incidents, local attitudes, and it does so in a local language. The pure calypso, the best calypso, is incomprehensible to the outsider.¹¹

The same attitude is engrained in *Miguel Street* where no less than ten calypsoes are quoted. In two instances, the stories 'Love, Love, Love Alone' and 'Until the Soldiers Came', the debt is acknowledged in titles which are drawn from the lyrics of particular calypsoes. Elsewhere the allusions, sometimes the prerogative of the narrator and sometimes voiced by characters within the stories, function as incidental counterpoint to situations being described. Usually the effect of such allusions is ironic, as when Eddoes's girlfriend delivers to him the baby whose father he is supposed to be and Boyee whistles the calypso:

Chinese Children calling me Daddy!
I black like jet,
My wife like tar-baby,
And still —
Chinese children Calling me Daddy!
Oh God, somebody putting milk in my coffee. (p. 127)¹²

Most of the calypso allusions are of this order and provide ironic comment on aspects of the society, especially the man-woman relationship. Indeed Naipaul's portrayal of the world of *Miguel Street* at times comes very close to the calypsonian's own often extremely ironic view of the society. Ultimately, however, he goes beyond the macho ethic implicit in most calypsonians' treatment of the battle of the sexes and subtly reveals what he sees as the reality underlying such attitudes.

In addition to actually quoting ten calypsoes in the text, Naipaul also appears to be alluding to others in a more oblique fashion. His account of Man-man's crucifixion is a retelling of the third stanza of The Mighty Wonder's 'Follow Me Children'.¹³ Bolo's nickname 'Missing Ball', given to him because of his endeavours to win the *Trinidad Guardian's* Missing Ball competition, echoes the title of a calypso drama of the period which originally appeared as 'No Money, No Love' in August 1939 and was revived in the calypso season of the following year with the title 'The Missing Ball'.¹⁴ The relationship of Toni and Mrs Christiani in 'Love, Love, Love Alone' is based on the philosophy advocated in the calypso 'Knock Them Down', which is quoted in 'The Maternal Instinct':

Every now and then just knock them down.
Every now and then just throw them down.
Black up their eye and bruise up their knee
And then they love you eternally. (p. 111)¹⁵

So the calypso tradition furnishes the most significant body of allusions in *Miguel Street* and Naipaul's use of such allusions has the effect of firmly rooting the work within the experience of Trinidad's urban black populace.

Numerous commentators have, like Naipaul, pointed out the social significance of calypso as — along with steelband — the music of the Trinidad masses. Among them is Naipaul's younger brother Shiva:

Trinidad did offer something. It offered the calypso and the steelband. Here were two indisputably original creations rooted to begin with among the urban Negro poor. Purely of the island, they did not need to refer to anything beyond it. Therefore, they were rejected and looked upon with suspicion and hostility by the

educated and well-to-do; the steelband and calypso did not have the sanction of the metropolitan culture. Lacking a theatre and a literature, it was the calypso, cutting through the fantasy, which mirrored Trinidadian life and without whose intervention much would have gone unrecorded and unnoticed. The calypsonian, himself a man of the people, chronicled the life of the people. He did so frankly and unsentimentally; and at times he could be brutal.¹⁶

Though these comments, like the whole of the paper from which they are taken — and indeed much of Shiva's other work — smack rather too strongly of the influence of his older brother, they do at least have the virtue of placing calypso in relation to the metropolitan culture and in *Miguel Street* Vidia Naipaul is dramatizing essentially the same relationship.

Moreover, Shiva's comments on the calypsonian's role as the 'man of the people' who chronicles the society in all its aspects also give just the right emphasis. The origins of the music are almost certainly primarily African — the name itself, originally 'kaiso', has been traced to a West African source¹⁷ — and Errol Hill argues that the calypsonian is a descendant of the *griots* of the Mandingo people of West Africa.¹⁸ It is an illuminating comparison, for the *griots* were the repository of the oral history of their nation and its arts, while in Trinidad virtually every significant public event in the post-Emancipation period has been mentioned in 'kaiso'. Even today, despite its popularity and consequent bastardization in America in the years after World War II and despite the claims of reggae and black American music to reflect the mood of the younger generation more adequately, calypso remains the most vibrant medium of social criticism in Trinidad.¹⁹

As an art form of the people calypso, then, represents an opposite pole to the metropolitan culture and, on one level, *Miguel Street* explores this cultural divide. It is most clearly illustrated in the story 'B. Wordsworth' in which the protagonist sees himself as a spiritual brother of his English namesake:

'What your name, mister?'

'B. Wordsworth.'

'B. for Bill?'

'Black. Black Wordsworth. White Wordsworth was my brother. We share one heart. I can watch a small flower like the morning glory and cry.' (pp. 57-8)

However, B. Wordsworth's image of himself as a Trinidadian Wordsworth represents only half the truth about him. He attempts to sell his poems, a practice in which, the narrator tells him, only calypsonians

engage, and it transpires that he is in fact a part-time calypsonian during the season. Like the vast majority of the two to three hundred aspirants who annually compete for the title of Calypso Monarch, he finds it impossible to make a living from singing calypsoes during the rest of the year and so dispenses with this role and dons that of Romantic poet. Both roles, Naipaul implies, are variants on the same idea; both fail to bring him any real self-fulfilment.

B. Wordsworth is, however, less a victim of his metropolitan fantasy than are certain other characters in the street. Those who aspire to the chimera of a metropolitan goal are invariably disappointed. In 'His Chosen Calling' Elias sits the Cambridge School Certificate exam on three occasions with scant success and the narrator comments, 'We felt it wasn't fair, making a boy like Elias do litritcher and poultry' (p. 41). The attempt of Titus Hoyt, 'I.A.', a kind of adult equivalent of Elias, to bring 'litritcher and poultry' to the boys of the street by forming the Miguel Street Literary and Social Youth Club proves equally abortive. His Latin lessons give the boys the feeling that 'one man sit down one day and make all this up and have everybody else learning it' (p. 99). The most extreme metropolitan fantasy is acted out by Man-man, who assumes the role of hell-fire preacher and shows himself to have a Christ complex when he stages his own crucifixion and is consequently eventually committed to a lunatic asylum.

Like B. Wordsworth, Elias and Titus Hoyt, Man-man is a casualty of the society in which, as Naipaul sees it, success is a virtual impossibility. In *The Middle Passage* he writes:

We lived in a society which denied itself heroes.

It was a place where the stories were never stories of success but of failure: brilliant men, scholarship winners, who had died young, gone mad, or taken to drink; cricketers of promise whose careers had been ruined by disagreement with the authorities.²⁰

Ultimately, despite their surface resilience, virtually all the characters in *Miguel Street* seem paralysed by their environment. Certainly all who aspire to any kind of metropolitan ideal are doomed to disappointment. Naipaul does, however, suggest the possibility of alternative positives, indigenous to the society, through the medium of his calypso allusions.

Commenting on the function of the calypso allusions in *Miguel Street*, Gordon Rohlehr says:

In *Miguel Street*, the spirit and gaiety of the calypso are not considered with hope as a new and strange positive which the masses of Trinidad have constructed out of the

debris of their lives, but with a sense of pathos as a sign of the pathological insensitivity of the Trinidad people. I would like to suggest that both views are possible, and that the first seems both the more charitable and the more correct one.²¹

Elsewhere, in a more general discussion of Trinidadian wit, which finds its most characteristic expression in calypso, Rohlehr suggests that it may be viewed in two completely different lights, which are analogous to these two views of calypso:

Wit is often a mask behind which the individual hides the fact that he has no face at all. It can be a means of evading truth about self and milieu, ... a wry expression of paralysis. On the other hand, it is equally a means of confronting truth, something more than simple pose. When the calypsonian sings about painful truth, he generally has to pose as posing...²²

On the surface, the wit of the inhabitants of Miguel Street seems to be 'a wry expression of paralysis'. All the characters, including the central figure Hat, have constructed personae which have enabled them to confront the world, but which involve 'evading truth about self'. Nevertheless it is possible to find in *Miguel Street*, as Rohlehr has argued in another context, 'an implicit recognition of the positives'²³ of the calypsonian world. Naipaul's rendition of the lives of ordinary urban Trinidadians is sufficiently thorough and (thanks to the use of the boy narrator) his point of view is sufficiently neutral to enable one to see beyond the 'sense of pathos'. Although he repeatedly strips away the masks which his characters wear, he is less concerned to expose their shortcomings satirically than to smile wryly at the futility of their endeavours and so compassion is not precluded. His use of calypso allusions and themes is an index of the extent to which he has immersed himself in the lives of ordinary urban Trinidadians, even if he begins from a position which suggests the comic ridiculousness of such people.

Specific calypso allusions both reflect the way in which the music provides commentary on actual happenings, such as the burning of the Port of Spain Treasury in 1933,²⁴ and cast light on the male-female relationship in the society. The battle of the sexes has been the most important subject of the calypsoes of the last forty years and it is central in *Miguel Street*. The further one reads, the clearer it becomes that, far from being a collection of only loosely related stories, Naipaul's first book is a carefully orchestrated investigation of the concept of manliness as it obtains in Trinidad.

The pattern is set in the very first story, in which 'Bogart' models himself on the American film star whose name he has adopted. The

Bogart persona was enormously popular in Trinidad in the 1940s²⁵ and in *The Middle Passage* Naipaul comments on the particular nature of his appeal:

In its stars the Trinidadian audience looks for a special quality of style. John Garfield had this style; so did Bogart. When Bogart, without turning, coolly rebuked a pawing Lauren Bacall, 'You're breathing down mah neck', Trinidad adopted him as its own. 'That is man!' ... For the Trinidadian an actor has style when he is seen to fulfil certain aspirations of the audience: the virility of Bogart, the man-on-the-run romanticism of Garfield, the pimpishness and menace of Durya, the ice-cold sadism of Widmark.²⁶

The Bogart of Naipaul's story appears to be a strong, silent man who has no need of women or family and so it comes as something of a surprise when he is finally revealed to be a bigamist. The story ends with Eddoes asking Hat, who has a choric role in the work as well as being an important character in his own right, why Bogart has left his second wife and come back to the street. '»To be a man, among we men«' (p. 16) is Hat's reply.

'To be a man, among we men' — the ideal of manliness is as central to *Miguel Street* as it is to the calypso tradition. In the second story, 'The Thing Without a Name', the formula of 'Bogart' is reversed: Bogart runs away from his wives; Popo, the carpenter hero of this story, runs *to* his wife. Popo finds that he has never been so popular in the street as he is when his wife, Emelda, deserts him. Previously his manhood has been questioned and Hat has said: '»Popo is a man-woman. Not a proper man«' (p. 19). Now, however, as he begins to drink heavily and wants to assault everyone, Hat is forced to admit '»He is a man, like any of we«' (p. 21). The reality of the situation is, of course, that Popo's drinking and belligerency are masks for his loneliness and it is not long before he leaves the street to win Emelda back. This leads to his becoming the subject of a popular calypso,²⁷ but on his return to Miguel Street, he finds that he is no longer respected for his manliness since he has shown his dependence on woman and he becomes a peg for Hat to hang his anti-feminist remarks on. The story's final twist, however, reinstates Popo as 'one of the boys' (p. 25). He steals furniture and paint to improve his home for Emelda, is caught and sent to jail. Jail, like heavy drinking, automatically establishes one's manliness in the street's eyes and so, when he is released, he is able to retain both Emelda and the respect of the street's men. Nevertheless there is still a sense of loss in the story, since, as the narrator is saddened to discover, the poetic side of Popo's nature, repre-

sented by his work on 'the thing without a name', has been suppressed and has given way to more routine carpentry.

The theme of manliness recurs throughout the volume, appearing in one form or another in no less than twelve of the seventeen stories. As in calypso until quite recently, the treatment of the man-woman relationship is focussed almost exclusively on the male viewpoint. Although, as Merle Hodge has pointed out,²⁸ *Miguel Street* contains several portraits of strong women, women are, with the exception of Laura in 'The Maternal Instinct' and the outsider Mrs Christiani in 'Love, Love, Love Alone' assigned secondary roles. As in most calypsoes, woman is the passive backcloth against which male aspirations are played out.

The bulk of calypsoes on the man-woman relationship are anti-feminist.²⁹ Initially *Miguel Street* may appear to be similarly hostile to women. Naipaul quotes two classic anti-feminist calypsoes, 'Knock Them Down' and 'Man Santapee':³⁰ 'Man centipede bad./ Woman centipede more than bad' (p. 126), and the whole work is pervaded by similar sentiments, especially as voiced by Hat. Moreover, certain incidents, such as Mrs Bhakcu's cleaning and oiling the cricket-bat with which her husband beats her and Mrs Christiani's masochistic obsession with Toni, suggest woman's complicity in the macho ethic preached in calypsoes like 'Knock Them Down'.

Nevertheless the dominant pattern of the stories is centred on an ironic exposure of the pretence of manliness. Big Foot, the terror of the street, is revealed to be a coward. Nathaniel's apparent espousal of the philosophy of 'Knock Them Down', which he quotes, shocks even the other male chauvinists of *Miguel Street*, but proves, as Hat anticipates, to be pure sham. The reality of the situation is that he is receiving not giving beatings and, when this is discovered, Eddoes remarks, '»It look like they make up that calypso about men, not women«' (p. 112). Morgan, who has ten children and prides himself on his virility, is broken by the exposure of his pretence of manliness when his wife returns home to find him in bed with another woman and makes him a laughing-stock by taunting him with his pride in his virility:

'Leave the light on. Come, let we show the big hero to the people in the street. Come, let we show them what man really make like. You is not a anti-man, you is real man. You ain't only make ten children with me, you going to make more with somebody else.' (p. 89)

and holding him up by the waist for all the people in the street to see his puny near-naked body. George, a noted wife-beater, buries one wife,

drives away another and, in an anticipation of the title-story of *A Flag on the Island* (1967), turns to running a brothel for American soldiers. Finally, however, his macho pose is insufficient to sustain him and he dies another broken man. In each case the assumed persona of manliness fails to conceal the underlying insecurity of those who adopt it.³¹ Like those who base their life-styles on metropolitan fantasies, those who affect to be strong men with no need of women are destroyed by their failure to fulfil what proves to be an impossible role.

The story 'Love, Love, Love Alone', which takes its title from one of the most famous of pre-war calypsoes, a calypso on the subject of Edward VIII's abdication:³² 'Is love, love, love alone/ That cause King Edward to leave the throne' (p. 136) affords a significant contrast to the majority of the stories in *Miguel Street*. The story of the Portuguese Mrs Christiani (known in *Miguel Street* as Mrs Hereira) parallels King Edward's abdication in that she has left her husband and the comforts of her middle-class life and come to live in the street with her lover, Toni. To the narrator's mother such behaviour is 'white people business' (p. 136) and she provides an interesting Hindu reaction to the European notion of Romantic love when she tells Mrs Christiani:

'I really wish you was like me. If somebody did marry you off when you was fifteen, we wouldnta been hearing all this nonsense, you hear. Making all this damn fuss about your heart and love and all that rubbish.' (p. 144)

Yet, even here, the reality of the situation reverses expectations. Mrs Christiani's love is inextricably bound up with Toni's brutal treatment of her and has a definite basis in masochism. So again the calypso allusion is ironic: her love is, as the narrator's mother points out, a far cry from the 'great love' (p. 136) of King Edward. Ultimately Toni's brutality becomes intolerable to her and she retreats to the security of her middle-class world. As with B. Wordsworth's account of his lost love, the dénouement of the story suggests the impossibility of European Romantic love in the calypso society. Paradoxically 'Love, Love, Love Alone' is the one story in *Miguel Street* in which the woman is really a victim of the macho pose.

In virtually every other relationship which is described it becomes clear that the real strength lies with the woman. The most resilient person in the street is Laura in 'The Maternal Instinct', who has eight children by seven fathers and treats Nathaniel, her man of the moment, with abject scorn: 'You think you is a man. But don't try playing with me, you hear. Yes, Nathaniel, is you I talking to with your bottom like two stale bread in your pants' (p. 113). Finally Laura's fate is not unlike that of most of

the male protagonists; her spirit is also broken. This, however, is something which is beyond the power of any man to achieve. It is her daughter Lorna's becoming pregnant and, as it were, usurping her role which transforms Laura into an old woman almost overnight. 'The Maternal Instinct' serves to bring out what is latent throughout *Miguel Street*: the society is fundamentally matriarchal. Hence the male's need to assert his threatened manhood in aggressive macho postures.

This pattern comes to a climax in the last three stories. In the fifteenth story, 'Until the Soldiers Came', the central theme appears to be the disruption caused by the American military presence in Trinidad in World War II and, a specific reflection of this, the Americanization of Hat's brother, Edward. Naipaul includes three references to calypsoes by Lord Invader which illustrate how the power of the 'Yankee dollar' disturbed the traditional pattern of man-woman relationships in Trinidad. This is one of the main themes of the calypsoes of the early 1940s and it achieved classic expression in Invader's 'Rum and Coca-Cola', one of the calypsoes which is quoted in the text.³³ So, in portraying the influence of America on the social life of Trinidad, both here and in 'Bogart' and 'George and the Pink House', Naipaul is once again placing his stories within the mainstream of the calypso experience.

The portrayal of the 'rum and coca-cola encounter' in 'Before the Soldiers Came' provides a variation of the manhood theme. Like Bogart, Edward adopts the mannerisms of a Hollywood film actor and, as is also the case with Bogart, his assumption of the persona of a 'tough guy' is an attempt to conceal his fundamental insecurity. Edward marries a 'modern' white wife, claiming that he has to do so because he has made her pregnant, though this is not really so. When the marriage proves childless and his virility is consequently impugned, the street's reaction destroys Edward, who has become a victim not only of the 'tough guy' persona, but also of the white man's notion of love. The final straw comes when his wife leaves him for an American and he finds himself a living exemplification of the calypso by Invader to which Naipaul alludes in the title of the story: 'I was living with my decent and contented wife/ Until the soldiers came and broke up my life' (pp. 185 and 196).³⁴ Thoroughly disgraced, Edward leaves Miguel Street and emigrates. Subsequently the news filters through that his wife has had a baby by her American. Fortunately Edward is far away. It is the ultimate affront to manhood.

In the next story Hat, who has figured in most of the previous pieces, now becomes the centre of attention. Hitherto his role has been mainly choric and, although his comments have not been unfailingly correct, he

has repeatedly shown himself able to see through the masks assumed by others: 'I always feel he (Morgan) overdoing everything. I always feel the man lying about everything. I feel that he even lying to himself' (p. 83) and to accept life's vicissitudes with stoicism: 'Life is helluva thing. You can see trouble coming and you can't do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just got to sit and watch and wait' (p. 116). To the fatherless boy-narrator, Hat is very much a surrogate father figure. His is the voice of experience which frequently acts as a foil to the boy's ingenuous reaction to events. Of all the male residents of Miguel Street he has appeared, thus far, to be the best equipped to lead an integrated life in the calypso society.

Now in the story which bears Hat's name, the narrator endorses such a view of his character:

I never knew a man who enjoyed life as much as Hat did. (p. 202)

He was self-sufficient, and I didn't believe he even needed women. I knew, of course, that he visited certain places in the city from time to time, but I thought he did this more for the vicious thrill than for the women. (p. 207)

In short, Hat would seem really to be the kind of man that the other characters aspire to be. This, however, is not the case. The story reveals him to be as much a victim of an assumed persona of manliness as any of the street's men. It repeats the formula of the ironic exposure of pretence which Naipaul has already worked successfully in the majority of the previous stories, only now there is a far greater sense of pathos, since, when we come to read Hat's story, he is familiar to us as no previous character has been. Our knowledge of him, coupled with the narrator's obvious warmth of feeling for him, serve to make this the most poignant story in the collection.

The story begins with an account of Hat's taking twelve boys to an inter-island cricket match. At the ground Hat tells onlookers that all twelve boys are his own and gets soft drinks at a discount price as a result. He thus successfully combines the pose of virility with the attributes of the trickster, a figure whom Naipaul sees as having taken over the role of the hero in the calypso society.⁵⁵ He appears to be perfectly attuned to Trinidadian life and his response to cricket, arguably another important positive in the society,³⁶ is an education for the narrator on this occasion:

Hat taught me many things that afternoon. From the way he pronounced them, I learned about the beauty of cricketers' names, and he gave me all his own excitement at watching a cricket match. (p. 201)

Although his trickery occasionally leads him into trouble with the police, Hat's spirits are never dampened for long. In the narrator's eyes, he leads an idyllic existence free from the entanglements with women which seem to complicate the lives of most of the street's men:

Cricket, football, horse-racing; read the paper in the mornings and afternoons; sit on the pavement and talk; get noisily drunk on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. He didn't appear to need anything else. (p. 207)

But finally Hat too proves far from self-sufficient. After his brother Edward's flight, he is never quite the same. His visits to the Port of Spain brothels become more frequent and culminate in his bringing a woman, Dolly, home to live with him. On the surface he changes little, but his nephews who live with him tell of a different Hat indoors, of a man who even buys 'joolry' (p. 210) for Dolly. From the outside the narrator notes that his wild birds, previously allowed to wander freely through his house and peck at visitors, are now caged and his tame alsatian is chained. Both changes are metaphors of Hat's having surrendered his free spirit as a result of having brought Dolly into his life. The sequel is predictable. Like a calypso archetype of the perfidious woman:

Matilda, Matilda,
Matilda, you thief my money
And gone Venezuela. (p. 210)³⁷

Dolly deserts Hat for another man. He pursues her, nearly kills her and is sent to jail for four years. The severity of the sentence seems at least partly due to the irrelevant defence which his Indian lawyer, Chittaranjan,³⁸ conducts for him. Chittaranjan argues, with recourse to clichéd Shakespearean allusions, that Hat should be dealt with leniently because he has committed a '*crime passionel*' (pp. 211-2). It is, Naipaul implies, the kind of defence that does more harm than good in the calypso society.

When Hat emerges from prison three years later, much of his former vivacity is gone. The narrator is now eighteen and, as Hat puts it, a 'big man' (p. 213) himself and it is impossible for them to enjoy the same relationship as before. During the period that Hat has been away, the narrator has matured to a point where he is able to see through the personae of the men of Miguel Street and when Hat says to him that a long time has elapsed since they were last together, he reflects:

A long time. But it was just three years, three years in which I had grown up and looked critically at the people around me. I no longer wanted to be like Eddoes. He was so weak and thin, and I hadn't realised that he was so small. Titus Hoyt was stupid and boring, and not funny at all. Everything had changed.

When Hat went to jail, part of me had died. (pp. 213-4)

Although the narrator is now able to see the reality underlying the surface gaiety of Miguel Street life, he is not insulated against succumbing to the street's conception of manliness himself. The final story shows him turning to drinking and womanizing, largely it would seem because he feels that society fails to offer any real alternatives. When his mother attacks him for his dissoluteness, he replies: 'Is not my fault really. Is just Trinidad. What else anybody can do here except drink?' (p. 216). Society emerges as the villain which renders the individual powerless to achieve lasting self-fulfilment. Finally, the narrator is saved by being sent abroad for a metropolitan education. He succeeds where Elias has failed and ultimately this kind of escape seems to be the only possible road to success for those born in the land of the calypso.

So, although in *Miguel Street* one finds Naipaul coming closer to a compassionate treatment of the black West Indian's situation than in any of his subsequent works, even here there is more than a touch of ironic ambivalence as he exposes the reality underlying the calypsonian's humorous treatment of the battle of the sexes. Even though he immerses himself in this aspect of the folk culture of the urban West Indian, finally the positives of the calypso society are rejected as the narrator grows up and takes a far less tolerant view of his world in the final story, before, like so many of Naipaul's other heroes, taking flight at the end of the work.

NOTES

1. 'Dan is the Man in the Van' is available on *Sparrow at the Sheraton*, ia records, Trinidad, unnumbered.
2. *In a Free State* (London, 1971), p. 170.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
4. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 8, 4 (December 1962), 65-6.
5. *The Middle Passage* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 87. Subsequent references are to this edition.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
7. *The Return of Eva Perón with The Killings in Trinidad* (London, 1980), p. 195.
8. 'Meeting V.S. Naipaul', Naipaul interviewed by Elizabeth Hardwick, *The New York Times Book Review*, 13 May 1979, p. 36.

9. Though *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) and *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958) were published before *Miguel Street*, it was written earlier: Naipaul began it in 1955.
10. Not, as some commentators have suggested, a slum-street. References in the work make it clear that Miguel Street is located in the Woodbrook/St James area on the West side of Port of Spain. Although not residential, this area is far from being a slum. This is made evident in 'The Maternal Instinct' where the street's residents look down on Nathaniel who comes from the 'dirtier' east end of Port of Spain (*Miguel Street*, London, 1959, p. 110). Subsequent references are to this edition and are included in the text.
11. *The Middle Passage*, pp. 75-6.
12. 'Chinese Children Calling Me Daddy' was composed and sung by The Tiny Terror (also known as The Terror) and is available on the album *Calypso Cavalcade*, Vol. 1, Request Records, No SLP 731. For help in tracing this and some of the other calypsoes referred to in *Miguel Street*, I am indebted to Gordon Rohlehr.
13. Quoted by Landeg White, *V.S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1975), p. 50.
14. Errol Hill, *The Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre* (Austin and London, 1972), p. 80. The calypso-drama tells the story of an impecunious husband who regains the affections of his errant wife after winning a newspaper's Missing Ball Competition.
15. Best known today as 'Cuff Them Down' by The Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco), this calypso has become traditional. The Roaring Lion (Hubert De Leon) and Lord Beginner (Egbert Moore) both claim to have composed it.
16. 'The Writer Without a Society', *Common Wealth*, edited by Anna Rutherford (Aarhus, 1972), p. 116.
17. To the Hausa word 'kai' by Atila the Hun (Raymond Quevedo) in an unpublished article quoted in Hill, *The Trinidad Carnival*, p. 61.
18. 'Calypso', *Jamaica Journal*, 5,1 (March 1971), 23.
19. During the last decade calypsonians have fallen into two main camps: those who believe that calypso should incorporate elements from other black music and sing 'Soca' (soul + calypso) and those who believe that it should remain pure. The conflict is dramatized by The Mighty Chalkdust (Hollis Liverpool) in his composition 'Calypso vs. Soca', Straker's Records, No GS 2224. The success of Chalkdust (Calypso Monarch in 1976 and 1977) and Lord Relator (Calypso Monarch in 1980), both social commentators who eschew outside influences, suggests that the traditional calypso is more than holding its own.
20. *The Middle Passage*, pp. 43-4.
21. 'Sparrow and the Language of Calypso', *Savacou*, 2 (September 1970), 87.
22. 'Kaiso '69', *Moko*, 8 (14 February 1969), 1.
23. 'The Ironic Approach', *The Islands in Between*, edited by Louis James (London, 1968), p. 130.
24. 'The Treasury Fire' was one of the calypsoes sung by Lord Beginner during the 1933 Carnival season, *Trinidad Guardian*, 15 January 1933, p. 1. The fire itself occurred on 25 June 1932.
25. Bogart's popularity in Trinidad is well authenticated in the newspaper reports of the period. A review of *To Have and Have Not*, which ran simultaneously at two Port of Spain cinemas in 1945, speaks of the 'strange attraction' which he had for local audiences, *Trinidad Guardian*, 4 March 1945, Magazine Section, p. 3.
26. *The Middle Passage*, pp. 63-4.

27. I have not succeeded in tracing this calypso and feel that it is probably an invention on Naipaul's part.
28. 'The Shadow of the Whip', *Is Massa Day Dead?*, edited by Orde Coombs (New York, 1974), p. 116.
29. See J.D. Elder, 'The Male/Female Conflict in Calypso', *Caribbean Quarterly*, XIV, 3 (September 1968), 23-40.
30. Composed and sung by Attila the Hun. The chorus has the same tune as 'Knock Them Down'.
31. Cf. Naipaul's remarks on Argentinian machismo in *The Return of Eva Perón with The Killings in Trinidad*, pp. 153-6.
32. Composed and sung by Lord Caresser (Rupert Callender). Available as 'Edward VIII' on the album *The Real Calypso*, Folkways Records, No RBF 13.
33. Lord Invader (Rupert Grant) sang many songs on the effect of the American 'invasion'. A typical example, 'Yankee Dollar' is included on *The Real Calypso*.
34. I have not succeeded in tracing this particular calypso. The theme was commonplace and 'My Wife Left Me for a Yankee' by Lord Kitchener (Aldwin Roberts) is one of its best examples. Cf. also 'Yankee Dollar'.
35. See Naipaul's comments on the 'picaroon' society, *The Middle Passage*, pp. 78-9.
36. See Naipaul's remarks in 'Cricket', *The Overcrowded Barracoon and other articles* (London, 1972), pp. 18-19.
37. 'Mathilda' by Lionel Belasco was popularized by Harry Belafonte, who first recorded it in April 1953. It is included on his album *Belafonte*, RCA Victor Records, No LPM 1150.
38. Brother of Chittaranjan, the goldsmith in *The Suffrage of Elvira*.