

ABSTRACT

Colonialism is one kind of imperialism in which victors/rulers exploit victims/the ruled. The colonial frame of reference enables Naipaul in dealing with his themes of the rise and decay of empire and the illusion and disillusionment attendant thereon, to present characters as a function of his peculiarly dark vision of the world. The colonial paradigm, thus, enables him to create characters who are either winners/exploiters or losers/victims.

In his later works, however, Naipaul seems to be suggesting a third category of character - the survivor. The survivor is one who, while not escaping the warping effects of colonialism, has made his own way and has survived in an imperfect world.

This paper, by focussing on characters, attempts to show how the theme of colonialism informs Naipaul's treatment of man's coming to terms with the inadequacies of certain historical/political legacies in a post colonial situation.

In a situation such as this, the representatives of the former colonial rulers are portrayed by Naipaul as being as lost and as dispossessed as the colonial peoples who were formerly ruled.

Among the former colonised, the few who emerge as new leaders, having as their only models their former colonial masters, find themselves in a cultural and spiritual void. This is so, not only because they themselves are as brutish and cynical as the colonisers/rulers whom they have replaced, but also because the foreign metropolitan centres of the ruling class offer neither stability nor sustenance.

It is in this kind of moral, spiritual and political limbo

that Naipaul's characters play out their circumscribed roles. While playacting has become a feature of interpersonal relationships, both at the private and public levels, Naipaul suggests that it is not sufficient to save man from extinction in the modern world. His fiction attests to this view.